**NOVA “POLAR EXTREMES”**

**A One-Night, Two-Hour Special Hosted by Kirk Johnson**

**Premieres February 5, 2020 on PBS**

**(check local listings)**

**SUMMER 2019 TCA PRESS TOUR PANELIST BIOS**

**@novapbs**

**#PolarExtremesPBS**

**DR. KIRK JOHNSON**

**Sant Director, National Museum of Natural History**

Dr. Kirk Johnson is the Sant Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, where he oversees the world’s largest natural history collection. The Museum hosts more than 6 million visitors each year. In 2018, its scientists published 586 scientific research papers and named 310 new species.

In 2019, the museum opened *The David H. Koch Hall of Fossils-Deep Time*, an exhibition that interprets the history of life on Earth and its relevance to the future of humanity.

Before his arrival at the Smithsonian in 2012, Johnson was a paleontologist at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, where he led expeditions in 18 states and 11 countries. His research focuses on fossil plants and the extinction of the dinosaurs. In 2011, he led an ice age excavation near Snowmass Village in Colorado that recovered parts of more than 50 mastodon skeletons. He is known for his scientific articles, popular books, museum exhibitions, documentaries and collaborations with artists.

His recent documentaries include *Making North America* and *The Great Yellowstone Thaw,* both of which aired on PBS channels. He is presently working on *Polar Extremes,* a documentary about the ancient climate of the Arctic and Antarctic. His latest book, *Cruisin’ the Fossil Coastline:* *The Travels of an Artist and a Scientist along the Shores of the Prehistoric Pacific*, explores the deep history of the West Coast from California to Alaska.

Johnson, originally from Bellevue, Washington, has a bachelor’s degree from Amherst College, a master’s degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and a doctorate in geology and paleobotany from Yale University.

**DR. JEREMY SHAKUN**

**Associate Professor, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Boston College**

Dr. Shakun is a paleoclimatologist who studies how and why global climate has changed over the past several million years. His research develops records of past climate change from glacier, ocean and cave deposits, and spans from the poles to the tropics and mountaintops to the sea floor. He is especially motivated to work on past climate problems that have direct bearing on where future climate may be headed. He holds degrees in geology from Middlebury College (B.A. 2003), UMass-Amherst (M.S. 2006) and Oregon State University (Ph.D. 2010), and he has been a professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Boston College since 2013.

**DR. MAUREEN RAYMO**

**Bruce C. Heezen Lamont Research Professor and Director of the Lamont-Doherty Core Repository at Columbia University**

Dr. Raymo is a distinguished scientist and public speaker. For over 30 years, she has been a pioneer in the study of climate change over Earth’s history. In addition to publishing foundational work on the stratigraphy and chronology of recent geologic epochs, Raymo has proposed hypotheses explaining why ice ages occur in Earth’s history, why ice sheets wax and wane with characteristic frequencies over the last few million years, and developed new ways of studying past sea level change. According to the European Geosciences Union, which recognized her accomplishments with the Milankovic Medal, “Maureen E. Raymo’s work has given names to critical, foundational ideas: the ‘uplift-weathering hypothesis’, the ‘41-thousand-year problem’, ‘Pliocene sea level paradox’, and ‘the Lisiecki-Raymo δ18O Stack’ are all central themes in palaeoceanography that appear in textbooks and have their roots in Raymo’s research and intellectual contributions.” Raymo’s work, firmly based on observations and data, has shaped our understanding of Earth’s natural climate variability, and her many landmark papers have influenced a generation of climate scientists.

Raymo has spent years carrying out research in the field—planning, participating in and leading numerous scientific expeditions around the world, on land, sea, and ice. She is a fellow of The Explorers Club and a member of the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest honors given to scientists in the United States. In 2014, she became the first woman to be awarded the Wollaston Medal, the Geological Society of London’s most senior medal and highest accolade, first awarded to William Smith in 1831 and later to Charles Darwin, Louis Agassiz and Charles Lyell.

Raymo speaks widely, to audiences ranging from scientists, to student groups, to the general public, on topics ranging from her latest research to the much broader problem of global climate change. Her talks are always informative and inspiring, with the twin goals of empowering individuals through a better understanding of climate science and motivating action on behalf of our shared global environment.

**LUCY HAKEN**

**Producer/Director, *Polar Extremes***

Lucy Haken is a British Producer/Director who has spent the last 18 months with London-based Windfall Films producing *Polar Extremes* for NOVA.

After graduating with a first-class degree in Natural Sciences from Cambridge University in 2002, Haken decided to channel her enthusiasm for understanding the world and share it with a wider audience. She now brings specialist science, history, engineering and natural history content to a popular audience, producing factual documentaries for a range of international broadcasters.

Her back catalogue includes *Bomber Boys* with Ewan McGregor and the Emmy Award-winning “Britain from Above” for BBC1; Discovery’s “Unearthed” and “Rise of the Machines;” BBC 2's “Richard Hammond’s Journey to the Centre of the Earth,” winner of BANFF Best Science Series Award; “The Search for a New Earth” with Stephen Hawking; and “How Many People Can Live on Planet Earth?” with David Attenborough, one of the most-watched BBC “Horizon” episodes of the last decade.

In her spare time, Haken plays clarinet in a military band and likes walking to the top of big hills to see what's on the other side. *Polar Extremes* is Haken's first project for NOVA, and it's taken her on the adventure of a lifetime!

**JULIA CORT**

**Executive Producer, *Polar Extremes* and Co-Executive Producer, NOVA**

Since joining NOVA in 1991, Julia Cort has contributed to more than 100 films and miniseries, covering everything from ancient engineering to quantum mechanics to the frontiers of artificial intelligence. She has served as Executive Producer on some of NOVA’s most acclaimed episodes and miniseries, including*NOVA Wonders, Making North America*, *Black Hole Apocalypse*, *Poisoned Water*and*Addiction.* In addition to overseeing long-form documentaries, since 2017 Cort has overseen NOVA’s digital video. Her work has received the Peabody Award, the National Academies Keck Communication Award, the AAAS Science Journalism Award and the News and Documentary Emmy.

**ADDITIONAL ONSITE TALENT**

**CHRIS SCHMIDT**

**Co-Executive Producer, NOVA**

Chris Schmidt has been an independent filmmaker of groundbreaking documentary and narrative projects since 1990. Over the last 20 years, he has written, directed and produced programs for NOVA and other broadcasters, including the 2008 breakthrough miniseries *Making Stuff*, followed by *Making Stuff 2*and the two-hour special *Hunting the Elements,* which is widely used in classrooms. Since joining NOVA full time in 2012, Schmidt has continued to develop, produce, write and executive produce long-form documentaries, quick-turn around films, miniseries and digital content. His work has been nominated for the News and Documentary Emmy Award, and he shared a prestigious Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award.

**CAITLIN SAKS**

**Co-Host and Co-Producer, *Polar Extremes: Antarctica***

Caitlin Saks is a co-host and producer of the digital series *Polar Extremes: Antarctica*. She is also a science editor for NOVA on PBS. As science editor, Caitlin develops story content for NOVA, including the Emmy-nominated and Kavli Award-winning film *Poisoned Water*. Additionally, she co-produced NOVA's two-hour television special on climate change, *Decoding the Weather Machine,*and the virtual reality experience *Greenland Melting*. Prior to her joining NOVA, Caitlin worked on award-winning films for FRONTLINE, including *League of Denial, The Choice 2012*and *Money, Power, and Wall Street*.

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