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Maple-Strong: Kamilla Carries Canada To Survivor's Final Four

Posted By: John Powell | May 22, 2025



Kamilla Karthigesu. Photo: CBS.

By John Powell – GlobalTV.com





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Dating back to the winner of Survivor: China, Todd Herzog, who had dual citizenship at the time, it seems that Canadians are made to play Survivor. Erika Casupanan won season 41. Maryanne Oketch won season 42. There are a host of others too who may not have won but played very strong games. You can now count Kamilla Karthigesu as one of those impressive castaways. This season's fourth place finisher would have been the Sole Survivor too according to the jury, if she had better luck making fire.

John: Kamilla, it's wonderful to be talking to you. How are you doing today?

Kamilla Karthigesu: I'm doing great! How are you?

John Powell: I'm fine, thank you. I've been waiting for this interview all season long. People have been saying you should've gotten an Emmy. Personally, I think you should get a Canadian Screen Award for your performance on Survivor. How did it feel to make it as far as you did?

Kamilla Karthigesu: Unbelievable! I still remember the moment, the feeling of being out there in Fiji and just feeling so proud of how far I'd come, proud of making it to the Final Four. I genuinely believed I'd be one of the first people sent home, that I'd never make the jury. So I was just really proud in that moment and still am to this day.



Kamilla Karthigesu. Photo: CBS.

John Powell: I don't know what it is but we Canadians seem to do really well in the Survivor game. Give us some insight as why do you think that is?

Kamilla Karthigesu: I think it's because we grow up in such diverse environments surrounded by people from all over the world with different beliefs and backgrounds. From the age of four or five, we're in school and life with people who are different from us and you just learn how to mesh, how to gel with others. I think that plays a big role. And, honestly, there's also a certain politeness. Even though I could be a little cutthroat I tried to stay polite about it.

John Powell: Do you know if there are any tariffs on your winnings? (laughs)

Kamilla Karthigesu: Oh God! Oh no, no, no, no... (laughs)

John Powell: On a more serious note – what was it like working with Kyle? You two were like brother and sister out there.

Kamilla Karthigesu: I couldn't have asked for a better partner to play Survivor with. We were just really upfront with each other, sharing all our information and being completely real. You saw it when it came down to one of us needing to go to fire-making. We had that honesty in our partnership. If one of us pitched an idea, the other didn't shut it down. We explained our viewpoints. It was a great working relationship.



Kamilla Karthigesu and Jeff Probst. Photo: CBS.

John Powell: In the game, we're different from who we are outside. There are things you'd do in the game that you'd never do in real life. You talked about how surprised you were at how easy it was to lie and convince people. Did it shock you how well you played that manipulation part of the game?

Kamilla Karthigesu: Yeah! There were times I thought, "There's no way they're actually buying this." I figured they had to be lying back. Then the move would actually go through, and I'd think, "Wow, they really fell for it. What is it with my face?"

John Powell: What do you think helped sell the biggest move of the season, convincing Joe and Eva to turn on their ally and vote out Shauhin? Were you surprised it worked? Was there more to it than we saw?

Kamilla Karthigesu: Definitely! I had planted the idea that Shauhin might have an idol a couple of days earlier. That's why David didn't want to throw any spare votes my way. He thought Shauhin would play his idol on me. So there was already a seed planted. When I later said Shauhin had shown me an idol, it seemed believable because people had already suspected he might have one.

John Powell: What surprised me most about your relationship with Kyle was that moment when you told him, "Sorry dude, I can't take you to the end." That was raw honesty and it could've gone very differently. Where did that come from?



Mitch Guerra and Kamilla Karthigesu. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

Kamilla Karthigesu: I think we were both dancing around it and then I finally just said it out loud. We're not stupid. We both knew what our best path to a million was. I'm glad Kyle is the kind of person who could handle that honesty. From all our conversations on the beach I knew he'd be real about it and not upset because he was thinking the exact same thing.

John Powell: You both kept your secret alliance the whole season. People knew you were friends but not that you were working together. Were there any moments you were scared the truth might come out?

Kamilla Karthigesu: Oh man! During the Shauhin vote there was a little montage where he talked to Joe and got upset. Then he sat next to me and said, "Yeah, I talked to Joe," and I just thought, I'm screwed. I genuinely thought he knew what was going on and was about to confront me. But nope, he just wanted to complain about Joe. He complained about Joe, Kyle, everyone. That was a scary moment.

John Powell: After the final Tribal Council, Jeff asked the jury who they would've voted for if you had made it to the end and they all said you. What did that mean to you to hear that?

Kamilla Karthigesu: It was the biggest compliment in the world! The jurors had mentioned it to me when I was eliminated. "We were rooting for you, we wanted to vote for you." I thought they were just being nice but then when Jeff asked it – he only does that for one person each season – I realized I really was that close.

John Powell: Knowing that and everything you went through, would you play again?

Kamilla Karthigesu: Oh, 100%! As soon as this is over, if I can take more time off, I'd go back in a heartbeat!

John Powell: Is there any moment you wish fans could've seen, whether personal or strategic?

Kamilla Karthigesu: I think it would've been nice to show how, post-merge, I was being heavily policed by David, Mary and Star. If people saw that they'd better understand why I didn't have the social pull because I literally couldn't be seen talking to anyone except Mitch. That context would've added more color to the season and helped explain some of the dynamics.

John Powell: You've mentioned loving Maple Story. I'm a big gamer too. What else are you into right now?

Kamilla Karthigesu: I'm replaying Valheim, there's a new biome, the Ashlands, and I'm burning through it with friends. Also, to distract myself from checking social media. I installed Cookie Clicker on my phone so I just tap away at that constantly.

John Powell: Do you think any of those games helped you on Survivor?

Kamilla Karthigesu: Maybe not those but definitely Valorant. I play with a bunch of guys, some of them my friends, have big egos. When they die, they argue like crazy. I'm used to chaos, used to being underestimated. That definitely helped on Survivor.

John Powell: One of the biggest moments for you was facing Eva in fire-making. You even encouraged her, such a typically Canadian move. What happened there? It looked like you couldn't get anything going.

Kamilla Karthigesu: I was trying but I hadn't been drinking much water. People from Lagi and Vula didn't know how to properly manage the well. They'd pour the sediment back in. I was turned off from drinking, which led to hand and leg cramping.

When it came to Eva, when she had that earlier breakdown back at camp, it was way worse than what we saw. At Tribal, seeing the fire-making supplies triggered her again. So, we took time to calm her down. During the challenge, I saw her slipping back into that headspace and I just couldn't let her suffer through that. No one deserves that.

John Powell: You've spoken about how proud you are to represent Canada. What did it mean to you to carry that torch on Survivor?

Kamilla Karthigesu: It was a heavy weight, honestly. Canadians have such a strong track record on Survivor. I'm so relieved and grateful that I made it far and represented well. Maybe it shows Americans that we actually are different in a good way.

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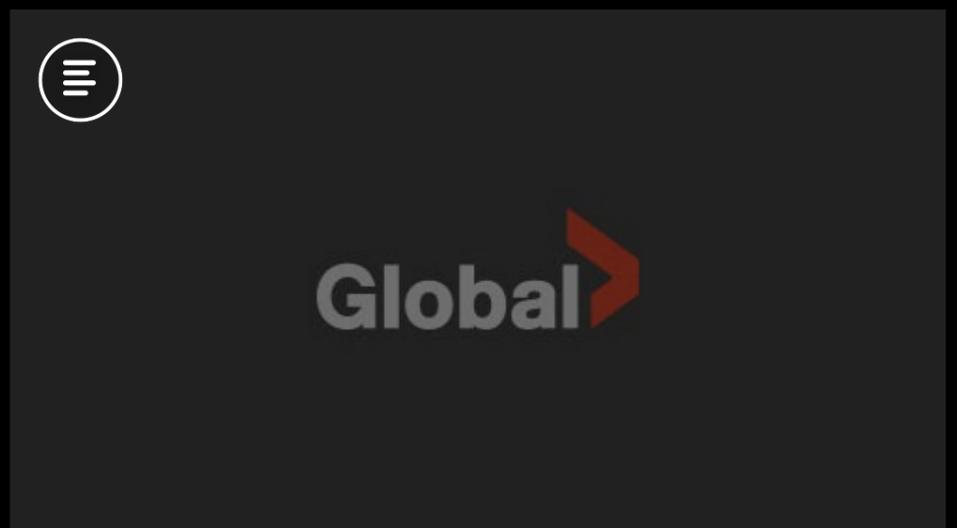
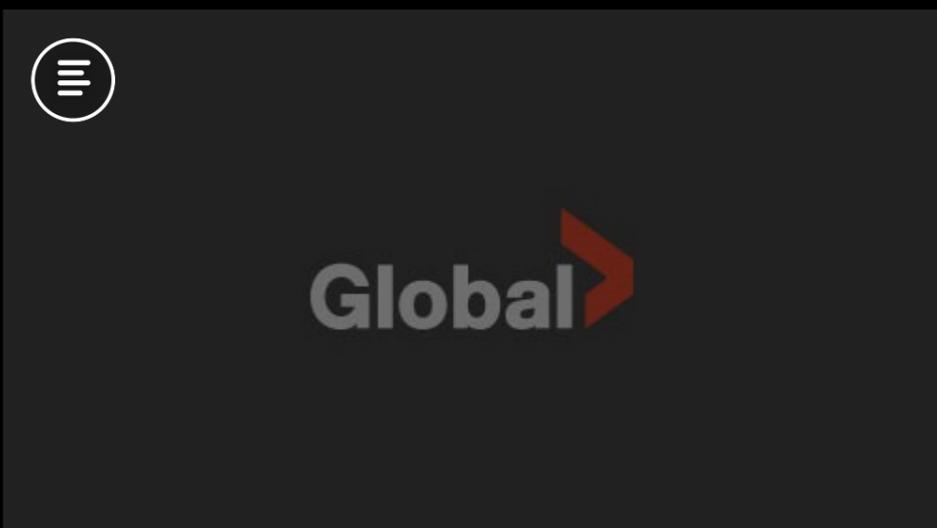
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