



THE BANFF CENTRE

MEDIA RELEASE

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July 2, 2002 -- for immediate release

First Blind Climber to Summit Everest Headlines Banff Mountain Film Festival



Erik Weihenmayer, the blind American climber who has conquered some of the world's toughest peaks, will be the headline speaker at the 2002 Banff Mountain Film Festival. Weihenmayer's climbing resume includes Alaska's Mount McKinley, the *Nose* on Yosemite's El Capitan, Alberta's 3000-foot *Polar Circus* icefall, and the summit of Mount Everest. On November 1, Weihenmayer will tell film festival audiences how he has surmounted physical and societal barriers to achieve near-impossible goals.

Erik Weihenmayer's friends and fellow climbers call him "Super Blind" — a tribute to his remarkable climbing abilities and his refusal to let blindness slow him down. Despite losing his sight at age 13 as the result of a degenerative eye disorder, Weihenmayer is an accomplished skydiver, skier and mountain climber. This fall, just weeks before his appearance in Banff, he hopes to summit Carstensz Pyramid in Irian Jaya (formerly Papua-New Guinea) to complete his climb of the Seven Summits — the highest peak on each of the world's continents.

"Erik Weihenmayer exemplifies the qualities of courage, determination and sense of adventure that the Banff festival has celebrated for the past 27 years," says Bernadette McDonald, vice-president, Mountain Culture, The Banff Centre, which hosts the Banff Mountain Film Festival. Weihenmayer's presentation will open the 2002 festival on Friday, November 1 at 8 p.m.

The 2002 Banff Mountain Film Festival takes place October 29 and November 1 to 3 in Banff, Alberta. Other featured speakers at this year's event include American alpinist Steve House and noted mountain filmmaker Gerhard Baur. At the heart of the festival are the world's best mountain films and videos, entered annually in Banff's internationally juried competition. Between 30 and 40 of the best films entered into competition are selected for screening over the festival week.

The festival also features seminars on current mountain issues, an adventure trade show, an art and craft sale and a climbing wall. A complete schedule can be found at www.banffmountainfestivals.ca. The Banff Mountain Film Festival is presented by Eagle Creek Travel Gear and National Geographic Society.

Tickets on Sale July 2

Individual event tickets for the film festival, Banff Mountain Summit (October 27-29) and Banff Mountain Book Festival (October 30–November 1) go on sale July 2. Tickets are available by phone: 1-800-413-8368 (North America) or 1-403-762-6301 or online: www.banffmountainfestivals.ca.

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The Banff Mountain Film Festival is a program of Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre. Mountain Culture programming promotes the understanding and appreciation of the world's mountain places by creating opportunities for people to share – and find inspiration in – mountain experiences, ideas and visions.

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An electronic version of this media release and downloadable photos of festival speakers are available at www.banffmountainfestivals.ca/media

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*The Banff Mountain Film Festival is presented by
Eagle Creek Travel Gear and National Geographic,
sponsored by Patagonia, Air Canada, Dunham Bootmakers, Chevy Avalanche,
and eVENT Fabrics, with assistance from Lake Louise Ski Area, and Petzl.*