



THE BANFF CENTRE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sister-in-law to Dalai Lama Champions Tibetan Nuns Project

In 1987, a group of Tibetan nuns arrived in Dharamsala, India, exhausted after an arduous trek over the Himalayas. Sick, many suffering from frostbite, the nuns had no food, no shelter, and no resources. In response to their plight, the Tibetan Nuns Project was established. On Thursday, May 8, Rinchen Khando Choegyal, director of the project and sister-in-law to the Dalai Lama, will bring the story of this humanitarian effort to Banff as part of the Mountain Speakers' Series. Her presentation begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Max Bell Auditorium at The Banff Centre.

Since the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1949, Chinese authorities have destroyed nearly 6,000 Tibetan monasteries. Buddhist monks and nuns have been imprisoned and forced to give up their religious practices. Faced with this situation, many choose to undertake the dangerous escape to India, trekking for weeks over snow-covered mountain passes. Those who succeed in their escape eventually find their way to Dharamsala, home in exile of the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan Nuns Project (TNP) provides food, shelter, and medical care to refugee nuns reaching the city. Today the TNP provides support to more than 500 nuns in five different nunneries.

Rinchen Khando Choegyal was instrumental in the founding of the TNP and has served as its director since its inception. She is a former two-term Minister of Education in the Tibetan government-in-exile and sister-in-law to the Dalai Lama. Over the years, Rinchen Choegyal has traveled throughout the world, advocating the preservation of Tibetan culture and ideals through education, improving conditions for the elderly and the poor, and the development of religious studies for women. She speaks with poignancy about the conditions these nuns endured in Tibet, including torture and imprisonment, and their strength as they establish themselves and their religious traditions in exile.

In her May 8 presentation, Rinchen Choegyal will describe the TNP's latest initiative — the construction of a new nunnery and how Canadians can help TNP complete this project. Joining Rinchen Choegyal will be Dr. Elizabeth Napper, co-director of the TNP. There is no cost to attend the presentation, but donations to the Tibetan Nuns Project are welcome. The event is sponsored by Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre.

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The Banff Centre is Canada's centre for creative excellence in the arts, leadership development, mountain culture, and conferences. Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre promotes 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.