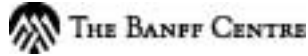


# A Peak Inside



Member Newsletter – Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre



Spring 2003

## ENDANGERED DANCE in the Himalaya

The Himalayas are a treasure trove of ancient dance traditions — many of them threatened with extinction by the homogenizing pressures of 21st century commerce and culture. These mountain dance forms are rich in spiritual and historic significance some dating back over 1,300 years.

On Thursday, May 1, join us as Asian dance specialist Joseph Houseal explores the sacred monastic dances of the Himalayas in a presentation featuring images and film gathered at Tibetan monasteries in Ladakh, India. Houseal received a 2002 Banff Mountain Grant for his ongoing work in documenting and helping to preserve these dances. His presentation begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Max Bell Auditorium.

Photo by Joseph Houseal.

Houseal is executive director of Core of Culture, an organization committed to safeguarding ancient dance and endangered movement traditions. A professional dancer, he is the former artistic director of Parnassus Dancetheatre in Kyoto, Japan. Houseal received a 2000 Emmy Award nomination for his PBS program on Kabuki dance, “Ancient Elegance”.

In the following excerpt from his journal about his trip, Houseal records his first impressions of Ladakh and the puzzled reaction of some local residents to his quest:

“*Om Mane Padme Om* — the jewel in the lotus. This written mantra — the most well-known of Buddhist words — was the first to greet us when we arrived in Leh, the capital of Ladakh. My cameraman — a British martial artist named Gessie — and I arrived at this, the highest airport in the world, nestled in the

western Himalaya, and went into the ‘capital’ of a place that didn’t exist on many maps, isn’t recognized diplomatically by anyone anymore, and has been, throughout the centuries, variously a part of Tibet, India, China, Kashmir and Pakistan, depending on who you talk to ....

Why did we go to Ladakh? It was a crack, a path, a plunge in the ravine where things can get by. What got by

continued on page 8

date & time

**Presentation:**

Thursday, May 1, 7:30 p.m.

Max Bell Auditorium

\$5.00 – Free to Mountain Culture members

**Exhibition:**

April 11 - May 2, 2003

Max Bell Building Lobby

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Renew your Mountain Culture membership at  
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# WARREN MACDONALD to Tackle *Polar Circus*



From *The Second Step*. Photo by Jeremy Smith © Part Animal Part Machine. Inset: Photo by Donald Lee.

**Warren Macdonald**, whose story was featured in last year's Grand Prize-winning film *The Second Step*, is returning to Banff this spring to do a little ice climbing. Warren will tackle *Polar Circus*, a 700-metre frozen waterfall. Considered a "showpiece of the Canadian Rockies," the climb is stunningly situated on the slopes of Cirrus Mountain in Banff National Park.

*The Second Step*, now screening on the film festival World Tour, follows Macdonald — who lost both his legs in a 1997 climbing accident — on an epic 28-day trek to reach the summit of

Federation Peak in Tasmania. Few who attended the 2002 film awards ceremony in Banff will forget Macdonald's inspirational speech as he accepted the Grand Prize with director Gary Caganoff. If you missed *The Second Step* at the 2002 festival, check out the film clip on our Web site at [www.banffmountainfestivals.ca/video](http://www.banffmountainfestivals.ca/video).

Macdonald may make a return appearance at next year's festival. Working with Canmore ice climber Will Gadd, Macdonald hopes to capture his *Polar Circus* climb on film.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS



- April 11-May 2** . . . . . Tibetan Dance Exhibit
- April 28-May 2** . . . . . MPHIA Training Course
- May 1** . . . . . Mountains Speakers' Series: Joseph Houseal
- May 8** . . . . . Mountain Speakers' Series: Tibetan Nuns Project
- May 30** . . . . . Deadline for 2003 Mountain Photo Competition
- June 20** . . . . . Deadline for 2003 Mountain Grants applications

# 2003 Banff Mountain Festivals SNEAK PREVIEW

## At the Book Festival

**Subhankar Banerjee** is a conservationist and freelance photographer specializing in wildlife, environment, and indigenous peoples. Banerjee has devoted the last two years to documenting the wildlife and geographic beauty of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to help rally opposition against proposed oil exploration and drilling. A native of Calcutta, India, Banerjee abandoned a technical career with Boeing in Seattle to photograph wild places across the U.S. but wasn't satisfied until he arrived on Alaska's pristine North Slope. "I will never be the same person," says Banerjee. "I came face to face with the wildest of wild animals and they tolerated my presence." Banerjee's book *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land* will be published this April by The Mountaineers Books.



Subhankar Banerjee author of *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Seasons of Life and Land*, published by The Mountaineers Books, will be a featured guest at this year's Banff Mountain Book Festival.

## At the Film Festival

With over fifty films to his name, Leo Dickinson is unquestionably one of the world's leading adventure filmmakers. He has won Grand Prize at the Banff Mountain Film Festival on three occasions with his films, *Dudh Kosi – Relentless River of Everest* (1978), *The Cerro Torre Enigma* (1981) and *Eiger* (1984). In 1978's *Everest Unmasked*, he filmed Reinhold Messner and Peter Habeler making the first ascent of Everest without oxygen and, in 1991, organized and filmed

the four-man team that made the first hot-air balloon flight over the world's highest mountain. This outstanding achievement was recorded in his acclaimed film, *Ballooning Over Everest*. Dickinson's films have won awards at every major mountain/adventure film festival, including Telluride (USA), Les Diablerets (Switzerland), St. Hilaire (France), La Plagne (France), Trento (Italy), Kendall (England), San Sebastian (Spain), as well as in Banff. Dickinson will be the featured guest in this year's Retro Reels program.

Passes for the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival are available online at [www.banffmountainfestivals.ca](http://www.banffmountainfestivals.ca) or by calling the Banff Centre Box Office at 1-800-413-8368 (toll-free N.A.) or 1-403-762-6301.

## easter getaway at The Banff Centre

### 40% Discount for MC Members

Special for Mountain Culture members: \$89.00 per night plus taxes (single or double occupancy) — 40% off regular room rates. Available Easter Weekend April 18 to 22, 2003.

Enjoy The Banff Centre's retreat-like setting on the slopes of Tunnel Mountain. Take advantage of superb



TransCanada  
PipeLines  
Pavilion at  
The Banff Centre.  
Photo by  
Donald Lee.

onal facilities, including a 25-metre pool, gym, indoor running track, squash courts, and exercise room; or set off for a ski or a hike, depending on the weather. To take us up on this special offer, call 1-800-884-7574 or 403-762-6308 and identify yourself as a Mountain Culture member.

# WOMEN OF SPIRIT

In 1987, a group of 66 Tibetan nuns arrived in Dharamsala, India, exhausted after an arduous trek over the Himalayas. Sick, many of them suffering from frostbite, the nuns had no food, no shelter, and no resources to begin a new life of religious freedom. In response to their plight, the Tibetan Nuns Project was established. On Thursday, May 8, join us in the Max Bell Auditorium to hear Rinchen Khando Choegyal and Dr. Elizabeth Napper, directors of the Tibetan Nuns Project, tell the compelling story of these nuns. The presentation begins at 7:30 p.m.

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. Many suffer frostbite. Some die. Others are apprehended by the Chinese or Nepalese police.

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 these refugee nuns. Then, when the women are rested and healthy, the TNP offers them education and a means of livelihood. Today the TNP provides support to more than 500 nuns in five different nunneries.

Rinchen Khando Choegyal was instrumental in founding 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 developing religious studies for women. She speaks with poignancy about the conditions these nuns endured in Tibet, including torture and imprisonment, and

date & time

## WOMEN OF SPIRIT – Tibetan Nuns Project

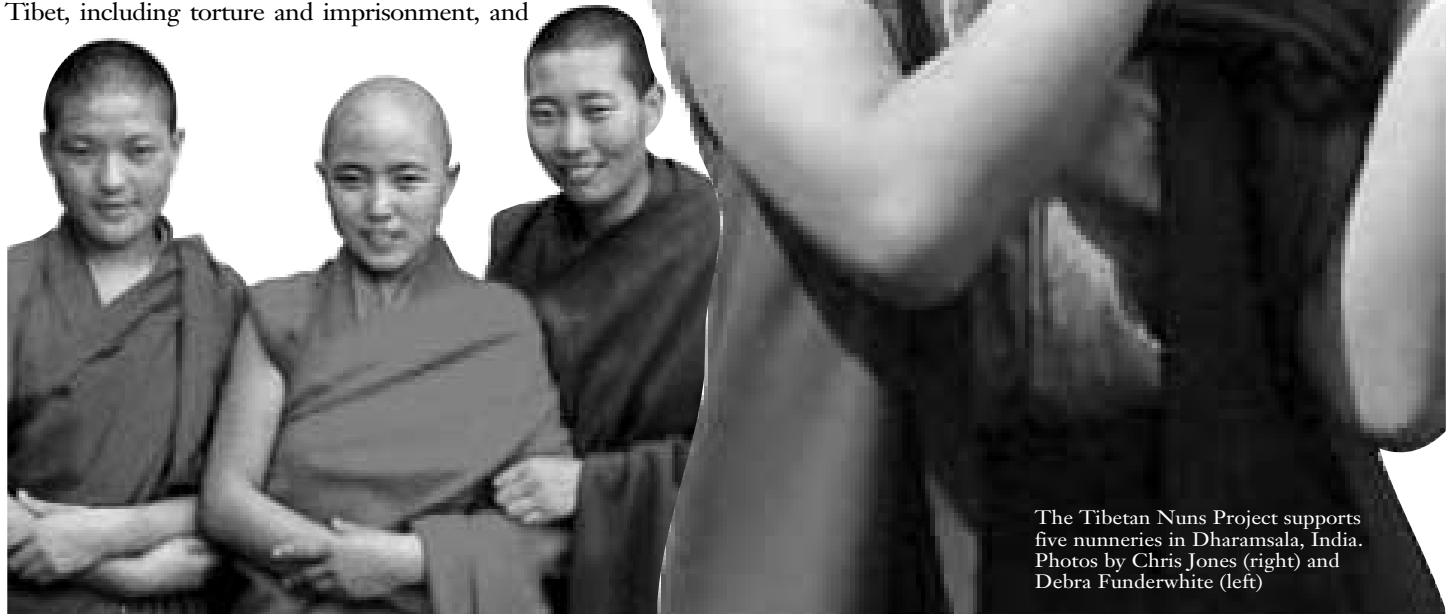
Thursday, May 8, 7:30 p.m.

Max Bell Auditorium

Free. Donations to the Tibetan Nuns Project welcome and encouraged.

about their strength as they seek to establish themselves and their religious traditions in exile. Dr. Elizabeth Napper, co-director of the TNP, has worked with the project in Dharamsala since 1991.

The May 8 presentation will focus on the TNP's latest initiative — the construction of a new Shugsep Nunnery. Currently, the nunnery houses more than sixty nuns in two small houses. With the influx of more nuns each year, the already deteriorating houses have become too dilapidated to repair. After a long search, a suitable plot of land has been purchased for construction of a new nunnery that will eventually house and educate over one hundred nuns. Construction will commence this spring.



The Tibetan Nuns Project supports five nunneries in Dharamsala, India. Photos by Chris Jones (right) and Debra Funderwhite (left)

# Mountain Forum GROWS

The North American Mountain Forum continues to grow as Mountain Culture's Amy Krause encourages membership and dialogue about mountain issues. Since the North American node moved to Banff, discussion list participants have jumped by 80% to close to 800 people.

As North American project manager, Krause is responsible for encouraging membership and participation, developing a library of mountain-specific resources, updating an international calendar of mountain events, and moderating the North American electronic discussion list. Topics covered during recent discussions include: managing quantity, type, and rate of growth within mountain communities; minimizing air, water, and soil pollution; reducing resource consumption and waste; and maintaining a sustainable tourism-based economy.

Using the Forum, residents in Rockies ski villages have shared wildlife-savvy recycling tips with planners in Appalachian towns, and transportation coordinators in Banff have debated regional transit options with their counterparts in Telluride, Colorado.

If you would like to get involved in Mountain Forum, there are a number of ways you can participate:

- surf the Web site, check out free services like the calendar of events and online library

- join a discussion list: connect with people across political, cultural, and geographic borders
- or become a member.

You can access all these services at [www.mtnforum.org](http://www.mtnforum.org). Membership in the Forum is free and open to anyone with an interest in mountain issues.

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY

1.800.298.1229

Thanks to all the MC members who have already renewed their membership. Make sure you'll continue to receive *A Peak Inside* and be able to take advantage of MC member events and discounts. Call 1.403.762.6458 or 1.800.298.1229 to renew.

To renew online, go to [www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture](http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture), click on the left-hand Membership link, and choose Renew Your Membership.



**Banff Mountain Photography Competition**

Send us your best shots!  
The 2003 Banff Mountain Photography Competition  
deadline is May 30. Entry form and details at  
[www.banffmountainfestivals.ca](http://www.banffmountainfestivals.ca)

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Arat with Catchpole © Dave Edwards Best Photo - Mountain Culture, 2002 Banff Mountain Photography Competition.

# The Story Behind *VERTICAL FRONTIER*



From *Vertical Frontier*. Royal Robbins relaxes on a Yosemite climb.

“**Camp 4 is a place** where great adventures start, where people come to test themselves.” Kristi Denton-Cohen, the director/producer of *Vertical Frontier*, is describing the legendary base camp for generations of climbers in Yosemite National Park. “In this dusty campground, I witnessed a communal passion for a sport that is really still being invented today. New philosophies and ways of protecting the rock, new techniques and new equipment from climbers of many nationalities, young and old, have been born and are tested there every day. Once I met the climbers, I knew I had found a special story that needed to be told.”

*Vertical Frontier* took home the Best Film on Climbing Award at the 2002 Banff Mountain Film Festival and is now screening on the film festival World Tour. It tells the saga of the free-spirited climbers who were inspired by the legendary big walls of Yosemite — from John Muir in the 1860s to the super-athletes of today. This comprehensive history of Yosemite climbing includes footage from classics such as *El Capitan* and interviews with dozens of Yosemite personalities such as John Long, Jim Bridwell, Allen Steck, Lynn Hill, Peter Croft, Royal Robbins, Ron Kauk, Yvon Chouinard, and Dean Potter. It also describes how several generations of climbers joined forces with the American Alpine Club and the Sierra Club to save Camp 4 from development and have it placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A recreational mountaineer and avid hiker, skier, and bicyclist as well as a documentary filmmaker, Denton-Cohen empathized with the climbers trying to save Camp 4 from the moment she heard their story. She first spent the night there in 1998 and discovered the spirit of community that has defined this climbing mecca for more than half a century. “We quickly realized that most people could not really understand the importance of saving a dusty, walk-in campground in Yosemite, inhabited by an often scruffy-looking group, without understanding who these people are

and why they explore the ragged peaks and granite walls of Yosemite.”

It took Denton-Cohen four long years to complete the film, sinking many of her personal and professional resources into the project. During that time, development plans for Camp 4 were shelved. On February 21, 2003, Camp 4 was officially listed with the National Register of Historic Places. Denton-Cohen plans to donate all profits from *Vertical Frontier* to non-profit mountaineering and mountain environment causes. You can contribute to this effort by purchasing a copy of *Vertical Frontier* at [www.pelotonproductions.com](http://www.pelotonproductions.com).

## Sustainable Mountain Communities

**Representatives from mountain communities** across North America and around the world will meet in Banff this summer for the third Mountain Communities Conference. Sustainable Mountain Communities, June 14-18, will focus on environmental sustainability in mountain areas impacted by tourism and development growth.

### Conference topics will include:

- Managing quantity, type, and rate of growth within legislated or naturally imposed boundaries
- Minimizing air, water, and soil pollution
- Reducing resource consumption and waste
- Maintaining a sustainable tourism-based economy
- Developing and maintaining sustainable transportation for people and goods
- Providing sustainable utilities and infrastructure

Confirmed speakers at the conference include: Laurence Moss (USA) on amenity migration, Ralf Buckley (Australia) on sustainability issues in worldwide tourism, Dianne Draper (Canada) on water management in tourism areas, Romain Molitor (Austria) on the Alps mobility project for car-free tourism, Timothy Duane (USA) on sustainability lessons from the Sierras, and many others.

Go to [www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture](http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture) and click on Mountain Communities Conferences for more information and for online registration. Sustainable Mountain Communities is organized by Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre and sponsored by the Town of Banff and Parks Canada.

# MOUNTAINS AS WATER TOWERS SUMMIT

**Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre** will turn a spotlight on the worldwide importance of mountain watersheds at a conference to be held this fall. Banff Mountain Summit 2003: Mountains as Water Towers will draw scientists, researchers, writers, government officials, and environmental agency representatives from across North America and around the world to The Banff Centre from November 23-26.

One-half of the world's people drink water that originates in mountain areas. As downstream demand increases, the potential for conflict over the ownership and use of that water increases. As global climate changes and airborne pollution increases, the quantity and quality of water available downstream becomes compromised. Scientists such as Dr. David Schindler of the

University of Alberta predict that the prairies could face serious water shortages as Rocky Mountain glaciers — which feed the headwaters of Western Canadian rivers — melt over the next half century.

Banff Mountain Summit 2003: Mountains as Water Towers will focus on topics such as mountain water ecosystems, water ownership, effects of climate change, and mountain watershed management. Speakers will include Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians and passionate defender of water rights; Margaret Catley-Carlson, chair of the Global Water Partnership; Marq de Villiers, whose book *Water* won the Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction in 1999; and Dr. David Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology at the University of Alberta. This unique event will include daytime conference sessions and evening celebratory events aimed at the general public.

Banff Mountain Summit 2003: Mountains as Water Towers is part of the United Nations International Year of Fresh Water and Canada's Wonder of Water celebrations. The Summit is sponsored by Parks Canada, National Geographic, the International Research Development Centre, and the Government of Canada and is offered in cooperation with Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin and Alberta Ecotrust. For more information on how to register for the Mountains as Water Towers Summit, or to purchase tickets for evening events, visit our Web site and click on the Summit link.

Photo ©Francois Portmann. fotoportmann.com

In conjunction with the Summit, National Geographic and Mountain Culture will publish *Whose Water Is It: The Unquenchable Thirst of a Water Hungry World*, edited by Bernadette McDonald, vice president, Mountain Culture and Douglas Jehl, a national correspondent for the New York Times. The book will feature provocative essays examining threats to the world's water, from the vast amount of fresh water stored in the world's mountains to the downstream regions that are home to its most intensive use. *Whose Water Is It?* will be published in October 2003.



## Mountain Parks HERITAGE INTERPRETERS' COURSE

April 28-May 2, 2003

A five-day course for tour leaders, guides, professional interpreters interested in achieving Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA) certification, or anyone who wants to improve their skills and knowledge as interpreters of Banff National Park's heritage. This course brings together all the resources you need in one info-packed week.

**Registration Deadline: April 25, limited space — reserve now.**

**For more details check: [www.banffcentre/mountainculture](http://www.banffcentre/mountainculture). To register or for more information, call 762-6369.**



Cham dances at Lamayuru Monastery.  
Photos by Joseph Houseal.

in Ladakh was the sacred monastic dancing of Tibetan Buddhism, called Cham. The Chinese cultural devastation of Tibet included a systematic eradication of the tantric mystical practices and among those practices, the Cham – the Dance – is esteemed as the apotheosis of mystical attainment. As the Tibetan diaspora bled out, and people fled, and monks and monasteries were displaced into India, Nepal, the United States, and Europe, the dance went with it. Ancient Dance was on the run. Dance was in diaspora.

Except in Ladakh. Being politically a part of India, and culturally and historically an extension of Tibet, where Tibetan Buddhist practices have been the foundation of culture for more than a thousand years, Ladakh became, by default, a sanctuary for Cham. Today Cham is still performed in its monasteries in an unbroken and uncompromised tradition. Ladakh is a slightly coarser, wilder microcosm of the lost dream of Tibet. In Ladakh, these ancient dances haven't been stopped, pushed out or modified to become merely a tourist attraction. Ladakh, and the Cham practiced there, was still wild and free. So I thought.

When we arrived at the house where we were staying, a Muslim innkeeper across the road ran out to us, waving his hands, "You are the ones here for the dancing? Let me tell you something. Three things have changed the dances: taxis, umbrellas and machine guns."



[We stayed in a] walled home belonging to an old Buddhist nun and her younger sister who was in her mid-fifties. They lived together and they were entirely self-sufficient within the walls of their garden, except for tea and milk and the occasional package of biscuits. They grew cabbage and barley and potatoes and vegetables, composted easily using the clever and hygienic Ladakhi toilet and planted flowers in between the cabbages so it would be pretty. The Karakoram mountains commanded the sky....

Our stay with these women, before and after our documentation work at Lamayuru, was indeed paradisiacal. We thought they were beautiful and wise and happy. They thought we were at least half-mad. The nun could not comprehend the notion of a 'professional dancer' — which I am — and asked for a demonstration of western dancing. I performed some ballet and modern dance moves. Gessie, sitting like a Ninja under the shade of a tree, was egging the whole thing on. The nun started laughing and smiling and called out her sister into the garden. She thought that my dancing, and a grown man dancing around "for no reason" was about the most absurd thing she'd ever seen.

Nevertheless, she slowly rose and performed a few pulsing steps of Cham from memory. The nuns don't perform it, but still it was in her bones. "Something like that," she said. After a moment, I modestly and reverently tried to emulate the movements she had shown ... and she started laughing again. Laughing and laughing, she told her sister she could not fathom why we were so interested in the Cham, and how puzzling she thought it was that I would want to learn it, and just how ridiculous my dancing was anyway.

She was very pleased to have us as company, however, and over the next few days, I would always indulge Amo whenever she asked me to "do Cham" for her in the garden. She would laugh and laugh."

**Tickets for Joseph Houseal's presentation** on May 1 are \$5 at the door, free to Mountain Culture members. His exhibition on Tibetan Dance is featured in the lobby of the Max Bell Auditorium from April 11 to May 2.

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