

**BANFF** CENTRE  
MOUNTAIN  
FILM AND BOOK  
FESTIVAL

**2017 SUMMIT OF EXCELLENCE AWARD**

**Don Serl**



The Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival is proud to announce Don Serl as the 2017 recipient of the Summit of Excellence Award, which recognizes an individual who has made a significant contribution to mountain life in Canada. Regarded as one of Canada's most accomplished and prolific mountaineers, Serl has about 200 first ascents to his name.

*"With the Summit of Excellence Award now being presented to deserving recipients outside of the Canadian Rockies, Don Serl was an obvious and easy choice,"* said Nancy Hansen, Summit of Excellence selection committee member. *"Over several decades, Don has made significant contributions to Canadian mountain climbing and culture and is humble about his achievements, preferring to discuss*

*new ideas and what others have done. He is a wealth of information about climbing on the West Coast and enjoys sharing his knowledge.”*

Born in Victoria and raised in Kamloops, Serl discovered a love for the mountains at the age of 25. while working as a chemist in Vancouver.

In 1974, Serl trained in the Federation of Mountain Clubs of British Columbia (FMCBC) basic mountaineering course where he said his “energies and imagination were unleashed” and by 1975 he completed his initial first ascent on the north face of Mt Cheam in British Columbia. Since then “he has reigned as the preeminent Coast climber” according to author and climbing peer Chic Scott. Heavily influenced by Canadian climber Dick Culbert, Serl’s horizons opened after an Alpine Club of Canada trip into the multi-summitted Waddington Range, followed by numerous expeditionary trips into remote corners of the Coast Mountains in British Columbia.

From the late 1970s to mid 1980s, Serl was lured to the big peaks of Nepal, Peru, Alaska, and the Yukon. After the birth of his children in the late 1980s, he decided to focus his attentions on the Coast Mountains and his “spiritual home” in the Waddington Range.

During this time, Serl completed first ascents of Mt Tiedemann south face, Mt Hickson north face, Razorback Mountain north face, Mount Queen Bess southeast buttress, Bute Mountain west face, and Monarch Mountain north ridge, as well as participating in the first traverse of the Waddington Range. He developed a love for waterfall ice climbing and began establishing new routes, a discipline he continued for over 30 years. Serl started documenting his exploits and co-authored two guidebooks: *The Waddington Guide* (2003) and *West Coast Ice* (1993, 2005), as well as publishing a plethora of articles in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and *American Alpine Journal*.

*“I am honoured to be chosen as the recipient of this year’s Summit of Excellence Award,” said Don Serl. “Over nearly four decades of chasing summits, I experienced many beautiful, challenging, and alluring ridges, faces, and couloirs, mostly in remote and obscure places. These wonderful features, and the strong, competent partners with whom I adventured, also share the honour, as do my wife and family, without whose tolerance little of this would have happened.”*

Presented by the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival since 1987, the annual Summit of Excellence Award is presented in memory of Calgary climber Bill March, an internationally respected mountaineer, author, and educator, who led Canada’s first successful Everest climb in 1982. Recent award recipients include David P. Jones (2016), Pierre Lemire (2015), Urs Kallen (2014), Ben Gadd (2013), Geoff Powter (2012), and Philippe Delesalle (2011).