

BANFF CENTRE

# MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL

WORLD TOUR  
MAGAZINE  
2020/21

Climbing for  
Change with  
Kai Lightner

Preparing to  
Meet Lhotse



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for Two to  
St. John's, NL

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MOUNTAIN  
FILM FESTIVAL  
WORLD TOUR





# What adventure are you seeking?

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As the inspiration for and birthplace of the Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival, it's no surprise to learn that epic experiences can be found around every corner in Banff and Lake Louise.

There's an abundance of inspiring moments to be enjoyed at your own pace, whether you're navigating the peaks on Norquay's Via Ferrata or learning local secrets on a guided walking tour. In any season, you'll be inspired by Canada's first national park.

A seemingly endless array of hiking trails invite you to explore against a gorgeous backdrop of snow-tipped mountains. A range of ability levels means that almost everyone can hike through the alpine wilderness, or by the shores of an aquamarine lake. Take your hike to the next level with a local guide to score insights into local history, wildlife and the best photo ops in the park.

During winter, Banff National Park is blanketed by fluffy snow, creating a picture-perfect landscape and

an incredible ski and snowboard destination. Lake Louise, Banff Sunshine, and Mt Norquay ski resorts combine to offer a vast skiable terrain, but you don't need to be a skier to play in the snow. Tubing, ice skating and snowshoeing are just a few of the family-friendly activities available.

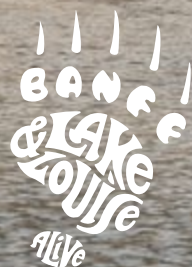
After a day of adventure, the lively communities of Banff and Lake Louise wait to greet you. A burgeoning foodie scene means you're spoiled for choice when it comes to dining and drinking, and if you're eager to dive into local culture, there are galleries, museums and historical landmarks to explore.

Banff National Park is a place you can come to be truly alive, to feel your pulse race, to be inspired and uplifted.

**Seek your adventure in Banff National Park – no matter what you find, it will be a beautiful journey.**



To get inspired for your next adventure in Banff and Lake Louise visit [banfflakelouise.com](http://banfflakelouise.com)



# Banff Centre is a world apart from walls.

## Kate Harris

Award-winning  
writer, wanderer,  
and author of  
*Lands of Lost  
Borders*

In 2012, Kate Harris applied to the Mountain and Wilderness Writing residency at Banff Centre. Without a CV or track record as a writer, Kate poured herself into a single piece of sample writing and was accepted. She credits Banff Centre for not only seeing her potential as a writer but for providing the mentorship and support that helped her turn a rough draft into what eventually became the winner of the Adventure Travel Award in the 2018 Banff Mountain Book Competition, the 2019 RBC Taylor Prize, and the 2019 Rakuten Kobo Emerging Writer Prize for Nonfiction.

*"The calling of an artist  
is to be an explorer."*

PHOTO BY KARI MEDIG.

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# Welcome. Bienvenue. Dâ âûch yahine. Oki. Gwanistli naniya.

## Acknowledging our Land

### **UMBA WATHTECH, GOOD DAY MY RELATIVES.**

My name is “Tatunga Wagichi” which translates into English as “Dancing Buffalo” as part of the Stoney Nakoda Nation. I am a dancer, singer, artist, father, youth leader, and faculty at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity’s Indigenous Leadership programs.

I wanted to take this opportunity to acknowledge the land on which Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, home of the Festival, is situated. In my language of the Stoney Nakoda we say, “Lyarhe Tatunga Estima Nuga”, “The Head Sleeping Buffalo Mountain”. It is the responsibility of the head and lead bull and cow buffalo to guide the herd to the location of good health where the herd can rest, feast and regain strength to continue forward.

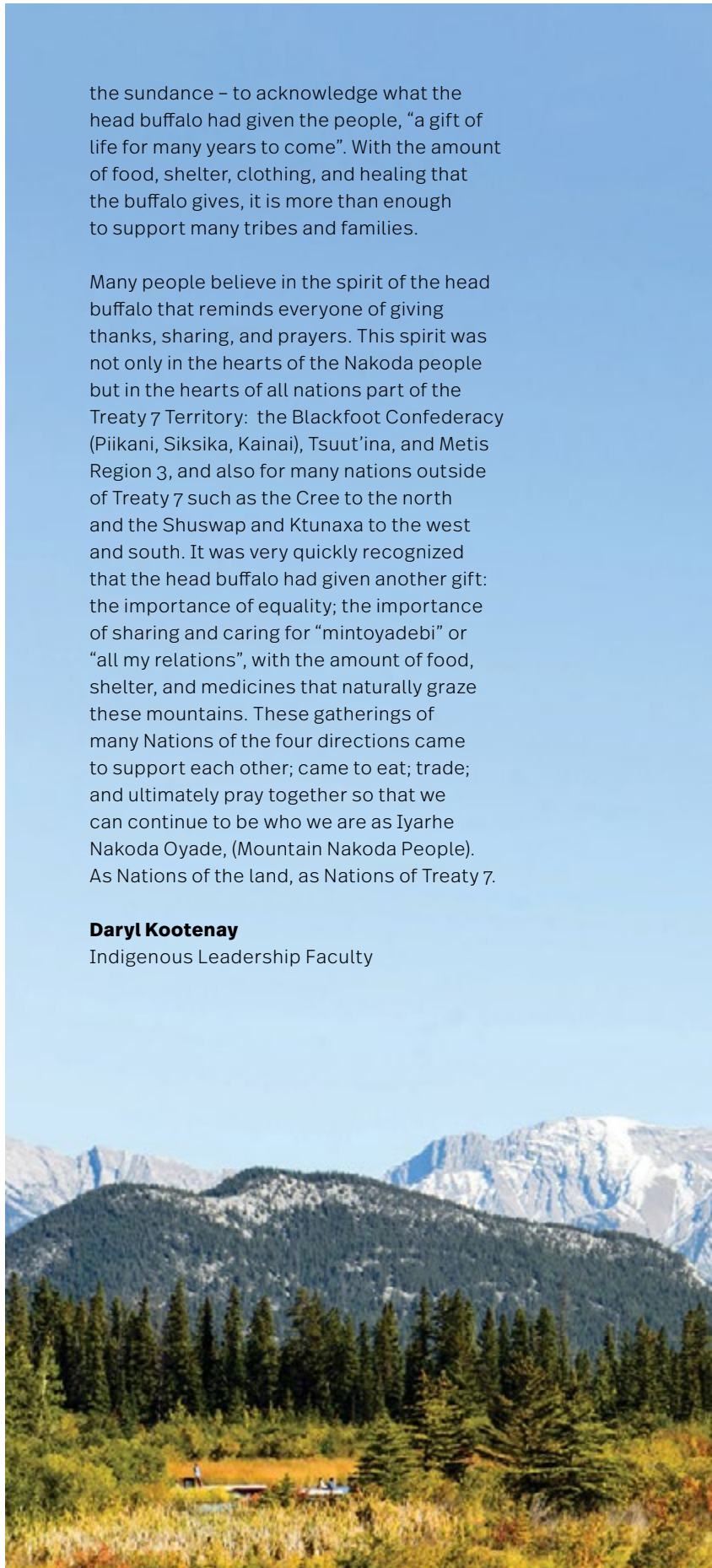
For the Nakoda people, the buffalo is a significant part of our livelihoods. The buffalo presents 166 processes which the Nakoda can utilize for mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health and well-being. Apart from creation stories and oral traditions, I once heard a story of how it was a buffalo that guided the Nakoda to the mountains and specifically to where the town of Banff is located. And when the head buffalo stopped and laid down, this gave us the signal that this is where we will live with abundance. To this day, the head buffalo still remains where he bedded down as “Sleeping Buffalo Mountain”. Ever since, the Nakoda have conducted many ceremonies – specifically

the sundance – to acknowledge what the head buffalo had given the people, “a gift of life for many years to come”. With the amount of food, shelter, clothing, and healing that the buffalo gives, it is more than enough to support many tribes and families.

Many people believe in the spirit of the head buffalo that reminds everyone of giving thanks, sharing, and prayers. This spirit was not only in the hearts of the Nakoda people but in the hearts of all nations part of the Treaty 7 Territory: the Blackfoot Confederacy (Piikani, Siksika, Kainai), Tsuut’ina, and Metis Region 3, and also for many nations outside of Treaty 7 such as the Cree to the north and the Shuswap and Ktunaxa to the west and south. It was very quickly recognized that the head buffalo had given another gift: the importance of equality; the importance of sharing and caring for “mintoyadebi” or “all my relations”, with the amount of food, shelter, and medicines that naturally graze these mountains. These gatherings of many Nations of the four directions came to support each other; came to eat; trade; and ultimately pray together so that we can continue to be who we are as Iyarhe Nakoda Oyade, (Mountain Nakoda People). As Nations of the land, as Nations of Treaty 7.

### **Daryl Kootenay**

Indigenous Leadership Faculty





**DEAR BANFF FANS,**

Since the world changed at the beginning of 2020, we've entered into a time of reflection and stillness here on the side of Sacred Guardian Buffalo Mountain on Treaty 7 Territory in Banff, Alberta, Canada. Thanks for joining us this year from wherever you are in the world, and whether you are online or in person, we're so glad you're here.

We've been facing the same challenges that you have – uncertainty, fear, confusion. We have worked hard to bring the Festival and films to you this year; perhaps harder than we have ever worked. Shifting perspectives, asking questions, exploring new ways of film delivery. But as always, we remain committed to sharing the best mountain culture stories with the world however we can. Our support of filmmakers, authors, and artists is unwavering and more important than ever before in this time of a global pandemic. Another thing that hasn't changed is the quality of films produced and in turn, the inspiration that these stories provide. We received an astounding 377 films in competition this year, many more than we expected in this time of crisis. All this is reassurance that the outdoor community is still lively and creative, even if caught in the great indoors, under lockdown.

The films you're about to watch take us on a much needed escape. They remind us of the place that mountains and adventure hold in informing who we are, in nurturing our souls. We are reminded about kindness toward others, shared values, and the importance of looking at things from multiple viewpoints. All of these values will bring us through this difficult time. We hope you enjoy these films and are able to share them with family and close friends. We hope you have a good laugh or shed a tear. We hope these films motivate you to live life to the fullest when we are allowed to roam the wonderful landscape that surrounds us once again. Stay safe, stay strong, and most importantly stay inspired.



**Joanna Croston**  
Festival Director





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WORLD TOUR  
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COVER PHOTO:  
JIM MORRISON AND  
HILAREE NELSON,  
SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS.  
PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN  
PONDELLA.

IMAGES (TOP TO BOTTOM):  
KAI LIGHTNER BOULDERING  
IN SOUTH AFRICA.  
PHOTO BY SHANE MESSER.

HILAREE NELSON.  
PHOTO BY NICK KALISZ.

FROM SHADOWS OF KURDISTAN.  
PHOTO BY MURAT YAZAR.

FROM BLUE SKY KINGDOM.  
PHOTO BY BRUCE KIRBY.



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#epicadventuresindoors



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symbol, it means we've  
got more in store for you  
with videos and articles  
available online.

You can also explore  
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## SUPPORTERS

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**Media** Erin Brandt-Filliter, Lynda Vang

We wish to express our gratitude to the entire Banff Centre team without whose support we could not produce the Festival or Tour, to Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival founder John Amatt, and to former director Bernadette McDonald, whose visionary leadership elevated the Festival to the world stage.

### BANFF CENTRE MOUNTAIN FILM AND BOOK FESTIVAL

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# JURY WRANGLING

BY JAMIE CARPENTER



**IT'S 8:45 A.M. AND I'M PACING** outside the sound-proof door of the viewing studio, "Where the hell is Joachim?" I think to myself as the four other members of the international film jury sit patiently inside awaiting the delayed start to the day's work. Finally my missing jury member arrives, steam rising from his lightweight shell jacket. "I'm sorry Jamie, I just couldn't pass up a sunrise run on Sleeping Buffalo Mountain." With a wink and a smile the cheerful German joins the others and we roll the first of the morning's nine scheduled films.

Every year the Banff Centre Mountain Film Competition receives between 350 and 400 film submissions from around the world. From these entries, a dedicated team of pre-screeners spends hundreds of hours narrowing the selection down to the 70 to 80 finalists that will be featured at the Festival and are subsequently considered for inclusion in the World Tour. It's the role of the international jury to view all film finalists, choose winners, and present the awards on the festival's final night. It's my role as Jury Wrangler to help them get the job done – on time.

Along with his role as Jury Coordinator, Jamie Carpenter is a veteran Road Warrior with the Festival's North American Tour. 2020 marks the first year that our international jury reviewed film finalists remotely from their respective homes, with discussions and deliberations as a team to select the award-winners.

Our jury is comprised of filmmakers, professional mountain athletes, broadcast industry specialists, and festival directors from around the world – selected for their deep knowledge of the mountain and adventure film genre. My job as a wrangler begins at a welcome reception and orientation with the jury on the opening weekend of the Festival. Over the following five days I continue to shepherd my charges to and from the viewing studio on a schedule that is measured in minutes. Given the gripping, thought-provoking and sometimes heart-wrenching content, the experi-

ence can be equal parts exhilarating and exhausting. Five days is not a lot of time to view over 70 films, many of which are feature-length. Regardless, the jury has never failed to meet the challenge.

**By day five, film viewing is finally complete but the jury's job is only half finished as the hard work of selecting winners begins.**

Often, the Grand Prize is an early and unanimous pick, but there are inevitably passionate deliberations with some of the film category awards.

On the last day of the Festival it's time for one final round up as I lead the jury through rehearsals for the "Best of the Festival" awards presentation. After presenting the awards with grace and good humour, the jury is finally cut loose and it's time for this wrangler to ride off into the sunset (or at least to the annual wrap party). ▲

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

BY KENNA OZBICK  
& LAUREN SCHMIDT

We caught up with some stars of Banff Centre Mountain Film Festivals past to see what they've been up to in the last year...

## BRENDAN LEONARD | HOW TO RUN 100 MILES

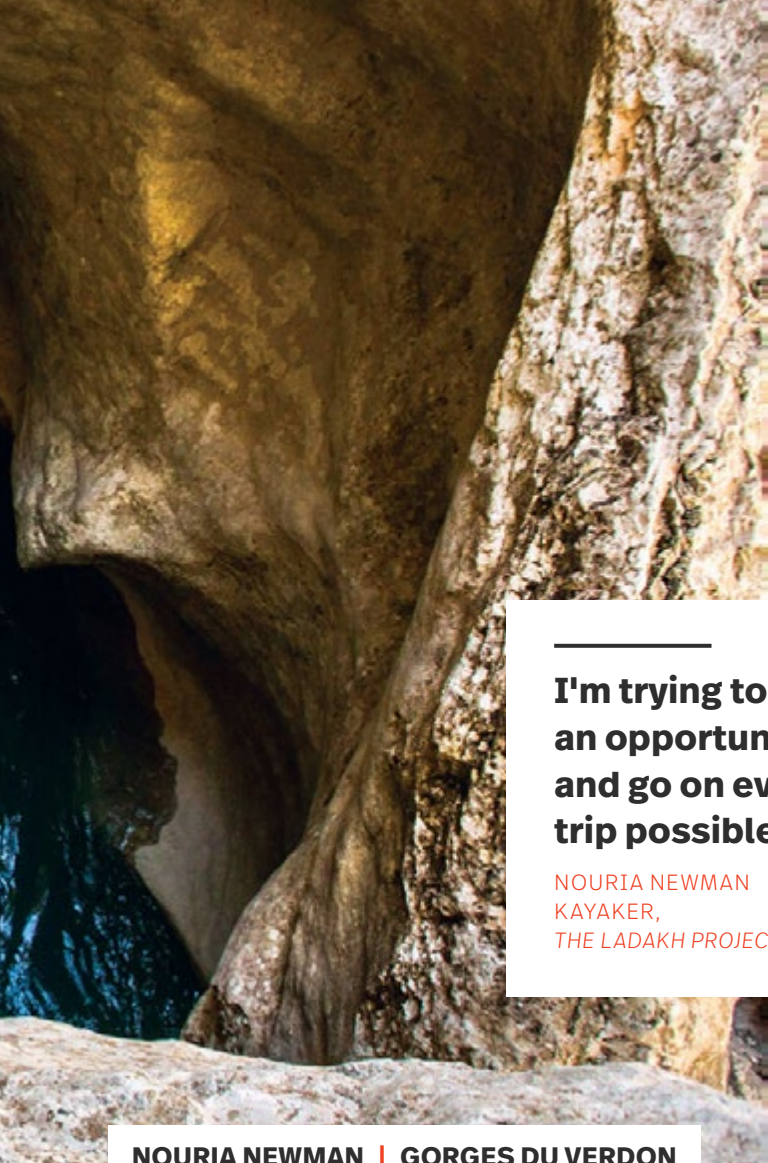


To help his creativity flow, *How to Run 100 Miles* filmmaker Brendan Leonard says he keeps on running. Following his film, Leonard ran two 100-mile races, one 100-kilometer race, and ran 26.2 miles 52 times just for the heck of it in 2019. With the pandemic cancelling races throughout the world, Leonard may have slowed a little with the 100 milers, but the trails always seem to be calling to help him clear his mind and create fun and humorous content for his website [semi-rad.com](http://semi-rad.com). His newest book *Bears Don't Care About Your Problems* is a collection of 80 of his best stories and illustrations from his blog, including an essay in which he discusses how much bears think about all the problems we humans have in our daily lives. (Spoiler alert: they don't think about them at all). With [semi-rad.com](http://semi-rad.com) turning 10 this year, Leonard keeps running and producing content that connects with everyone who has ever put on running shoes or loves a great cartoon about life's funny challenges.

[semi-rad.com](http://semi-rad.com) | [@semi\\_rad](https://www.instagram.com/semi_rad)

—Kenna





**I'm trying to be an opportunist, and go on every trip possible.**

NOURIA NEWMAN  
KAYAKER,  
THE LADAKH PROJECT

**NOURIA NEWMAN | GORGES DU VERDON**

With big plans in store for 2020 (which involved running a +30-metre waterfall and doing another expedition in the Himalayas), kayaker Nouria Newman of *The Ladakh Project* had to pivot when COVID-19 ground the world to a halt. Rather than mope about her foiled plans, Newman immediately started scoping out local lines and every runnable river in the area near her father's home in the French Alps where she was living. After days of bushwhacking and waiting for favourable conditions, she said she eventually ended up "running the hardest rapid of my career, pretty much in my dad's garden!" Once strict lockdown conditions were eased, Newman shot a short piece of her paddling the Verdon River and spent three weeks exploring the amazing rivers in Norway with friends. Though she does not know what the future holds, she is "trying to be an opportunist, and go on every trip possible". *The Ladakh Project* filmmaker Corrina Halloran has also been keeping busy, and has just started her Masters in Creative Writing. She is hoping that the future brings more adventures with amazing athletes (hint hint Nouria)!

—Lauren



**MYRTLE SIMPSON**

Myrtle Simpson may have just celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in July but she has no intention of slowing down her adventures. *Myrtle Simpson: A Life on Ice* premiered at the 2019 Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival and then hit the road with the World Tour where audiences fell for the epic tales of her life. Simpson and her family embarked on their own tour traveling to the US, Canada, Germany and Scotland to show the film, and were able to join as a guest of the Banff World Tour during the National Geographic showing in Washington D.C. Unsurprisingly, most of the audience of 400 wanted a "selfie" with Simpson in the lobby of the National Geographic theatre! Since then she has hiked, biked, canoed, and swam with her four kids and several of her grandchildren on her birthday – saying she "closed out the day with a giant bonfire and barbecue." She continues to explore and inspire others to get out on their own adventures.

—Kenna

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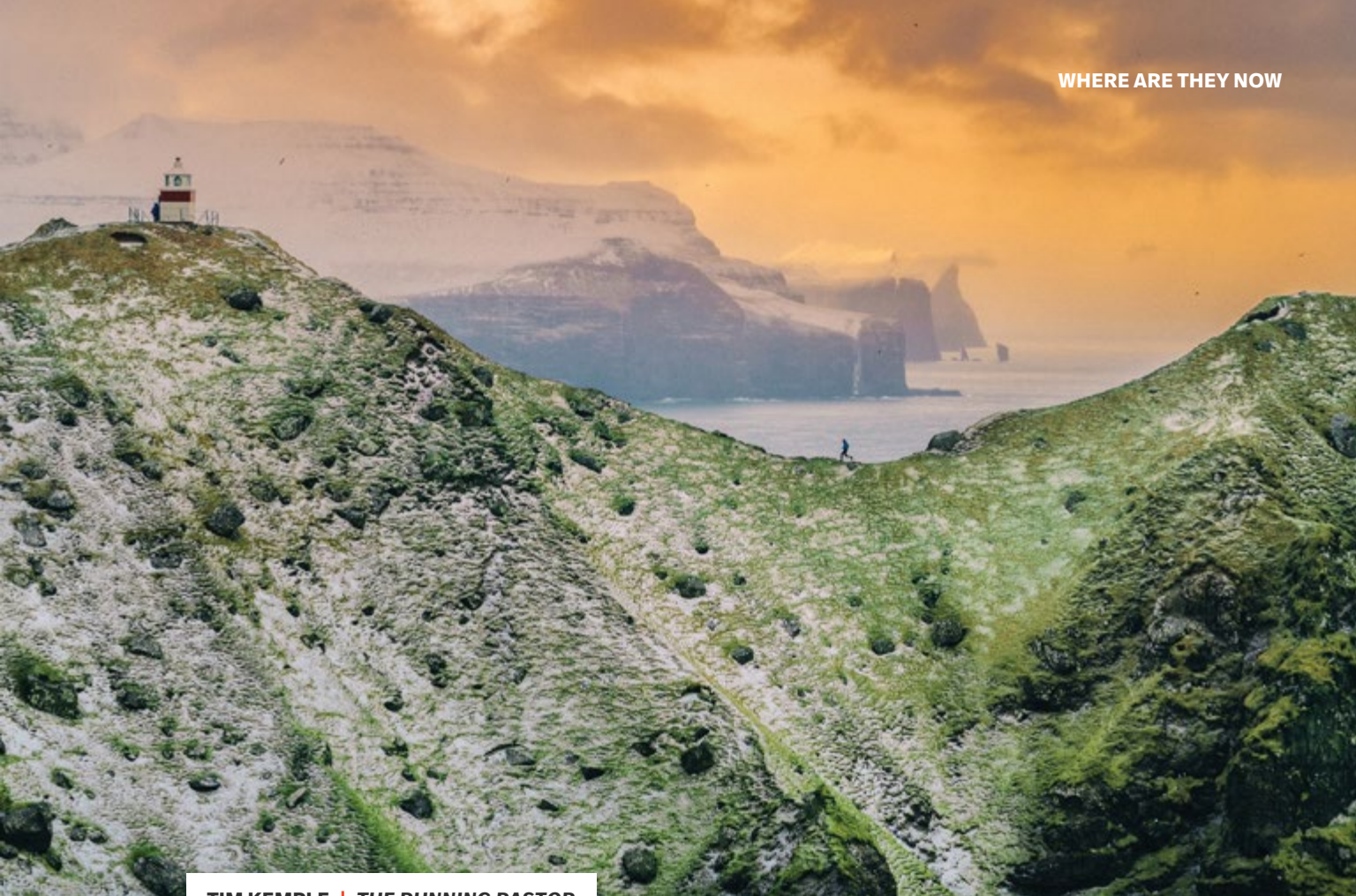


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TIM KEMPLE | *THE RUNNING PASTOR*

When the pandemic heightened mid-March 2020, Camp4 Collective Director, Tim Kemple, (whose films *Surfer Dan* and *The Running Pastor* were both included in last year's Banff World Tour) had to learn how to adjust to a new way of life. "Like everyone in our industry there's a bit of that 'freelancers' itch' where you are worried if the phone is ever going to ring again," he mused. However, Kemple soon learned to enjoy the forced break, and focused his time on his family, climbing, and attending to projects that he had been putting off. "It has been fun, a bit like groundhog day sometimes, but in the end probably needed for long-term sustainability. When things eventually get back to the 'new normal' I think you'll see us take longer breaks over the course of the year to re-center like we've been forced to do in 2020." Now that things are back to 'normal' in some sense around the Camp4 studio, Kemple is back at work! His latest project is a series of four films about the modern-day Ainu population on the island of Hokkaido, Japan.

—Lauren

### DID YOU KNOW?



### ROTHERA RESEARCH STATION, ANTARCTICA

The Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival World Tour visits all 7 continents.

#### **Yes, Antarctica included!**

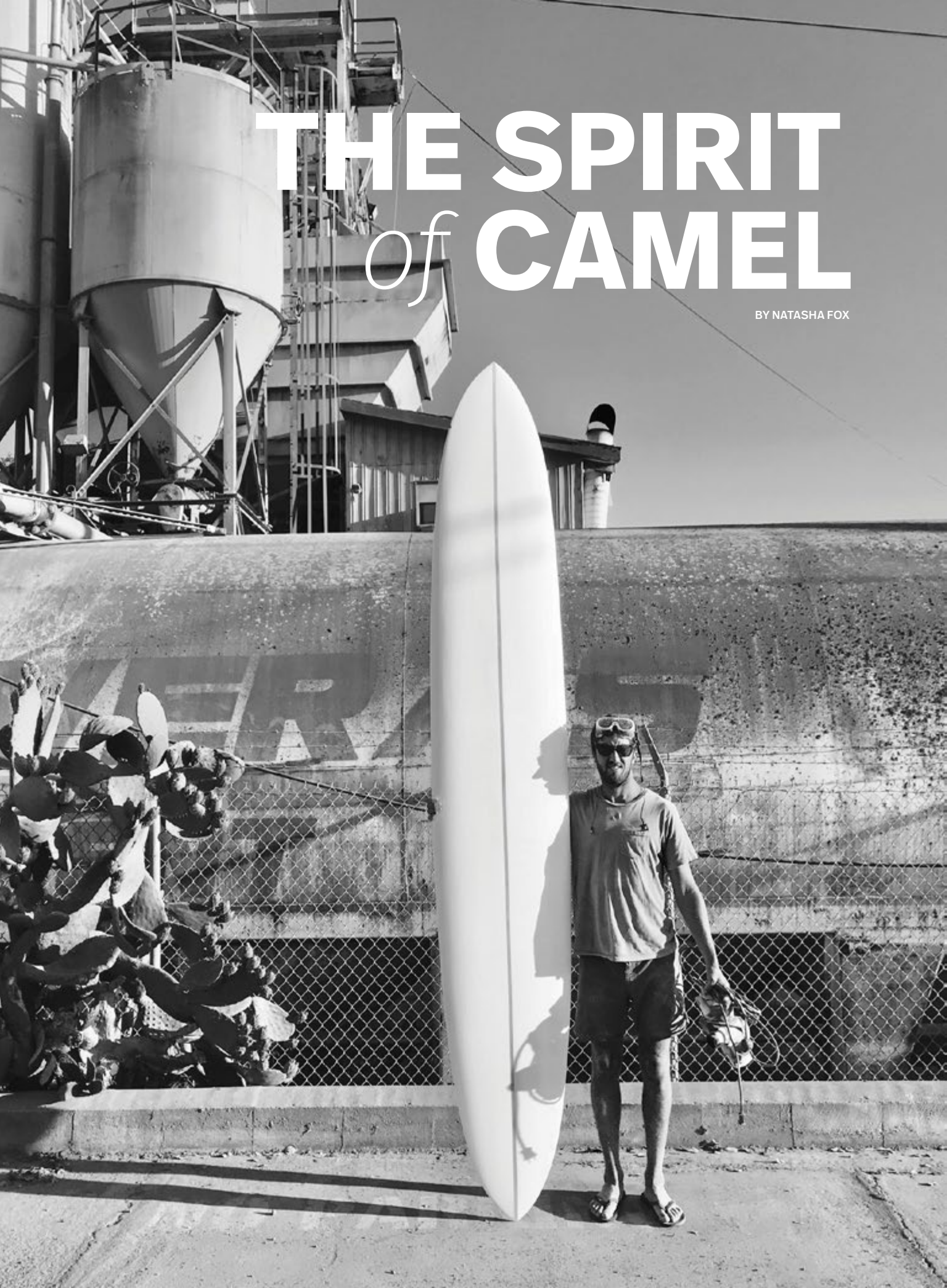
We have screenings at Rothera Station of the British Antarctic Survey, where scientists can take a break from their research to enjoy films from around the world.

Visit [banffmountainfestival.ca](https://banffmountainfestival.ca) for more info and check out page 44 for a chance to win prizes.



# THE SPIRIT *of* CAMEL

BY NATASHA FOX







### CALIFORNIA NATIVE TREVOR GORDON

has been keeping the spirit of adventure alive and well since being featured in the 2019 Creative Excellence award-winning film *Camel Finds Water*. In the film, Gordon finds a dilapidated hull of a boat abandoned in a field, fixes it up to make it seaworthy, and takes it on its maiden voyage on a surfing trip to British Columbia – dubbing her Camel.

Gordon is no stranger to the water. He currently lives with his wife on a sailboat in the Santa Barbara harbour. Inspired by spending so much time in small spaces, the couple, along with friend Mary Gonzalez, have co-authored *The Tiny Kitchen*. The cookbook features recipes born from tiny spaces – which, of course, are perfect for cooking on boats! Burritos may have been the main source of fuel while rebuilding the Camel on land, but when anchored in coastal British Columbian waters with no burrito shop in sight, Gordon's culinary skills came to the rescue.

Since returning from that maiden journey, Gordon and Camel were inseparable as they created more memories. Two years had passed since Camel first floated, but Gordon knew it was time to make room

for new adventures. A man can only have so many boats, so Camel has been sold to new owners, who have sworn to keep her whimsical spirit alive. Among Gordon's recent activities are sailing trips and heading inland to go bow hunting. Gordon hasn't necessarily moved on from Camel though, and he can now be found shaping surfboards featuring an outline of the beloved vessel (pictured), and the boards take to water beautifully, just like Camel did.

Until recently, *Camel Finds Water* filmmaker Ian Durkin could be found hunkering down on the other side of the continent, working as lead curator at Vimeo in New York City. He has also been working on a few personal projects, including the new short film *The Secret of Bottom Turn Island*, which you can catch on this year's World Tour. Doing his own part in keeping with the spirit of Camel, he has since moved. "I've really just been quarantining in New York City for the most part this year, but I'm leaving town." Durkin has packed his bags and can now be found on the shores of Rhode Island, where he has relocated to be closer to the ocean (and adventure) himself. ▲



# PREPARING TO MEET LHOTSE

BY DEBRA HORNSBY

**How do you train to make the first ski descent of the world's fourth highest mountain? American ski mountaineer Hilaree Nelson knows. Tackle even tougher conditions first.**







**HILAREE NELSON** and partner Jim Morrison's quest to be the first to ski from the summit of Lhotse is chronicled in the 2019 film *The North Face Presents: Lhotse*, directed by Dutch Simpson and Nick Kalisz. The film not only tells the story of their ground-breaking descent of the 8,516-metre (27,940 ft) mountain, it also follows Nelson and Morrison as they prepare for the expedition, including a memorable trip in April 2018 to the Sierra Nevadas.

---

**Skiing in sketchy conditions wasn't necessarily the goal for that trip, but Mother Nature had other ideas.**

"We had a tick list of steep descents for the Sierras," says Nelson, "but, just before we arrived, there was this crazy rain event, followed by a drop in temperature that froze the mountains solid right to the top."

Nelson and Morrison were forced to change their plans on the fly. Bypassing some of the couloirs they had hoped to tackle, they spent the week climbing higher, descending on "ripple ice crust" in conditions Nelson recalls as "death-defying."

"It was the best training for Lhotse we could have had," she says. (Christian Pondella's shot of Nelson and Morrison climbing a ridge during their Sierra adventure is featured on the cover of this magazine, and is the Festival's 2020 signature image.)



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"My biggest take-away from that Sierra trip," Nelson says, "was my kit. I was using the skis and boots that I had intended to take to Lhotse, and I discovered they didn't work in steep icy conditions. That was a huge learning in terms of getting ready."

Strangely enough, the surface conditions during Nelson and Morrison's historic Lhotse descent on September 30, 2018 weren't as tricky as they had been in the Sierras. Nelson is quick to point out she's not saying the expedition was easy – merely getting to the top of Lhotse, part of the Everest massif,

is daunting. It involved weeks of climbing, setting ropes, acclimatization, and establishing high altitude camps – including traversing the Khumbu Icefall and enduring perilous avalanche conditions en route to Camp Two. "We worked incredibly hard . . . It was a joint effort," she emphasizes. "The support of our Sherpa team was key – and we couldn't have done it without them."

Nelson describes their descent from the Lhotse summit as "not as scary as some of what we had encountered in the Sierras."

**"The hardest part was the Lhotse couloir, which is so narrow, and there are sections of the face where obviously if you fall, you're going to go for the whole big ride."**

At the top, the snow conditions were different with each turn – crust and ice – so that training in the Sierras helped a bunch," says Nelson.

"The biggest thing I recall from when I got to the bottom was thinking 'that was fun'. I had just skied Lhotse and it was fun! You put your skis on, and you ski 7,000 feet in this perfect line. I was exhausted and coughing, but I was also smiling and laughing and feeling 'we did it'. There was an incredible sense of relief, and a little bit of that sadness you get when you complete a passion project."

Since Lhotse, Nelson and Morrison have journeyed to Mount Vinson, the highest mountain in Antarctica, and more recently – with the pandemic curtailing travel – she has been pursuing adventures closer to home.

"I took my kids up two 14ers [mountains over 14,000 feet] in Colorado this summer," Nelson says. "I've always looked so far and wide to do big things, but in reality, it's all here. We've been making the most of what we've got right in our backyard." ▲





# CLIMBING for CHANGE

BY  
JOANNA  
CROSTON





**We wanted to provide alternatives to traditional sports like basketball and football for BIPOC communities.**

KAI LIGHTNER ON CREATING A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION CALLED CLIMBING FOR CHANGE

**KAI LIGHTNER IS A CLIMBING POWERHOUSE.**

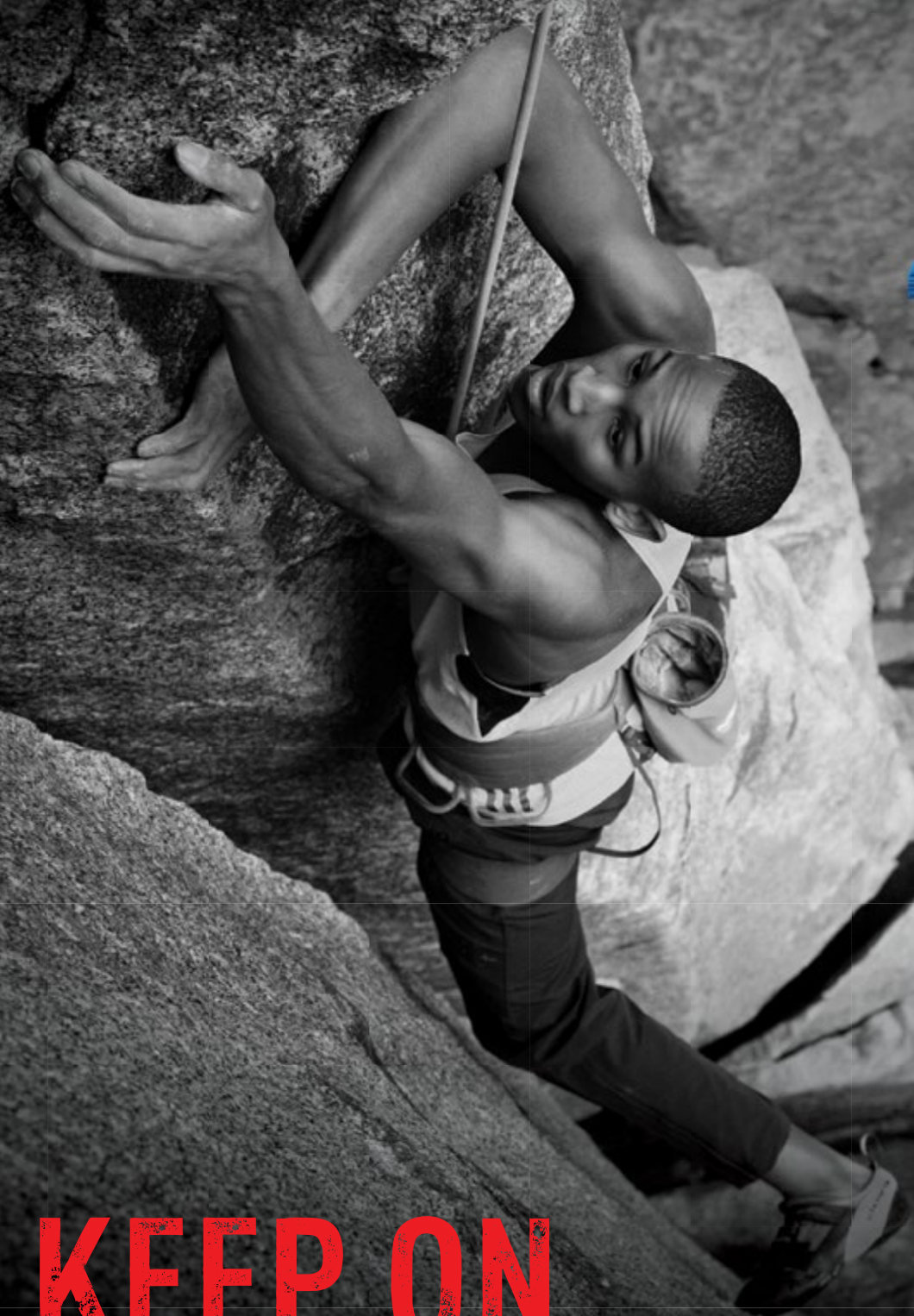
He's climbed multiple 5.14 routes, won countless competitions at National and Continental levels, and Banff audiences will remember him from past festival films including *5.14c* and *Young Guns*. And now Lightner aims to use his climbing skills to support and encourage others in the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) community to explore the sport he loves by making it more accessible.

Lightner joined us in Banff for the 2019 Festival and was part of our *Climbing Through Barriers* panel discussion. A conversation led by diversity-in-the-outdoors advocate James Edward Mills that included panelists Bethany Lebowitz (Black Girls Climb), Mikhail Martin (Brothers of Climbing), Erynne Gilpin (Indigenous Womxn Climb), and Lightner. The conversation was rich and informative and a great stepping stone for bringing the conversation to the Banff community.

Ten months after his Banff appearance, I called up Lightner and he spoke to me from his Aunt's home in Atlanta, Georgia. He'd decided it was safer to be there than in New York City where he is attending university and where COVID-19 had taken a hold over the city and its residents. I wanted to talk to him about his new non-profit, Climbing for Change.

Recently Lightner founded Climbing for Change because he realized that long-term change in the outdoor industry is what was needed to support diversity and funding for underrepresented communities and programs. I asked him why he made the decision to start the initiative:

"After talking with my sponsors and different organizations about their plan for DEI [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion] initiatives, I realized that many of them didn't know how to facilitate the long-term changes that society was demanding from them. One-time donations were not going to cut it – a sustainable model had to be created that would establish long-term connections between corporate businesses, grassroots DEI organizations, and community leaders seeking change in their areas"



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CLIF BAR® gives KAI LIGHTNER an ideal mix of protein and carbohydrates for long-lasting, 5.14d-tackling, route-sending energy.





He added, “From these conversations, I decided to create a non-profit organization called Climbing for Change, which aims to connect underserved communities with organizations seeking to provide opportunities and diversify the outdoors.”

Climbing for Change was still in the mobilization phase in summer 2020, but their hope is to provide seed money for competitions or scholarships for community groups for programs, or support for climbing gyms to help lower membership rates and even money for climbing expeditions.

“Idle time is never good for young people.” Lightner said. “We wanted to provide alternatives to traditional sports like basketball and football for BIPOC communities. We wanted them to know that there are alternative sports that will get them outside.”

Lightner’s commitment and enthusiasm for sharing his love for climbing is contagious. His excitement for the cause was obvious even though we were thousands of kilometres apart for the interview. With someone like Lightner leading the charge, I have no doubt that seeing more BIPOC on the Banff screen is inevitable and we encourage underrepresented communities to tell us their stories, send us their films, and make the world a more inclusive one. ▲



How can Banff audiences help support Kai Lightner’s new initiative? Visit [Climbing4change.org](https://Climbing4change.org) to donate, offer services or find out how you can bring funding to your community.





To find out how their adventures through the Bartang Valley went, catch *Running the Roof* on the Banff World Tour's online program.





# RUNNING THE ROOF

BY LAUREN SCHMIDT

**P**EOPLE MAKE DRUNKEN BETS all the time but once the pint glasses are drained and the hangover sets in, these wagers can become a foggy memory. There are few who would follow through on a bet that involves spinning a globe and travelling thousands of kilometres to wherever their finger lands – particularly when that destination ends up being Tajikistan, a part of the world that is unfamiliar to many. Even fewer would commit to running ultramarathon distances in remote, high altitude terrain, with extreme temperature swings – but Jody Bragger (JB) and his friends Gabriel (Gabe) Ghiglione and Jodie Gauld are not like most people. *Running the Roof*, a new documentary by Sourcy Films, chronicles just what amazing adventures can occur when people turn their drunken ideas into reality.

Though the bet was initially made between JB and Gabe, the pair quickly realized they couldn't do it alone. "We needed a tribe to bring this dream to life," says Gabe. "So we reached out to our friends that live for the 'out-there' ideas: Jodie, our badass ultra runner friend from London and of course, Ben and Alexis – a pair of

mega-talented filmmakers who have the ability to make just about every situation more fun. Together, we became this crazy little team who weren't going to be stopped."

"Because this bar bet was so ridiculous, I felt like it needed more attention," says JB. "It kind of encapsulated my mantra: if it's not epic, it's not worth doing." All in the group agree that without JB, the trip would not have happened. In the weeks following their bet, he obsessively pored over maps of Tajikistan and ultimately plotted their border to border route, which followed the Bartang River through the stunning Pamir mountain range, ending at Lake Karakul. This challenge was not for the faint of heart – it covered roughly 400 kilometres in just seven days, with elevation gains of nearly 4,500 metres. Though JB and Jodie were seasoned long-distance runners, Gabe only had a handful of short distance races and one marathon under his belt prior to this expedition.

Going into the trip Jodie knew very little about their destination. "Like the others, I want to see the world and, embarrassingly, at the time I hadn't even heard of Tajikistan, so what better way is there to educate myself than exploring this place on two feet with friends." Once there she was "warmed by locals who were always very friendly, interested in what we were doing and clearly so proud and passionate about their country." She reminisces, "I was also surprised at how delicious their homemade breads and jam were – I could have that every day for the rest of my life and be happy." ▲

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**If it's not epic,  
it's not worth doing.**

JODY BRAGGER



BY NICKY LYNCH

**A profile of the  
2020 Mountain Photo  
Essay Grand Prize  
*Shadows of Kurdistan*  
by Murat Yazar**



**FOLLOWING**  
*the* **SHADOWS**







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PREVIOUS PAGE Preparing for winter: In summer, shepherds care for village sheep in the mountains. When winter returns, they separate their animals and return them to the barns. The children also often play football on the fields. Doğubeyazıt, Turkey, 2015

**O**VER A HUNDRED YEARS have passed since the geo-cultural region of Kurdistan was divided across four borders following the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916. Today, there are almost 35 million Kurds separated and living in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

Photojournalist Murat Yazar grew up in the town of Urfa, a small Kurdish village near the Euphrates River in Turkish Kurdistan. He has been documenting the people of Kurdistan since 2011, when Syrian refugees started flowing across the border to his hometown. Of his winning photo essay, *Shadows of Kurdistan*, Yazar says, “I wanted to include images of daily life, alongside work that addresses the political situation in our cities and villages. It was also important to me that the vibrancy of Kurdish culture shone through.” These five images were part of his larger project from 2011 through 2019, featuring 85 images and compiled into a book by the same name.

Over the past decade Yazar has travelled across the borders of the four parts of Kurdistan into cities, villages, and the countryside to document and share stories and traditions of the people.





**For me, photography has been the key to discovering my identity and making my culture visible.**

MURAT YAZAR



"I wanted to bring them together in a single book – together and without borders." He adds, "I tried to show my culture in all its colours. My camera was my canvas and brush, my culture was the colours, and the views were my composition." Says Yazar, "In many places in Kurdistan it is still forbidden for us to live in our traditional ways or to study our language – we live in our land like shadows, without colour."

Yazar says that it was extremely challenging to document his home region due to the severity of the political situation and civil war coupled with a fear ingrained in the people of sharing their lives and identity. "It took time for me to be allowed to enter inside their lives, but when I did, it was truly rewarding to see and understand them." He adds, "As the walls between us fell, I realized how close I was – and yet, still so far from my culture and the people who enrich it."

This project has become part of the tapestry of Yazar's own life story. "For me, photography has been the key to discovering my identity and making my culture visible." He also recognizes his work is still incomplete. There is an area of Kurdistan in Rojava, Syria, where he

LEFT The Ceremony of Pir Şaliyar: Villagers gather in their town, high on the sides of a mountain, for an ancient ceremony to honor Pir Şaliyar, a Zoroastrian dervish who lived in Hawraman in the 11th century CE. Hawraman, Iran, 2019

ABOVE Newroz Spring Festival: Men carry torches up the mountain to celebrate the Kurdish New Year. Akre, Iraq, 2019



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ABOVE High Dive into the Khabur River: From an ancient bridge, teens leap 16 metres down to the Khabur River. Zakho, Iraq, 2019

RIGHT Game Time by Lake Urmia: Lake Urmia is a salt water lake in Iran. In recent years the water level has decreased due to over-irrigation in the region as well as the effects of climate change. Winds carry the salt from the lake to the farmers' lands nearby, destroying the soil and forcing many villagers to leave their homes. Urmia, Iran, 2019



was unable to cross the border due to the war and says he only has images of Kurds at the Turkey-Syria border escaping the violence. "I wait and dream that one day peace will come to my land and I can finish the story," says Yazar. "Ultimately, I hope to create an archive of my culture and homeland, uniting the four parts of Kurdistan."

Yazar's essay was selected as the Grand Prize Winner of the 2020 Banff Mountain Photo Essay Competition. The international trio of jury members includes Pat Kane, Robin O'Neill, and Jim Herrington – the latter saying that, "There is a narrative tension that runs through his work, an electricity even, the photos crackle. They feel very alive and take me somewhere – leaving me wanting to know more." ▲

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Murat Yazar is now based in Rome, Italy and his work has been exhibited in Paris, Milan, Rome, and Barcelona. *Shadows of Kurdistan* was recognized by the 2020 Sony World Photography Awards, and the book was published in Rome, Italy in June 2020. His images have been published in *National Geographic Magazine*, *The Times of London*, *Le Courier*, and *The New York Times*.

Watch a **short video** from Hawraman, Iran, 2019, by Murat Yazar.

For details on learning opportunities at Banff Centre in mountain and adventure photography, writing, and filmmaking visit **banffcentre.ca**.



**L**AMA MORTUB CLIMBED CAREFULLY onto the platform, followed by three young proteges, and the quartet settled cross-legged on the periphery. The mandala was perfectly symmetrical, divided into four identical quadrants, and each man was responsible for one.

Without words, they began to work.

After studying a blueprint, each artist searched for the needed colour. If a precise match could not be found, it was created by mixing sands together like paint. The sand was then poured into a long, narrow metal funnel known as a *chak-pur*, and by running a rod over the funnel's serrated surface,

fine-grained sand flowing from the spout, the monks were able to "draw" with sand.

The work was painstaking, for correcting a mistake would be impossible. Attempting to nudge even a few errant grains could induce a catastrophic unravelling. So the men took their time, steadying their forearms on piles of small pillows and rehearsing every stroke. When at last ready to apply sand, the artists took a deep breath and entered a stillness reminiscent of meditation.

Each worked at his own pace and rhythm, and slowly a splendour of motifs bloomed: sceptres, flames, flowers, castles and thunderbolts. Occasionally, after a





Excerpt from Bruce Kirkby's

# BLUE SKY KINGDOM

*An Epic Family Journey to the Heart of the Himalaya*

PAGES 219-221. COURTESY OF DOUGLAS & MCINTYRE.

particularly intense session of sand painting, one of the monks would shake his arms. Or throw a head back with closed eyes. But no one got too far ahead of the others, and there was unity to their progress.

A support team hovered on the periphery, retrieving anything needed by the artists: another pillow, more sand, a cup of tea. Slowly, the mandala inched outward.

Taj and Bodi watched for a time, and I prayed neither would sneeze. Eventually the pair lost interest and drifted off to investigate the altar. Finding a scattering of rupee bills, Bodi asked if he could run home and get some of his own money to give Buddha.

"Of course," I said, and he dashed off.

Soon he was back, huffing and puffing, with a hundred-rupee (two-dollar) note. Painstakingly he balanced the bill atop a silver plate. Then he spun and spun, and spun some more.

The clinical term for such behaviour is stimming – an unconscious means of self-soothing, or controlling anxiety. All of us "stim" to some extent, whether we know it or not: tapping pencils, twirling hair, pacing while talking on the phone. But those on the autism spectrum tend to stim more frequently, and more gregariously, to the point that it can interfere with life.

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Bruce Kirkby is an adventurer and author. He is also a past participant of Banff Centre's Mountain and Wilderness Writing Program and has served as a Jury member for the Festivals' international Mountain Book and Film Competitions.

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**As I fondly watched my son, he laughed and spun and giggled – and then accidentally knocked over an immense candle, plunging the temple into darkness.**

Only the hole in the roof, above Buddha's head, provided a glimmer of daylight.

"No problem, no problem," came the soft voice of Lama Mortub.

A flashlight snapped on. Ta'han tossed me a lighter. Soon the room was bright again. After setting the candle atop the wooden crate, I scraped up the hardening wax.

Before chasing the boys outside, I surprised myself by bowing, ever so slightly, to the golden statue rising before me. The gesture was wholly unexpected, but in the moment, felt perfectly right. ▲



# The Written Word

## The Role of the Banff Centre in Mountain Literature

BY JON POPOWICH

**A**S AN ADOLESCENT, when my earliest mountaineering desires were taking shape, I pored over every piece of writing I could find. In public libraries and used bookstores I quested for the stories, photographs, and descriptions that would help draw the maps (mentally and physically) I would need for this strange new land.

I hungered for all of it. I came to realize that what also drew me was the 'voice' often present in the writing. I encountered words of action, and also those of reflection and feeling; climbing led not just to summits, but to language that gave shape to life and all of its questions.

Expression is everywhere now. Every second, 'influencers', vloggers, and bloggers share their thoughts, opinions, and adventures with us.

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### Mountain writing wouldn't be where it is today if it wasn't for the Banff program.

MARGO TALBOT

But good writing is different. Good writing is true craft; it takes desire, time, skill, practice, and advice. For the climbers and adventurers, one of the most important places where expression, community and recognition all come together is the annual Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival. But many people are unaware that beyond the Festival, the Banff Centre has played another important role with their annual Mountain and Wilderness Writing Program.

Launched in 2005 by Bernadette McDonald, the founder of mountain culture programming, and now equipped with a skilled faculty including Tony Whittome, Marni Jackson, and Harley Rustad, it sees participants each year from around the world. Content is broad, in subject and format. Whittome notes, "It's the only mountain writing program which is multi-genre. We've had books, podcasts, a graphic novel, magazine articles, some poetry, and memoir." Describing what I sensed all those years ago, he points out that the practice of climbing is introspective and some of those qualities can inherently lead to good writing. "Climbing writing can raise all kinds of deeper moral and existential virtues and questions."

The participants of the program continue to raise the bar and exert influence. Few could argue with the climbing and literary qualifications of Michael Kennedy. From 1974-1998 he was Editor of *Climbing* magazine, and from 2009-2012 Editor-in-Chief of *Alpinist* magazine. Kennedy reflects: "After only a week into the program, by far it exceeded my already lofty





expectations. [And] in terms of the influence of this program and the trajectory of mountain literature, Banff is very significant. Many really good books have come out of here.”

**It's the only mountain writing program which is multi-genre. We've had books, podcasts, a graphic novel, magazine articles, some poetry, and memoir.**

TONY WHITTOME

Indeed, there have been several nominated and award-winning titles catalyzed through Banff. Brian Hall is an accomplished alpinist who feels the program, “goes the next step by actually facilitating writers. It's a nice environment for people to write in seclusion, plus you have active mentoring with faculty and interactions between writers.”



Has the content and focus of mountain writing shifted over these years? Jackson indicates that there is now more writing that includes a ‘Trojan Horse’ often to bring in messages on subjects like biodiversity. There are also more women writing about adventure. Rustad adds, “There are younger writers now who really want to work on environmental stories. There is this enormous push to go on a trip and see how that fits into a changing world.”

Geoff Powter is a climber, writer, editor, and has been a key speaker at the Festival in Banff. He feels that “Banff’s Canadian voice and presence in the mountain literature world has been critical. [And] the writing community during the Festival is very accessible.” In the world of endless web searching, there is also a need to retain the literary side.

The future is positive for mountain writing. The Festival, and the Mountain Wilderness and Writing Program, continue to stimulate a lot of interest and engagement; there is, as Whittome says, “an enormous symbiotic relationship between them”. I noted during the 2019 festival, when local alpinist Ian Welsted was interviewed by Geoff Powter for the Voices of Adventure series, he said, “I hope mountain literature will get to the point of really fine literature. I think fiction could really flourish into something bigger. I would like to write fiction. The category is wide open.” It would seem there is always the unexplored in the mountain world.

Perhaps it was climber, author and speaker Margo Talbot who put it most directly: “Mountain writing wouldn’t be where it is today if it wasn’t for the Banff program. All these climbers didn’t know the power of the stories in them.” She is right, and their stories continue to move me to this day. ▲

This is an abridged version of an article written by Jon Popowich for *Gripped*.

To read the full article visit [gripped.com](http://gripped.com).

The Mountain and Wilderness Writing Program is generously supported by The Carlyle Norman Scholarship Endowment Fund and Carlyle Norman Scholarship for Literary Artists Endowment Fund



**Banff’s Canadian voice and presence in the mountain literature world has been critical.**

GEOFF POWTER



For more information on the Writing Program, visit [banffcentre.ca](http://banffcentre.ca)



# GLOBAL EVENT, LOCAL IMPACT

## Hosting a Virtual Festival

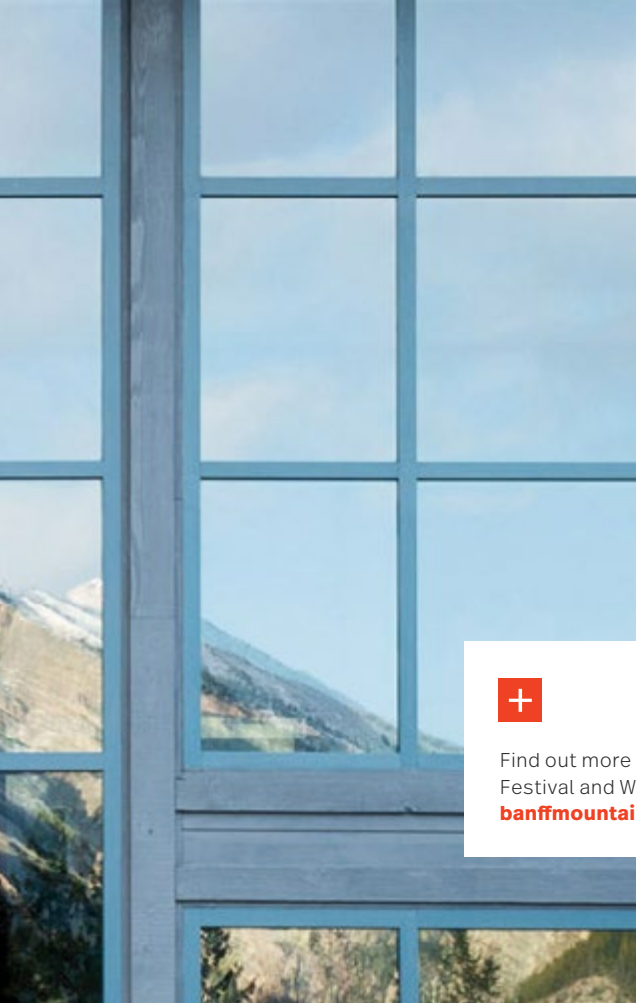
BY LAURIE HARVEY

**BANFF WAS ENJOYING** one of the greatest ski seasons in history in March 2020. Ski season pass holders from around North America were flocking to the Canadian Rockies to take advantage of near perfect conditions. While other mountain resorts were winding down their seasons, our local resorts were operating at near-capacity. Then, over a matter of days, local resorts were closing...rapidly and almost without warning. Banff locals watched the chairlifts stop and seasonal workers rushed to return home.

Businesses in Banff felt the closure of international borders and the National Park; approximately 85% of residents were laid off – temporarily or permanently - through March and April. We know Banff is a global destination, and we quickly realized how interconnected we truly are with the whole world as the COVID-19 pandemic was declared.

In addition to the effects of the pandemic on our local community, our Film Festival World Tour 'Road Warriors', who are travelling to support and present local Film Festival offerings across North America, were starting to feel nervous about being on the road, heading from location





Find out more about the  
Festival and World Tour at  
[banffmountainfestival.ca](https://banffmountainfestival.ca)

to location. World Tour hosts were expressing concerns about hosting large public events. World Tour screenings, for the first time in history, were being postponed, not only in Canada and the United States but around the world.

Our Festival finds its home at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity – a not-for-profit post-secondary institution with a mixed revenue model, including close to 40% of revenue generated through hospitality and conference services. By the middle of March, almost all hospitality and conference services had been cancelled until 2021 and all other campus activities, including programs and events, were restricted and cancelled to follow local health regulations. With revenue and activity levels diminished, Banff Centre had no choice but to temporarily lay off many of its incredible and talented employees.

Reduced to a small team, the Festival and World Tour had little time and few resources to react. We quickly came up with a plan – based on knowledge and intuition.

### **The Festival was among the first to provide a free offering of films online – ‘Epic Films for the Great Indoors’.**

By the time we removed the page from our website five months later we had over half a million views. The early and positive response from our community gave us the confidence to push forward to proceed with a virtual edition of the 2020 Festival.

We have been re-imagining the Festival and Tour ever since those days in March. It has been a steep learning curve during a challenging time. But it has also been exciting and creative. We have had to adapt and evolve, and be confident yet nimble. When team members began returning to work, with their talent, skills, and dedication, we could implement our new plan. These challenges have brought us closer not only to our immediate teammates but to all of our colleagues across Banff Centre.

A virtual Festival offers fewer boundaries and will be accessible to more people globally. Typically, the Festival will sell out many events several weeks in advance. This year the Festival has unlimited capacity, and we can welcome the world to see the films, experience the books, hear from filmmakers and authors, read this World Tour magazine, and shop the Mountain Marketplace for branded merchandise from Festival partners. Friends and families can share a single pass for online viewings, and pods of fans can gather to celebrate mountain culture through the diverse selection of films from around the world.

### **We will always strive to bring together filmmakers, authors, athletes, and photographers to share their stories and wisdom with passionate outdoor audiences.**

We have learned through the experiences of 45 years of sharing epic adventures that challenge makes us stronger and recommits us to our purpose. The pandemic has forced us to find new ways to share and inspire while keeping people safe at home. The nine days of the 2020 Virtual Edition of the Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival will unite our community in the spirit of resilience and perseverance as it does each year. And the 2020/21 World Tour will continue to do so around the globe. ▲

# A TIMELY ADVENTURE

BY CARMEN JACKSON



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**The history  
of the area  
is written  
into the ice  
and land.**

CORRIE WEDEL

**C**ORRIE WEDEL had been saving money for years, planning to use it for a down payment on a house while resisting the urge to spend it on a trip to Antarctica. Wedel, a high school teacher from British Columbia, first became intrigued about visiting the southernmost continent years ago, when a colleague of hers raved about her own trip there with stories of the wildlife, ecology, history, and landscapes. As Wedel explained, "For 15 years I had been thinking, 'I am saving up money, I really *should* buy a house,' but I still had that dream to take that money and go down to Antarctica."

Wedel didn't have to use her down payment. She was the incredibly lucky winner of the Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival World Tour contest grand prize in 2019 – and World

Expeditions sent her on a 13-day trip for two to the most remote continent on the planet.

Wedel, to the approval of mothers everywhere, chose her mom as her companion and they departed in early March of 2020. The global pandemic added a level of precariousness to the expedition – after flying from Vancouver to Punta Arenas on a marathon of flights, they knew that they would be refused access to the boat if they had a temperature upon arrival. Fortunately, they were able to board what would be the second-last trip of the season.

As Wedel describes the wonders of this different world, her voice rises excitedly. "From penguins to orcas to leopard seals, the wildlife was exceptional and the landscapes






were equally fascinating." As a science and visual arts teacher, Wedel was awe-struck by the variation in the ice. "Look at the colours! The textures!" she'd exclaim as they passed icebergs that were crystal clear, or brilliant turquoise, or covered in red algae.

One of the many highlights of the trip for Wedel was on the day of her birthday. They stepped foot on the continent for the first time, saw "penguins and whales galore!" and did a polar plunge in the waters of Antarctica.

Wedel reveled in experiencing first-hand the landscapes that she had taught about throughout her career, and she's thrilled to bring those experiences back to her students. "The history of the area is written into the ice and the land" says Wedel,

referring to the fossils on beaches and variations in ice. "I have taught this subject for years and to actually go onto the beach in Antarctica and find fossils myself ... it's hard to believe it happened."

For Wedel, this was truly the trip of a lifetime, and she couldn't believe her luck: first with winning the Grand Prize of the contest, and then with it actually going to the place she'd been dreaming of for so long. "I had a perpetual grin the whole time. One of the crew kept asking me 'Are you ever not smiling?'" 



Find out more about World Expeditions at [worldexpeditions.com](http://worldexpeditions.com)

Find out more about the World Tour Contest at [banffmountainfestival.ca/contest](http://banffmountainfestival.ca/contest)



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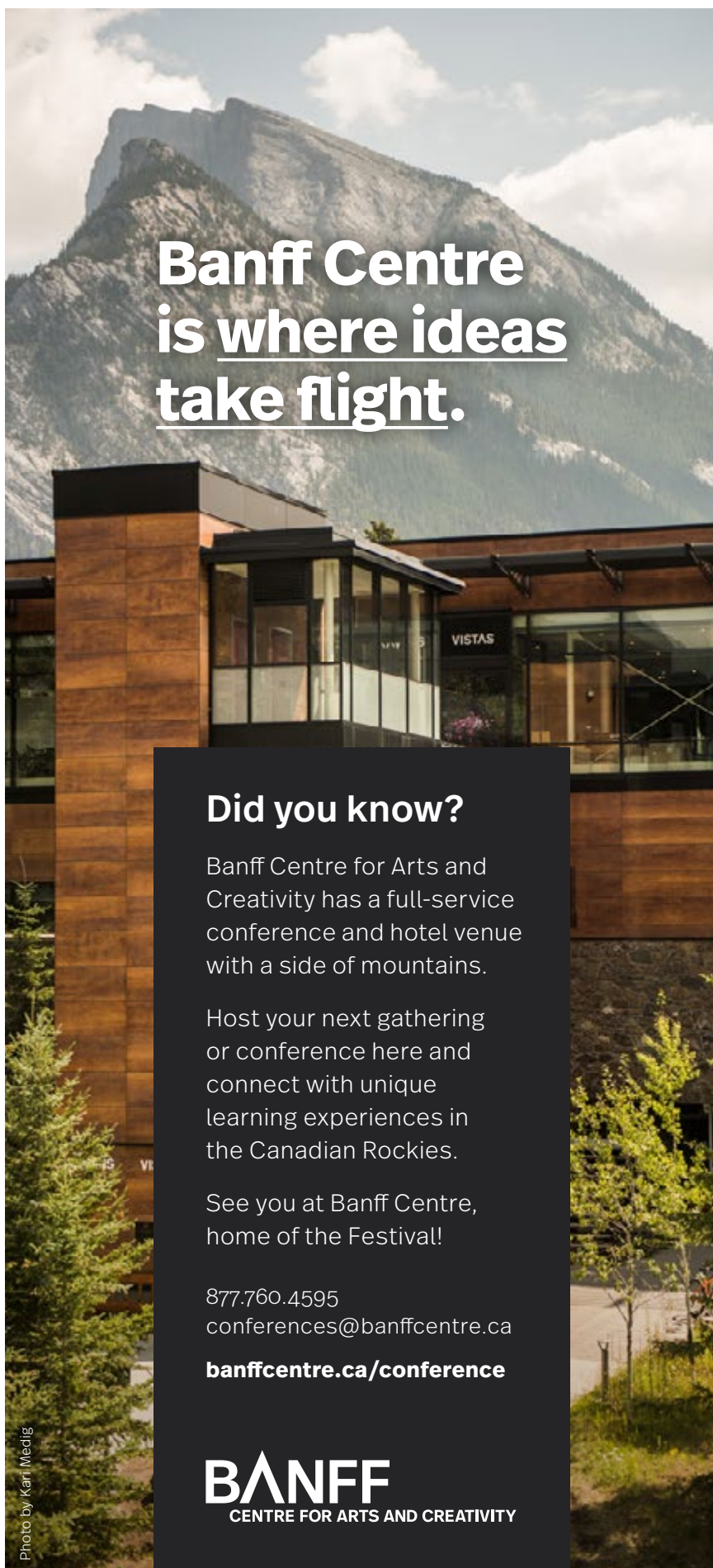


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Photo by Kari Medig





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Every year on International Mountain Day (IMD) the world pays special attention to the value and importance of mountain regions and vibrant life within them. IMD was designated by the United Nations to highlight the important environmental, economic, social and spiritual benefits of mountains.

This year's IMD theme is **MOUNTAIN BIODIVERSITY**, as the topography of mountain regions makes them cradles and refugia for abundant and diverse life. Mountain regions are critical for biodiversity conservation in a changing world given their extent and coverage of such a wide spectrum of environments. Please join us this December in celebrating and raising awareness of mountain peoples and places around the world!

Follow the Canadian Mountain Network on social media or visit our website to learn how you can coordinate or attend an IMD event and don't forget to subscribe to the Canadian Mountain Podcast to hear incredible stories of Canada's diverse and important mountain places.

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The Canadian Mountain Network is a national not-for-profit organization that supports the resilience and health of Canada's mountain peoples and places through research partnerships based on Indigenous and Western ways of knowing that inform decision-making and action. The Network is generously supported by the Government of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence program and other diverse partners.



# HEARD FROM AROUND THE WORLD

#epicadventuresindoors



**@AndyFryers** All set for The Banff Mountain Film Festival live. Bring it on... **@BanffMtnFest**

**@shfaulkner** That time again...watching **@BanffMtnFest** and dreaming of quitting my job and going on some adventures... **#wonderlust #adventure #ExpeditionUnknown #nature #photography #travelphotography #Travel**

## Inspired

I love attending an event where we get to see people daring greatly on many levels...physically, emotionally, environmentally, culturally. It encourages me to dare greatly as well.

– Dauphin, Manitoba

## Bucket List

Love love love the Banff Mountain Center World Tour!!! Dreaming of when I can make it to Banff!!

– Washington, DC

**@HPersaud** In normal life going to these film festivals are a highlight of my year ~ thank you **@BanffMtnFest** for putting your films on our TVs during **#lockdown** ~ fresh air brave hearts and commitment to recklessness, perfect 🙌

## Virtual

Looking forward to seeing things in real life again but thank you so much for making the tour a virtual thing this year.

Peace & allotaf\*\*\*inglove

– Lawrence (LKF) Kansas

## Longtimers

I started going to the World Tour close to thirty years ago. My wife got interested and started going and then we started bringing our children with us. Now they are 30 and 25 and we all still go every year, along with spouses and friends.

– San Diego, California

## First Impressions

I had invited who I believe is my future life partner who has been a friend for over 3 years, as a first real date, but she and her young daughter became ill and she could not attend. I am convinced if she had come she would have totally fallen for me.

As it is with the CV19 thing, things are on hold, so the 5<sup>th</sup> ticket will be for her Next Year.

– Salt Lake City, Utah

## Don't Hibernate

Just when we think it's time to hibernate for the east coast winter, the festival comes along and gets us inspired to get outside!

– Halifax, Nova Scotia

## FOLLOW THE FESTIVAL

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## Motivated

Every year the Banff World Tour is something I look forward to. I basically grew up on it and it has so much meaning to me. It inspires me every year to chase after what I want to do and to stay persistent, and basically be as badass as possible.

– Fort Collins, Colorado



**@rohanalmond** The outdoors, outdoors! Thank you for an amazing 3 hours of adventure and escapism! **#banffmountainfilmfestivalworldtour #banffmountainfilmfestival**

## DID YOU KNOW?



## FESTIVAL AND WORLD TOUR

### 45 countries

And growing.

### 7 continents

Yes, Antarctica included!

### 550,000

Annual attendance...we'll see how Virtual looks in 2020/21...

### 45 Years

The first Festival was held in Banff, Alberta in 1976 and has been held each Fall ever since.

### 2020/2021

The first Virtual Festival in Banff in 2020 + combo of live and virtual World Tour screenings around the world.





## — THE BANFF COLLECTION —

Commemorate the Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival with our 95% recycled BUFF® Original Multifunctional Headwear Banff Collection. All new unique designs from artist, John Fellows now available at: [buff.com/banff](https://buff.com/banff)



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