

Cultures at Risk

August 19-21, 2005

An Exploration and Celebration of the Traditional Cultures of the World's Mountain Peoples

Mountain regions around the world are refuges for some of the globe's most intact and colourful indigenous and traditional cultures. From Peru to Tibet to the Alps, mountain people maintain ways of life reflecting their mountain homes, and continuously adapt to the changing world around them.

Cultures at Risk explored and celebrated the mountain cultures of the world at a time when their pace of change seems faster than ever before. Through performances, exhibitions, panels and speakers, our audience was invited to decide whether these cultures are threatened or thriving.

Opening night

Friday, August 19, 8 p.m., Eric Harvie Theatre

The show opened with a blessing from First Nations elders, and a performance of traditional drumming and singing by Tsuutina/Siksika Joe Starlight. Tibetan recording artists Gompo Dhundup and Jamyang Yeshe followed Joe with a performance of Tibetan music and dance. After intermission, photojournalist Stephen Ferry and his spectacular images told the story of the Kogi indigenous people of Colombia, who believe that if they protect their sacred mountain home, they will keep the entire planet in balance.

The Opening Reception was sponsored by the French Consulate. It featured specially chosen French wines and cheeses from the traditional mountain farms and vineyards of France, along with the opening of *National Geographic* photographer Gordon Wiltsie's exhibition *Mountain Peoples of the World*.

Saturday day events

August 20, 9 a.m. — 5 p.m., Max Bell

The morning opened with John Beatty's amazing multimedia presentation on the traditional seabird harvest in the Outer Hebrides. Beatty, a highly-acclaimed English wilderness photographer, is one of the very few outsiders in living memory to have been allowed on the island of Sula Sgeir to witness this annual event.

After coffee break (including a tour of Stephen Ferry's photo exhibition in the Max Bell lobby), we moved on to a panel with an amazing range of experience from Tibet to Patagonia — they explored the impacts of global change on traditional mountain cultures.

After lunch break, mountain poets Jacob Polley (from Cumbria, England) and Peter Christensen (from British Columbia) read from their works, followed by an exploration (with Harry Vandervlist of the University of Calgary) on how mountain poetry has evolved from the old world to the new.

And we finished off the day with a lively presentation by dance expert Joseph Houseal on the preservation of traditional Cham dance in Bhutan.

The Range of Mountains **Saturday, August 20, 8 p.m., Margaret Greenham Theatre**

Lively traditional Andean music started this evening with a bang, featuring two indigenous musicians from Otavalo, Ecuador. They were followed by the internationally acclaimed Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir, who have just returned from a highly successful tour of Swiss venues. The ESMC sang traditional songs in the four languages of Switzerland.

Following intermission, the words and glorious images of *National Geographic* photographer Gordon Wiltsie took us to Mongolia for a visit with the nomadic herders who practice their traditional lifestyle, while coping with the incursions of the 21st century.

Sunday daytime events **August 21, 9 a.m. — 5 p.m., Margaret Greenham Theatre**

The Bow Valley's own Frances Klatzel has lived among and worked with the Sherpas of Nepal for more than 20 years. She's an acknowledged expert on the culture, and started Sunday's program for us by sharing her stories and images.

After coffee break (and a chance to visit the *Mountain Peoples* exhibition in the Eric Harvie Theatre West Lobby), a panel discussion included Frances Klatzel, Jim Enote of the Zuni First Nation, Ethiopian anthropologist Meskerem Asseged, Australian Aboriginal ecotourism leader Allison Halliday, and Australian ecotourism expert Trevor Sofield. This discussion focused on cultural success stories.

After lunch, 17-year-old singer Elizabeth Laprelle led off our Appalachian hour, followed by Appalachian novelist Sharyn McCrumb and Appalachian musician Jack Hinshelwood. Their dynamic combination of readings and music took us deep into the traditions of the Appalachian mountains, and uncovered some surprising parallels with the Canadian Rockies.

Photojournalist Beth Wald finished the day with her amazing presentation *Eternal Afghanistan*. Beth showed us an intimate look at post-war Afghanistan and the struggles and successes of these resilient people.

A Mountain Celebration Sunday, August 21, 8 p.m., Main Dining Room

The Banff Centre's chefs provided a delicious banquet of mountain specialties from around the world, with all our special guests and performers in attendance. The fabulous dinner was interspersed with encores from some of our favourite Summit performances: Elizabeth Laprelle (Appalachian traditional music), Joe Starlight, Luke Whiteman, and Shirley Hill (First Nations drumming and dancing), Cesar and Luz Cotacachi (traditional Ecuadorian music), the Ergo Cantamus Quartet (music from Switzerland), and Gompo Dhundup and Jamyang Yeshe (Tibetan music).