

2012 SUMMIT OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

GEOFF POWTER

CLIMBER, AUTHOR



Writer, psychologist and climber Geoff Powter has been at the heart of the mountaineering community in the Canadian Rockies for more than 30 years. Both as an ardent observer and an active participant, Powter's life has enriched our understanding of why we go into the mountains and what the mountains can bring to us. Geoff Powter will receive the 2012 Summit of Excellence Award at this year's Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival.

Powter is a journalist and clinical psychologist whose writings have delved deeply into the many aspects of climbing. He has written award-winning profiles of some of Canada's most intriguing mountain personalities, and spent 13 years at the helm of the 105-year-old Canadian Alpine Journal. Assuming the editorship of the CAJ in 1993, Powter achieved his goal of providing space to what he has called the "inner ranges" - the more philosophical and thoughtful aspects of alpine adventure, including fiction and poetry. He has won 10 National Magazine Awards for his journalism in a wide range of publications.

Powter's book, *Strange and Dangerous Dreams: The Fine Line Between Adventure and Madness*, was published in 2006 and gained a special jury mention at the Banff Mountain Book and Film Festival that year. Exploring 11 tales of troubled expeditions, the book is his investigation into the psychology of risk.

While he started climbing as a teenager near his home in Montreal, it wasn't until he came west to pursue post-graduate work that he saw what he calls his first "real mountain." Becoming a highly accomplished climber himself, Powter has since put up more than 50 new routes right here in the Rockies, and has also participated in 13 expeditions to the Himalaya. To give back to the region of the world that he felt had given him so much, he served seven years as President of the Canadian Himalaya Foundation.

Marty Von Neudegg, director of corporate services for Canadian Mountain Holidays, and a member of the nomination committee, said Powter's accomplishments in the mountain community are notable for their breadth and depth - from his climbing abilities and accomplishments, to extensive publishing as an editor and writer, his involvement in and commitment to the Festival, and the personal support he has given to many people behind the scenes.

"There are many people who are worthy candidates and who bring a lot of terrific accomplishments to the table. What makes Geoff stand out is that the contributions come from so many directions," Von Neudegg said. "He's a pretty unique character in the mountain community."

Powter, a resident of Canmore, has been a volunteer and participant in the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival since 1988, and in 2000 began the popular Voices of Adventure interview series at the Festival. An engaging facilitator and interviewer, he's held court with mountain legends such as a few of his personal favourites: Dr. Charlie Houston, Brad and Barbara Washburn, and Royal Robbins.

Bernadette McDonald, former vice-president of Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre, was at the helm of the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival when Powter brought his idea of interviewing mountaineering legends and personalities to the table.

Geoff has contributed to the mountain community in so many ways: as a talented and bold climber, as a fine writer, as editor of the Canadian Alpine Journal, she said. My personal debt to Geoff has more to do with his generous collaboration with the Festival during the years that I was director. He was always full of good ideas, provided a fantastic sounding board for me, and always conducted the Voice of Adventure interviews with sound research, impeccable preparation, and inspired delivery. He remains one of the important and consistent voices of the Festival.

Powter, who is a lead consultant with the Pacific Center for Leadership in Canmore, is also on faculty for Leadership Development programs at The Banff Centre, helping teams and leaders achieve results through his facilitation of experiential sessions.