

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Alpinist Barry Blanchard Wins 2002 Bill March Summit of Excellence Award**

Barry Blanchard, one of Canada's leading alpinists, is this year's recipient of the Bill March Summit of Excellence Award. Blanchard will be honoured during an award ceremony at the 2002 Banff Mountain Film Festival. The 16th annual award is sponsored by One Step Beyond WorldWide.

"Barry Blanchard has been a respected member of a small group of very elite alpine climbers for years. After three decades in the climbing game, he is now considered a mentor for a completely new generation of climbers while he continues to set high standards in his own climbing," says Bernadette McDonald, Vice President, Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre.

Barry Blanchard's name commands respect throughout the climbing world. In the past three decades, he has specialized in lightweight alpine expeditions in the world's highest ranges. He lists his proudest climbing achievements as "a six-day ascent of the North Ridge of Rakaposhi [Pakistan] with Kevin Doyle and the late David Cheesmond, the first ascent of the North Pillar of North Twin [Canada] with Cheesmond, and surviving an alpine-style attempt on the Central Spur of the Rupal Face of Nanga Parbat [Pakistan] with Mark Twight, Ward Robinson, and Doyle".

Blanchard is also a well-known raconteur, writer and mentor. *Explore* magazine describes him as "a mountaineer so revered that aspiring alpinists pin his photo in their high-school lockers". Despite the high-level adulation, Blanchard maintains a down-to-earth sense of humour. "If it wasn't for foreshortening," he says, "no one would go up on anything."

Born in Calgary, Blanchard lives in Canmore, Alberta, with his wife, climber Catherine Mulvihill. An internationally certified mountain guide, he has worked as a climbing advisor and safety rigger on a number of Hollywood films including *Cliffhanger*, *K2*, *The Last of the Dogmen*, *The Edge* and *Vertical Limit*.

Blanchard describes himself as a "proud Canadian half-breed". "I am Metis, and a seventh-generation descendent of the leader of the Metis at the battle of Seven Oaks in the early 1800s. Two hundred years ago my people made their living hunting buffalo from horseback — kinda predisposes me to an adventurous life, don't you think?"

Blanchard will receive the 2002 Summit of Excellence Award at the closing night of the Banff Mountain Film Festival on November 3. The Summit of Excellence Award is sponsored by One Step Beyond WorldWide in memory of Calgary climber Bill March, an internationally respected mountaineer, author and educator. Past recipients of the award include: Bob Sandford (2001), Chic Scott (2000), Guy Lacelle (1999), John Martin (1998), Sharon Wood (1997), Tim Auger (1996), Brian Greenwood (1995), Kiwi Gallagher (1994), Roger Vernon (1993), Jon Whyte (1992), Don Forest (1991), Pat Morrow (1990), Hans Gmoser (1989), Jim Davies (1988) and Bruno Engler (1987).

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