



## **Bow Valley Women of Distinction to be honoured at International Women's Day Celebration**

**February 9, 2016 – Banff, AB** – YWCA Banff and Soroptimist International of Banff National Park and Canmore will once more present the Women of Distinction Awards to recognize three women from the Bow Valley for their contributions to creating lasting, positive change in our communities.

*"We are excited to present these awards as part of our International Women's Day celebrations, where we will showcase three inspiring women from the Bow Valley as well as our guest speaker Natalie Panek,"* YWCA communications manager Paula Krupa said.

2016 Bow Valley Women of Distinction award recipients were chosen through nomination process by a committee comprised of YWCA and Soroptimist volunteers.

Dr. Priscilla Wilson became the first female doctor in Banff National Park in 1969, breaking through gender barriers and inspiring a future generation of female physicians. She also worked as the Medical Officer of Health and was instrumental in influencing Parks Canada to secure a new water infrastructure for Banff as a result of the famous Beaver Fever contamination of 1982. Dr. Wilson was also an active volunteer with Aids Bow Valley in the 90's, and although retired from her practice, she remains a member of the ethics committee at Banff Mineral Springs Hospital.

A resident of Lake Louise for 17 years and dedicated volunteer, Carolin Crofts is the long-time editor of the community news publication Lake Louise Live. She also chairs the HR Committee which supports seasonal workers. With energy and passion for community service, Carolin helps to bring together the residents and seasonal population of Lake Louise through numerous community initiatives. Whether by co-founding Remembrance Day services or decorating the town core, she's always ready to help make Lake Louise a welcoming home for all of its residents.

For 25 years, Madeline Crilley developed and nurtured Bow Valley Literacy Program. She worked on behalf of learners, most of them immigrant women, to build a program that continues to be an integral part of our community today. She also supported hundreds of community volunteers through the program during her tenure. Understanding the needs and socio-economic realities of adult learners, Madeline was committed to ensuring the program grew and she advocated passionately for learners on a personal and political level throughout her life.

*"International Women's Day celebrates accomplishments of women from across the world and through the Bow Valley Women of Distinction awards, we aim to do so on a local level," Krupa said.*

The award ceremony will open with a keynote speech from an inspiring Canadian woman. Natalie Panek is a rocket scientist, explorer, and advocate for women in technology, and she is on a mission to inspire the next generation of female game-changers to dive head-on into challenge and pursue careers in male-dominated fields.

An inspiring young voice, Panek was named one of CBC's 12 young leaders changing Canada and was recently chosen as one of 23 visionary women to help shape Canada's future through A Bold Vision. She was also named in the Top 100 Most Powerful Women in Canada by Women's Executive Network, and joined an elite group of Forbes' 30 under 30.

*"The theme of this year's event is making things happen and these four women give an inspiring example of what that means in terms of social development and creating positive change," Krupa said.*

The event and award ceremony will take place on Thursday, Mar. 3, 2016, in Rolston Recital Hall at The Banff Centre, followed by a post-event reception. Buy tickets and learn more at [www.banffcentre.ca/events](http://www.banffcentre.ca/events).

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#### **About Women of Distinction Awards**

The awards recognize women who through their own initiative, ability and effort have made an exemplary achievement in their field, women who are outstanding role models because of their goals and the way they have achieved these goals, women who have made substantial contributions to the social fabric of their communities in unique and individual ways. Whether recognized as trailblazers in their fields or young women on the rise, all are pathfinders, bringing forth the key issues facing Canadian women.

#### **About YWCA Banff**

YWCA Banff is a social profit organization with over 100 years of experience in Banff and the Bow Valley. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, YWCA empowers women, girls and the community through leadership development, advocacy, programs and services.

In pursuit of this mission YWCA Banff focuses on the following outcomes:

- Respect for the human rights of women and girls.
- Provide and advocate for suitable emergency and transitional housing, and permanent affordable housing.
- Advancing the leadership development of women and girls.
- A sustainable community-based organization.

#### **About Soroptimist International of Banff National Park & Canmore**

Soroptimist International is a worldwide organization of business and professional women who unite to make a difference for women. Working within their communities and through international projects, Soroptimists enhance the education, health, human rights and status of all women.

Soroptimist is coined from the Latin “soror” meaning sister, and “optima” meaning best, and is interpreted as “the best for women”. Soroptimists make a difference for women through six programs of service:

- Economic and social development
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Human rights/status of women
- International goodwill and understanding

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