
GRIT&ROCK FIRST ASCENT EXPEDITION AWARD

ENABLING FEMALE FIRST ASCENTS

Press Release

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THE GRIT&ROCK FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF AN ANNUAL FIRST ASCENT AWARD TO ENABLE WOMEN TO MAKE MOUNTAINEERING HISTORY

The annual expedition prize of £5,000 will be awarded to a female-led alpine team and will become the biggest of its kind globally. The award is established by **GRIT&ROCK**, a UK-based charity dedicated to using mountaineering and outdoors to help young women build grit and resilience.

The aims of the **GRIT&ROCK FIRST ASCENT EXPEDITION AWARD** is to promote and encourage female participation in pioneering alpine ascents and to further the understanding and exploration of the unclimbed peaks. The application deadline is January 31, 2017.

The world's most famous first ascent is the conquest of Everest in 1953. Today there remain over 200 peaks higher than 6,000m in Tibet alone that have not yet been climbed. Unlike previously climbed mountains, virgin peaks have no pre-laid route. No ladders or ropes exist to help guide the way, and dead ends and unexpected obstacles can stall progress.

Despite competing on par with men in most endurance sports, women still account only for a fraction of pioneering alpine ascents. Since their establishment in 1992, the Piolets D'Or, the Oscars of Alpinism, have been awarded only twice to women. A lack of funding and sponsorship have been often cited as the root cause for this. The grant is looking to help pierce the high altitude glass ceiling and to encourage and enable broader female participation in first ascents.

The selection panel consisting of Lydia Bradey, Catherine Destivelle, Victor Saunders and Lise Billon (Piolet D'Or recipient in 2016) will award the first prize in February 2017.

Victor Saunders, deputy chairman of the Alpine Club and the judge of Piolet d'Or'2016 and the BANFF Festival said:

'Mountaineering is not about collecting summits, it is about collecting experience. Practicing at the edge of your comfort zone is where you get the biggest leverage. First ascents are about solving unusual problems in new and innovative ways. If you continue doing it - solving new problems in remote parts of the world - you will be recognised by your peers as being at the top of the game.'

'Alpinism is missing out on nearly 50% of the population. And that 50% of the population is missing out on the joy of discovering and climbing new routes. Bringing more women in to the game is good for women and is good for alpinism. We hope that this award will provide momentum to get a bigger community of women involved in pioneering ascents.'

Lydia Bradey, the judge on the selection panel and the first woman to reach the summit of Everest without supplemental oxygen in 1988, said: *"If we can encourage women to think outside of the box, lead their own expeditions and explore routes in remote parts of the world, it would be a fantastic achievement."*

Masha Gordon, the founder of GRIT&ROCK said: *'Our Foundation's goal is to help raise a generation of brave and confident girls through the power of outdoors. These girls need role models. This prize is aimed at helping create them'*.

ABOUT GRIT&ROCK: The Foundation's core programmes focus on inspiring young women to embrace outdoors as a way of building resilience, grit and self-esteem. In September 2016 GRIT&ROCK launched 3 pilot projects for disadvantaged youth in some of the most deprived areas of the UK: Blackpool, Middlesbrough and Tower Hamlets.

ENDS

Note to editors:

Masha Gordon, the founder of GRIT&ROCK is a two times Guinness Book of Records title holder for being the fastest female to complete the Seven Summits and the Explorers Grand Slam challenges. She is in the UK and is available for media interviews from *Monday 10th of October till Wednesday, 19th of October.*

For further information, please see the website www.gritandrock.com/award or contact GRIT&ROCK at award@gritandrock.com



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