



# ALTITUDE PROJECT

## Community Support Foundation

*Dear Friends, and Friends of Friends,*

Thank you so much to all who have generously donated to the 2019 campaign to support schools in the remote Upper Dolpo region of Nepal!

### In this Newsletter:

- Fundraising Goal for 2019 – update and progress
- Health – Instruction in “WASH” by ENPHO – Water purification, Sanitation, Hygiene
- Medical – Long Term Goal – year-round health posts / small scale hospital
- Education – Teacher Training by REED in March for 70 teachers
- Dorje Dolma “Yak Girl” author, artist - West Kootenay and Okanagan tour - Jan / Feb 2019
- Jigme’s Hand – special YouTube video!
- Solar Lights by LuminAid
- Photo Essay by other Dolpo trekkers and now Altitude Project Donors!
- Last minute Christmas gifts – Altitude Project Gift e-Cards!

Our goal **WAS** \$40,000 – to date we have raised \$31,500; and with the \$10,000 matching program from a kind-hearted sponsor, our total will be \$41,500!!!

What now? Well, I’ve just returned from Nepal and during the last week – “the week of many meetings”, I learned so much more about the issues in the Upper Dolpo related not only to education but also health, sanitation and medical needs that it is appropriate to use a quote by Yogi Berra ***“when you find a fork in the road – take it”***. As absurd as that statement is, it is appropriate for the current situation.

Our new goal is ***a minimum of \$40,000***. The need here is so great that we could utilize \$60,000 or more in the next year.

**Health** - nurses from the Upper Dolpo and public health specialists maintain that at least 50% of the Dolpo’s health problems are related to contaminated drinking water. Many children and villagers get sick with vomiting and diarrhea, especially during the rainy season when water from the hillsides, littered with dung, collects in the water courses. Diarrhea killed a five-year-old child at

Saldang this summer and one project teacher came dangerously close to death. Without help from the nurse at the neighbouring health post at in Karang, the teacher would have surely died. Four bags of saline were infused and the nurse was not sure if she would survive the night.

Because sick kids can't learn, we have begun work with ENPHO, (Environment and Public Health Organization). They are a NGO that specializes in the "WASH" program (water purification, sanitation – compost toilets and general hygiene practices). WASH was started by CAWST, a Canadian NGO. Both NGOs work with people in impoverished areas; they are experts in providing cost effective, simple technologies for access to safe drinking water, compost toilets and hygiene.

During the winter months, ENPHO will provide a free three-day training program on the basics of "WASH". All Dolpo school coordinators, some nurses and, hopefully, appropriate government personnel will attend. Afterwards, an expert from ENPHO will travel to the Upper Dolpo to do water testing and to develop a plan to deliver safe drinking water to Saldang School. Longer term, local government must become involved. Altitude Project will try to fund some of the cost for the ENPHO trip to the Dolpo. Bipin Dangol, Executive Director, met with us to introduce ENPHO programs to school coordinators and the information presented was of great interest.



**Medical** – the health posts that exist at Namdo, Saldang and Karang provide very basic care. And, they are closed in the winter. Infant mortality rate is extremely high in most parts of the Upper Dolpo at ~ 50%, and up to 25% of mothers die during childbirth. There is a desperate need for improvement! There is an amazing hospital at Bhejir (that is funded by generous people from the US and Switzerland) but patients must cross a 5,000+ meter pass to get there – not an easy task even when healthy! A long-term goal is to create a similar type of small-scale hospital at either Saldang or Karang that would provide a higher level of health care with basic testing like blood chemistry and ultrasound. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the annual budget of the hospital at Bhejir is only \$35,000 US. Last year they treated ~1,000 patients.

Most nurses in the Upper Dolpo are originally from this region and have returned to help their villages! Tashi Bhuti Lama, originally from Bhejir, decided to become a nurse at age 3 when she witnessed her mother's death during childbirth. Now 29 years-old, she is a shining example for how education in the Dolpo helps their communities.



*Images of hospital at Bhejir (Vijer)*

**Education** – all schools in the Upper Dolpo appear to have sponsors in place that can support the ongoing operation of the schools in 2019, which is terrific news! There are currently eight NGOs working here that I’m aware of.

During 2018, the NGO **REED** – Rural Education and Environmental Development Centre Nepal, visited many schools in the Upper Dolpo to assess the quality of education. Their survey showed there is great opportunity for improvement. Most project teachers are not professionally trained. They are people from the villages who completed high school, at minimum, in Kathmandu and have returned to help their villages as teachers.


REED has proposed a first phase training program in March of 2019 for a ten-day training session for 70 teachers. They will stop at Dunai in the Lower Dolpo for the training session as they make their way to the Upper Dolpo to open the schools at April 1. Eight NGOs will contribute to the training program at a cost of ~ \$2,000 each. REED will follow-up the training session with on-site support to ensure teachers are implementing the practices learned during the training session.



## Dorje Dolma – Yak Girl – coming to town!

Altitude Project is sponsoring Dorje Dolma, author and artist, to visit the West Kootenay and Okanagan Valley in late January and early February for author talks about her amazing story of being born and raised in the remote Upper Dolpo region of Nepal – it's all detailed in her book "**Yak Girl**". On the final night of the tour, Feb 4, we will host a showing of the companion movie "**The Only Son**", an international awarded movie about her brother, at the Civic Theatre in Nelson!

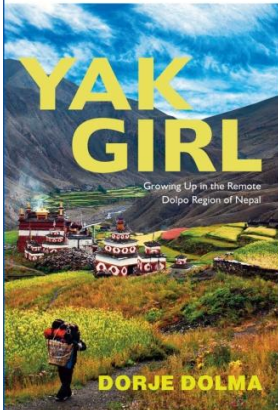
"A rare and fascinating testimony, told from the inside, of a little girl who made an incredible trip from inner Dolpo to America—and from the Middle Ages to the 21st century."  
—Eric Valli, director of the Oscar-nominated film Himalaya



# YAK GIRL

Growing Up in the Remote Dolpo Region of Nepal




Please join Altitude Project for a special evening with author and artist Dorje Dolma



Thursday, Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>, 7-9 pm,  
Nelson Public Library

"With humor, soul, and insightful detail, the author gives us vividly told vignettes of daily life and the practice of centuries-old Tibetan traditions. This wonderful and surprising tale of survival, loss, and self-reflection offers us entry to this difficult, yet magical, place."

[www.altitudeproject.ca](http://www.altitudeproject.ca)  
[www.dorjearts.com](http://www.dorjearts.com)





## ALTITUDE PROJECT

is honoured to present  
the award winning  
documentary  
by Simonka de Jong



# THE ONLY SON

February 4th, 7pm  
Nelson Civic Theatre

WILL HE FOLLOW FAMILY TRADITION OR HIS HEART?

The Only Son is a documentary about Yak Girl Dorje Dolma's family and the challenge of keeping Dolpo's ancient culture alive. Dorje's brother, Pema, grew up in a Kathmandu orphanage. The film centers on their parent's expectation that Pema will return to Dolpo when he completes his education, marry a Dolpa woman, and manage the family land.

The film is shot in Karang, and the cinematography is spectacular.

Dorje will be selling copies of her book, *Yak Girl*, in the lobby.



## Tickets \$11.

**THE CIVIC THEATRE**  
THE NELSON CIVIC  
THEATRE SOCIETY  
719 Vernon Street  
250-505-1007  
[www.civictheatre.ca](http://www.civictheatre.ca)  
[www.altitudeproject.ca](http://www.altitudeproject.ca)

Along with the author talks, David R. Gluns, will display some of his beautiful portrait photographs of villagers and students from Saldang!

We would love to arrange a few more events – Sunday, Feb 3rd mid morning or Monday, Feb 4th at noon-ish are possibilities so if you have a group that would be interested to hear Dorje's story, please contact us ASAP. We are also working to arrange radio interviews with CBC and local stations. Watch for ads in local media in the coming weeks.

***Dorje's passion is to help fund a desperately needed year-round health centre in the Upper Dolpo region. Funds raised during this tour will be applied to that goal. Dorje will be selling her book, DVDs of the movie and art work at all events.***

## Jigme's Hand

This is an amazing story that is best explained by watching this [short YouTube video](#) created by Ann, our extremely talented web designer, creative director, editor, and great friend! Caution - have a tissue on hand – there may be some tears!

Jigme had to have the lower part of his left arm amputated. Ann initiated our work with the [Victoria Hand Project](#). And Phurba, our trekking guide, is bringing news of their work to 2 Sherpa children who need a prosthetic device.

I was privileged to be with Jigme in Kathmandu for the final fitting of his new prosthetic hand!



## Solar Lights – by LuminAID

We will again be providing solar lights by [LuminAID](#) for people in the Upper Dolpo. Last spring we supplied 125 lights and expect to send a similar number in 2019. These lights are proving to be extremely useful for villagers; in the home, traveling between homes at night; trips to the toilet and most unexpectedly, they seem to keep snow leopards away from animals at night, especially when grazing animals in high mountain summer camps!

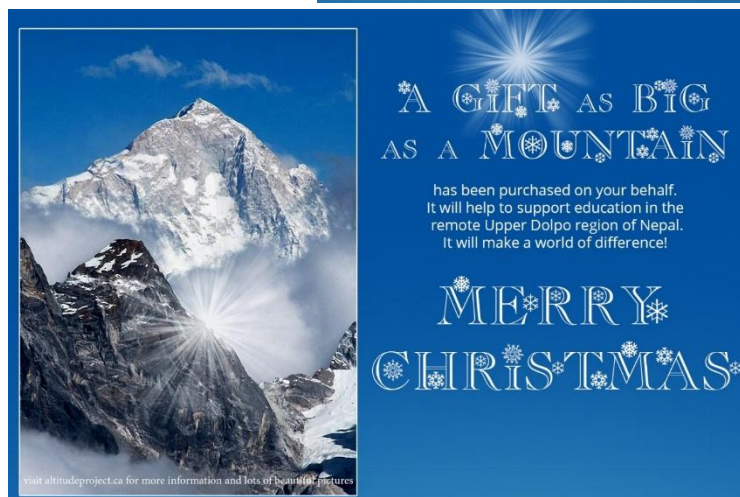


## Photo Essay by other Dolpo Trekkers

- [A group of trekkers](#) to the Upper Dolpo found a copy of Dorje's book and subsequently learned of Altitude Project. It moved them to help us – we are extremely grateful to know others understand what we are trying to accomplish in this region! Thanks to all of you!

***Our amazing web designer has developed several Gift e-Cards that might be appropriate for someone on your holiday season list! We are happy to personalize them for you! Just let us know what you need at [newsletters@altitudeproject.ca](mailto:newsletters@altitudeproject.ca)***

Gifts of any amount are most welcome and appreciated! For example: \$25 will buy one solar light for a home; \$50 will buy school supplies for one student. Larger donations will help support the entire school budget with teacher salaries, food supplies for lunches, repairs and maintenance costs, as well as school supplies for the children. We suggest using the e-Card "A Gift as Big as a Mountain" for donations of \$100 or more! By the way, the photo on that e-Card is of Makalu – the fifth highest mountain in the world at 8,485 meters!



We are now on facebook - please like / follow us to see the latest updates and photos.

*If you can give a little – it will help a lot!  
And remember – every dollar goes directly to Nepal!*

***And please remember that we now have registered charity status in Canada so if you want a tax receipt for 2018, a donation must be made by Dec 31.***

Here are the ways to donate to Altitude Project – **PLEASE NOTE CHANGES!**

- Interbank transfer from your bank to this account number at CIBC in Nelson BC, Canada – 00270/010/1065610
- e-transfers can be sent to donations@altitudeproject.ca – for security question please use “What is this for” with the answer SaldangSchool (no spaces)
- A cheque payable to Altitude Project can be mailed to Altitude Project, 4228 Crescent Bay Road, Nelson BC, Canada, V1L 6N1
- On the donate page of the Altitude Project website
- We can now accept securities as donations. We have an account with Canada Helps; they handle transactions on our behalf. Canada Helps is a large non-profit charity that helps other charities raise funds. They make it easy, click “Donate Now -> “Donate Securities” and then follow the instructions.
  - Making a donation of stock can be a big benefit to donors, as it eliminates capital gains tax!

**❖ *And please be sure to include your name and mailing address when making a donation. We need both to issue a tax receipt – it is a CRA requirement!***

*Tashi delek, Namaste, Sincere Thanks*

*On behalf of Altitude Project*



**David Swain**

*If you no longer wish to receive email from Altitude Project, please advise us by return email – thanks*

