



## The Luxury Marketing Council New York Chapter - Upcoming Event

**Wednesday,  
October 10**

**Time:** 6pm - 8pm

**Location:** The Global Fur Group, 150 West 30th Street (between 6th and 7th Ave), 5th Floor

Please RSVP by replying to this e-mail or to [rsvp@luxurycouncil.com](mailto:rsvp@luxurycouncil.com) by no later than Tuesday, October 9th. Space is limited. If you have already rsvp'd there is no need to do so again.

Please be sure to bring valid photo ID for building security

In the event that your plans change, we'd be most appreciative of the courtesy of a cancellation.

### **Exploring Canada's Original Luxury Product: Furs' Rich Heritage and Today's Thriving Market**

#### ***The Canadian Luxury Series – Part One***

##### **Panelists**

- **Gwendolyn Nacos**, President of Natural Furs International, Montreal, Quebec
- **Mark Downey**, CEO, Fur Harvesters, North Bay, Ontario
- **Keith Kaplan**, Executive Director, Fur Information Council of America, LA, California

**Generously hosted by Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs and with Special Thanks to The Global Fur Group**

The Luxury Marketing Council, in collaboration with the Consulate General of Canada in New York, is delighted to present the first in a series on Canadian luxury.

The early history of Canada is inextricably linked to the riches of the fur trade that supported a vast network of harvesters across her vast wilderness. Those traditions continue today, enhanced by world-renowned craftsmanship and design.

Fabulous furs were just about everywhere on designer runways for the current Fall/Winter season, not only revitalized in outerwear but also in all types of luxury accessories, from bags to boots. With fashion tastemakers driving this trend for optimal luxury, our panel of industry experts will share with you personal insights about the marketing of this traditional luxury category, the latest trends they perceive in the market, and what they've learned about the luxury customer in the process.

We do hope you can join us on October 10th . Prior to the panel discussion we will enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres and offer those attending a private tour of The Global Fur Group's showroom, vaults, and workrooms as well as a brief demonstration of the premier fur care process offered to Global Fur Group's customers.

*The Canadian Luxury Series:* In the coming months this series will spotlight some of the stars of Canadian Luxury, from Canada's rich heritage in the fur trade to its newest luxury export, gem diamonds. Not to be left out is Canada's men's clothing industry, perhaps best exemplified by its dominant position in North American men's suits. Finally the series will conclude with an exploration of Canada itself, a vast and varied destination for luxury, adventure, corporate, and incentive travel.

### **About our Panelists:**

## **GWENDOLYN NACOS**

Since 1993 Mrs. Gwendolyn Nacos has been President of Natural Furs International, a family-owned fur manufacturing business. The company is one of the main suppliers of the fur salons at Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue and a key resource for many better independent furriers across the country. Integral to maintaining the quality and fashion direction at Natural Furs International, Mrs. Nacos is well accustomed to meeting the in-store demands of modern retailing and, in doing so, has gained personal insights into the market for luxury furs.

Born in Westfield, NJ and armed with degrees in acting from Monticello College and Social Sciences from Harvard, Gwen Nacos arrived in Montreal in 1973 ready for a career in fashion. In 1977 she joined The Hudson Bay Company as their first Fashion Director, Menswear and Childrenswear before moving into buying positions in Cosmetics/ Fragrances and Loungewear/ Sleepwear. In 1980 Gwen joined Jandabar Fashions as Merchandise Manager and Sales Director of their Loungewear Division.

Today, employing toolsets developed in her early career, and no doubt borrowing from her experience on the stage, Gwen pulls out all the stops in order to get key messaging about her extraordinary furs through the organization – from top to bottom – with the ultimate intent of reaching the shopper. Mrs. Nacos will share her methods, from “company conclaves” – at which she presents the collection as bought by the buyer to store managers, to “morning shows” – for store employees to learn about new products and create buzz to pass along to customers, to “trunk shows”- in which 20-30 pieces are shown by models to preferred clients, and from time to time appearances by designers and private dinners for premier customers.

Mrs. Nacos is the Vice-President of the Fur Council of Canada and is also very much involved in fundraising for Montreal hospitals and Cancer Research/Support Foundations. She was the Founder of Cedars CanSupport/Faire Face in January 1989 and remains as their Director today, and is a Member of the Board of Directors of Royal Victoria Hospital

Foundation from January 2007 to present.

## **MARK DOWNEY**

Mark Downey was raised with a great appreciation for self reliance in the wilderness. Introduced to the fur trade while still in high school as a licensed trapper in the province of Ontario, Mr. Downey remains an active trapper and a certified Ontario Trapper Education instructor.

In 1981, Mark joined the Ontario Trappers' Association (OTA) of North Bay, a trapper-owned international auction house acting as both the marketing arm for the trappers' raw pelts and as government lobbyists. In 1983 he left to attend Sir Sandford Flemming College of Natural Resources where he received a diploma in Fish & Wildlife before returning to OTA in December of 1985 as a fur grader and auctioneer.

When OTA went into receivership in 1991, Mr. Downey was elected to an 8-member committee with a mandate to start another trapper-owned auction house in North Bay. After Fur Harvesters Auction was incorporated in March 1991, he served on the board of directors and held the position of Public Relations Manager from 1991-2001, as well President from 1999-2001. During the 90's he was an active board member of the Fur Institute of Canada and sat on the executive committee for several years. During the mid 90's he sat on the board of Demi deci fur dressers in North Bay.

Mark Downey stepped down as President of the FHA in 2001 and took on his current role of Chief Executive Officer of the company.

Fur Harvesters Auction Inc of North Bay is a trapper-owned auction company with ownership being shared equally between the Native and Non-Native producing people of North America. They sell, through auction, pelts collected from across North America at four auctions held annually to buyers from around the world. Three take place at their North Bay location and one is held in Seattle, Washington in conjunction with American Legend Mink Cooperative.

## **KEITH KAPLAN**

Keith Kaplan is the Executive Director of The Fur Information Council of America (FICA), a national trade group representing U.S. fur retailers, manufacturers and merchants. FICA's primary functions include the Hollywood Project - which places furs in television and film and on celebrities, fur fashion promotion and public relations, educational development, legislative monitoring and addressing animal rights and legislative issues.

With a strong background in marketing and public relations, Mr. Kaplan opened his firm, The Kaplan Group, in 1993 to provide branding, marketing and public relations services to luxury lifestyle clients. In addition to the fur industry, clients have included well known names in men's fashion, women's fashion, footwear, jewelry, watches, and travel. Prior to

opening his own agency Keith enjoyed a successful history at companies including Horlick/Levin Advertising where he acted as Vice President, Director of Client Services as well as Foote, Cone & Belding/LA and J. Walter Thompson/Chicago.

Mr. Keith Kaplan holds an MBA in marketing and finance from the University of Chicago. He earned his BA in Economics at UCLA where he was awarded *Cum Laude*, Dean's List and Honors Program. Keith also attended the London School of Economics.

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## **About Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs**

Wild furs from Canada's majestic Northwest Territories (NWT) have always been considered among the very best in the world. Marten sold under the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs (GMVF) brand is internationally recognized today as second only to Russian sable. The GMVF program not only helps meet the demands of today's global market for luxury furs, but also to ensure both a viable future for generations to come and a fair price for today's fur harvester.

The harvesting of wild fur is a fundamental part of Aboriginal culture and represents a tough and challenging existence, dependant upon the skills and motivation of the harvester. A major component of the GMVF program is continuing education and training for NWT harvesters to ensure the highest-quality pelt handling.

With support from the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs branding program has boosted both the demand for, and value of, NWT wild fur which is among the most prized in the industry. The Government of the Northwest Territories is also noteworthy in the world of gem diamonds as having the world's only program for government-certified diamonds under their Canadian Arctic Diamond certification program.

## **About The Global Fur Group**

Located in mid-town Manhattan, The Global Fur Group showroom offers retailers a wide selection of fashions in fur, as well as full service offerings including cleaning, storage, repairs and re-modeling of furs.

The Global Fur Group was established in 2004 in order to better serve American retailers with marketing initiatives and establish proximity for "just-in-time" delivery of fur products.

The Global Fur Group is comprised of Global Furs Inc., and Natural Furs International.

Founded in 1978 by Tom Nacos, Global Furs Inc is one of the largest volume houses in the world. Offering enduring classics under the g.f. label and fur streetwear for men by Ozani. Global Furs' inventory level is unparalleled.

Natural Furs International is one of the most prestigious long-standing fur companies. Since 1952, Natural Furs has been fostering designer labels for both established and emerging designers. Currently Natural Furs houses Féraud, a tradition of femininity, KRIO, modern urban furwear, and most recently Bill Blass Furs.