



**Ottawa Shambhala  
Meditation Centre**

**Centre de méditation  
Shambhala d'Ottawa**

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Dear Members and Friends of the Ottawa Shambhala Centre:

I hope this finds everyone well and happy. We are looking forward to a great year at the Ottawa Shambhala Centre. Here are a few things I would like to share with you as we start the Shambhala New Year.

The big news, of course, is that we are moving. After looking for more than two years, we have found our new location, and will be moving in June. As you can imagine, this is an enormous project that will profoundly benefit the entire Shambhala Community in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. Our new space is currently gutted, and so we have the precious opportunity to make it everything we would like it to be, but of course this will take enormous effort from everyone involved. Please consider joining us in this collaborative effort.

While all this is going on, our members, teachers and volunteers will continue to work diligently and with great devotion to preserve and care for the precious teachings and programs. Please check out our online calendar for programs that will interest you, including Shambhala Training, Shambhala Art, Qi Gong, Way of Shambhala classes, and much, much more.

Another on-going project is the work on our strategic planning. We are committed to making the Ottawa Shambhala Centre a place for spiritual growth now and into the future.

Lastly, I want to thank everyone who contributed their time and resources toward making our Centre great. We rely on your generosity and support. We couldn't do it without our members and friends who give so much of themselves toward making the Ottawa Shambhala Centre our spiritual home. From the bottom of my

heart, I thank each and every one of you. Cheerful New Year!

Tejumo Ogouma  
Director

## Practice and Education

The Ottawa Shambhala Centre has had an active Practice and Education year. We have introduced many people to the practice of meditation through our *Learn to Meditate Program* and in the context of introductory programs, offered the full *Way of Shambhala* curriculum, as well as programs for children and families, video classes, programs in the Shambhala Arts, and more. Thanks to Lynn MacDonald's inspiration, we have also revived the practice of *nyinthuns* – all-day sitting, walking, and eating practice.

A team of people led by David Fowler manifested incredible exertion and expansive generosity in successfully integrating our website and registration with the main Shambhala infrastructure, allowing us to have a stable long-term electronic presence.

Altogether over the last year we've been very happy to have a lively constellation of practice and study, with wonderful members of our community staffing programs, offering hospitality, serving as kasung, teaching, keeping up the shrines and bookstore, and altogether manifesting this important part of our Centre.

In the next year, we look forward to all of this continuing!

This winter, we are happy to offer a number of classes open to everyone – welcoming to new people but rich and deep enough that experienced meditators will find much wisdom for their practice.

The year began with a class on Sakyong Mipham’s new book *The Shambhala Principle*. In February, there is a video class *The Awesome Mind & Good Human Society* focusing on how meditation affects the mind, and how shifting our mind can help shape our world, as well as *Basic Goodness 2: How Can I Help? The Basic Goodness of Society* (anyone can take this class – it now has no prerequisites). In April, we’ll offer a class on *Cultivating Loving Kindness, Practicing Compassion*.

We also have a rich palette of practice opportunities, Refuge and Bodhisattva vows (and affiliated one-day classes for those considering these vows), a practice Program with Acharya Richard John – *Maitri: Five Wisdom Energies*, and a spring sangha retreat with Shastri Henry Chapin. And we continue our regular schedule of core classes, practice programs and community gatherings.

## Learn to Meditate

*Learn to Meditate* is the primary way that we introduce new people to meditation, other than entry-level weekend programs (Shambhala Level I). The English-language sessions occur the first and third Wednesdays of each month and are led by MIs and Guides.

The French-language sessions called *Apprendre à méditer* occur on the second Wednesday of each month and are coordinated by Chantal Tremblay.

*Learn to Meditate* sessions are very popular, usually drawing upwards of 12 people. We have never been able to track whether people continue with us in terms of taking programs, but anecdotally it is fair to say that the majority do not. Nonetheless, a number of people have entered the Shambhala path through *Learn to Meditate*. On the whole, people seem to find these evenings accessible, welcoming and informative.

## How’s Your Meditation Going?

Last year, “*How’s your Meditation Going?*” was piloted, and led by Jean Sirois. The goal of this program was to offer some continuity to individuals who have attended a *Learn to Meditate* open house or any other introductory class. The program consisted of having a meditation instructor (MI) available once a month on Thursday evening, in addition to a two-hour workshop, once a month, on Saturday. Also, two three-evening classes based on *Turning Your Mind into an Ally* were offered.

Unfortunately, the turn-out was small. The program has been discontinued since we don’t believe that it will be sustainable longer term. We will be offering other beginner classes, including video classes, as an alternative in the upcoming year. Our goal is to ensure that new people who come to the Centre are not left without anything that could interest them for long periods of time.

## Meditation Instruction at the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre

With the generous assistance of the Recreation Therapists and Volunteer Coordinator, Sarah Shima has been providing basic meditation instruction to mostly live-in clients of The Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre since February 2011, generally on a monthly basis.

The number of participants of this drop-in class has ranged from one to nine people. The class follows the same syllabus as the basic week-night instruction at the Shambhala Centre.

Since January 2014, Suzanne Côté has joined Sarah in providing instruction once per month as well. We will be providing meditation instruction generally on the first and third week of every month.

## Family and Children's Programs

This year has seen some wonderful family energy at the Shambhala Centre. The *Bodhi School* children's program continues to thrive and grow, just like the children who attend it! Led by Chantal Boutin and Derek Heffernan, *Bodhi School* offers simple meditation instruction, activities, art, music and games related to a Shambhala theme, for children aged seven to 11. *Bodhi School* has been running continually for nine years and now has 10-15 children in attendance at most classes.

This year saw the start of a new program for teens called *Wide Awake!* led by Sheila Craig and Siobhan MacManus. This program provides an opportunity for teens to practice meditation, to discuss how Shambhala themes apply to their lives, and to explore these themes through contemplative practices and mindful movement. We also incorporate those favorite teen activities of socializing, snacking, and listening to music!

We are striving to make Shambhala community events more welcoming for children and families. This year's combined Children's Day and Winter Solstice event, organized by Brittan Fell and Margaret Couper was a great success. For the first time, we are planning activities for children with our community Shambhala Day event.

Last year we held several well-attended *Mindful Parenting Circles* and hope to continue offering these evenings in the future. If you have ideas for family events or are interested in helping make them happen, please contact Sheila Craig.

## Ashe Society

In the past year, meetings of the Ashe Society have been organized by Jean Sirois in order to foster an active and vibrant Ashe Society for our warriors who have attended Warrior Assembly.

## Shambhala Art

In November 2013, 11 individuals attended a wonderful weekend program, *Shambhala Art Part I: Celebrating the Five Senses*. Parts I and II will be offered in the first half of 2014. Assuming there is sufficient interest, we will offer parts IV and V at later dates.

## Queer Dharma

Queer Dharma is a meditation group open to any lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) identified person interested in combining the practice of meditation with the study of Buddhism. We offer meditation instruction to newcomers, and we encourage seasoned practitioners of all Buddhist traditions to join the group. Queer Dharma provides a safe and sane environment in which the unique concerns and experiences of LGBTQ individuals can be freely discussed. In August 2013, the Ottawa Shambhala Centre participated in Ottawa's Pride festivities by marching in the Parade and hosting a booth at Ottawa City Hall's Pride Info-Fair. Our visible and welcoming presence allowed us to reach out to the LGBTQ community in Ottawa and invite them to participate in our Queer Dharma group, which meets once a month. The group will continue to meet monthly in 2014.

## Shambhala Café

Shambhala Café is an informal evening of practice, socializing and discussion of topics related to meditation in daily life. Three or four of these evenings are held each year, and attendance is usually modest, but we have attracted anywhere from four to 17 participants. Often, the people who come to Shambhala Café are non-members.

Past Shambhala Cafés have dealt with topics such as love and relationships, work, the environment, prison dharma, wealth, consumerism, technology, relating to

the physical body in meditation, working with stress, and putting others before ourselves.

This year, we are starting to invite members other than MI or teachers to facilitate cafés on topics that are important to them personally. We will also try to have topics that provide more experiential opportunities for participants. For example, April's Shambhala Café will be on *The Basic Goodness of Growing Vegetables* and might be followed up with a garden demonstration later on in the season. Another topic in the works after the centre moves to a new location is around inclusion issues that could involve some experiential exercises around disabilities.

## Francophone Activities

French open houses were held once a month with an average of 2-3 participants (Instructors and guides: Jean Sirois, Tejumo Ogouma, Guy Coulombe and Chantal Tremblay).

On three successive Mondays of October, Chantal Tremblay gave a mini-course on three chapters of the book *The Wisdom of No Escape*. Participation varied from 2 to 5 people.

The same formula will be repeated in March or April if we can find a teacher.

## Feasts

Monthly feasts, either *Werma* or *Padmasambhava*, are hosted at the Ottawa Shambhala Centre for tantrikas. These feasts provide an opportunity for senior students to get together, and build our community around food, discussion, and celebratory practice.

## Dorje Kasung

After some time without a rusung, David Fowler was appointed to the position in the fall. He would like to express tremendous appreciation to Khenchung Diane

Sarrazin and Khenchen Pascal Machado for maintaining the activities of the squad in the absence of a rusung, and for their ongoing support and care.

You may see someone in a blue blazer with a Kasung pin and grey or khaki pants standing in the entrance hall. This is one of the squad doing a desk shift. Desk shift is what Kasung call the activity of protecting the Centre during a public sitting. If you are interested in learning more about Kasung practice, please contact Rusung Fowler.

The squad really appreciated the visit of Sergeant-Major Anna Weinstein in January. She conducted a day of Kasung dharma and practice.

## Printed Calendar

The printed calendar is produced three times per year. It is a one-page description of sessions and programs that people can attend without prerequisites. We print 100 copies, and reprint if necessary.

## Membership Coordination

Membership is a natural choice in the journey of a dharma student. It is necessary to direct the desire to contribute and people need to be informed and directed to various tasks or roles in light of their interests, experience and skills. Information also needs to be communicated to the Volunteer Coordinator, Diane Sarrazin.

The Membership Coordinator, Lucie Gauvreau, also participated in the Recentering Committee, as she considered that this was a priority issue for members and an opportunity for exceptional cooperation. Because of her concern for a better flow of information, she reorganized the bulletin boards and validated texts for the new website.

During 2013, we gained 13 new members and ended the year with a total of 92 – six more than last year.

Six people rescinded their membership, usually because of changes in their private or professional lives, lack of income or a physical move.

#### Objectives for 2014:

- 1) Reviewing membership in light of directions from Halifax and of our strategic planning in order to sustain a higher number of members.
- 2) Improve communications on the advantages and responsibilities of members connected to the Centre's activities. (The new website has an important role in this, but that of Meditation Instructors, teachers and members at large is just as important in motivating potential new members.)
- 3) Update the basic information kit.
- 4) Promote good communications between the various coordinators in order to better orient potential new members' interest in the operations of the Centre.
- 5) Promote greater closeness and sharing among members working to create enlightened society.

## Volunteers

In her relatively new role as Volunteer Coordinator, Diane Sarrazin has been reaching out to the Centre's volunteers to learn more about what they do and how she can help them, and also to recognize their generous contributions to the Centre. In addition, she has been able to find individuals for some of the vacant positions. Diane envisions having a section of the Centre's website devoted exclusively to volunteers, providing information on current volunteer roles as well as positions to be filled.

## Hospitality

We would like to acknowledge and thank the small group of members who provide hospitality services for the Centre. Hospitality involves providing a friendly, welcoming environment to individuals attending meditation sessions at the Centre: greeting individuals

and responding to general questions about the Centre, preparing tea service, selling books, and post-session kitchen clean-up. This is a vital activity to welcome newcomers. **We are currently in need of more volunteers.** Please consider devoting an evening every month or two. This is an excellent way to practice generosity and fearlessness, and to contribute to the Shambhala community. Hospitality training or a refresher with the person responsible for hospitality is always available via shadowing during the volunteer shift. We can offer a more official, short training session if people express interest. For more information, please contact Guy Coulombe who is responsible for hospitality.

## Fundraising

*Harvest of Peace* has traditionally been a time to share our good fortune by donating to the Ottawa Centre and to the Shambhala Community at large. At the September 2013 celebration, people were again extremely generous, donating more than \$2,000 to support the Ottawa Centre.

In recent years, we have been raising funds to support our move to a new and accessible location. Through your generosity, we are now in a stronger financial position to relocate and renovate a new Centre.

Demonstrating the thoughtfulness of our members, Gilles Laroche arranged to produce and sell Shambhala car stickers and has raised \$240 to date – thank you, Gilles! This initiative is continuing. Other creative fundraising ideas are encouraged.

Going forward, our fundraising efforts will focus on Ottawa Centre requirements to support both our community and the services we rely upon to help us offer meditation instruction, the Way of Shambhala Program, and the many other courses and events that take place at our Centre. It is also quite likely that some fundraising events may be launched to fund certain specific requirements for the new Centre.

2013 saw the launch of the Unified Giving Model (UGM). This is an initiative led by Shambhala International and the Kalapa Court to institute a secure, predictable funding base for Shambhala International in

Halifax, and to eventually augment support for the land centres.

The UGM is also intended to strengthen the essential connection of centres/groups with the centre of the mandala. The initial UGM phase includes an emphasis on expanding the membership base to enable an increased revenue sharing between centres/groups and the centre of the mandala. The UGM implementation clearly recognizes that any increase in transfers to Shambhala International must not jeopardize the financial security of centres/groups. So, until a new centre is secured and the new lease and renovation costs determined, our Ottawa Centre will maintain its current revenue transfer to Halifax at approximately 8%.

Fundraising events planned for 2014 include the traditional Shambhala Day event and a large auction to be held at the Centre in May. More details to follow.

## Translations

Did you know that there are people toiling in the dark to translate texts, like this one, in Ottawa? They are Guy Coulombe, Pascal Machado and Suzanne Côté. There is also Élisabeth Dadoun who is currently on sabbatical. If you have something needing translation, please write to [translators@shambhalaottawa.ca](mailto:translators@shambhalaottawa.ca) indicating the deadline date. If you would like to join the translation group, please write to Suzanne at [suzannerigden@gmail.com](mailto:suzannerigden@gmail.com).

*March 15, 2014*