



# Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

Vol. 10 Issue 1: Winter 2011

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also contribute to the newsletter. Submissions are invited, articles of 500-700 words, poems and insights that reflect engaged practice and personal experience are appreciated. The Pine Gate Sangha has many leaders and the newsletter is an organic outcome of sangha insight. Effortlessly it appears.

Ian Prattis provides dharma talks and teachings that encourage practice through deep non-action, so that engaged practice (action) emerges from understanding and compassion. Carolyn Hill teaches a regular Qi-Gong class at Pine Gate Meditation Hall as an introduction to mindfulness practice. The Pine Gate Sangha welcomes old and new members to its regular and special activities.

## Facebook

A conspiracy headed up by Brother Yves – *Resounding Expansion of the Source* - has been successful – Pine Gate Sangha now has a Facebook Page. Looks very interesting too - with videos of Thay, book reviews, discussions, sangha activities, posts and some gentle humour.

Check it out:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Pine-Gate-Sangha/166759323357079> - click the "Like" button if you wish to make Yves and Co happy! Ian has done so and contributed a few things. His grandchildren will never believe that he has graduated to Techno-Peasant Level II.

Pine Gate is the voice of Ottawa's Pine Gate Sangha, who practice engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Friends of the sangha

**Mindfulness and Discernment**      **Ian Prattis**

The Tibetan Buddhist root of mindfulness is contained in the term - *drenshey*. English translations interpret it as mindfulness. This is only part of its meaning. In Tibetan, *dren* means mindfulness while *shey* refers to discernment. The two are intertwined and lead to significant questions. Mindfulness cannot take on concrete meaning until we ask “Mindfulness about What?” The mindfulness trainings in different traditions address this question with specific guidelines for mindfulness about speech, sexual conduct, consumption, non-attachment to views, dealing with anger, community, being present and so on. There is, however, a further question – “Mindfulness How?” This is where *shey* – discernment - comes into play. My reflection on the connection between *dren* and *shey* is that while they are tightly interconnected there is also a process at work. Discernment is only there when mindfulness is skilful. This essential process is often neglected or left implicit. I intend to make it explicit, as the matter of discernment refers to skilful means – life skills, street smarts, astute awareness and clear understanding of reality. This is known as *Upaya* in Sanskrit.

I intend to raise *Upaya* – skilful means of discernment – to a major, explicit, component of practice. It is obvious that both qualities of mindfulness and of discernment are essential, as their incorporation in the Tibetan term *shen drey* implies. Yet many practitioners and teachers neglect to emphasize the quality of discernment whereas this is needed along with mindfulness to tame the wild mind. For a prime example of discernment we can examine Nelson Mandela’s example. Mandela’s gift was certainly not dharma. It was astute and skilful discernment in the use of tactics. He was a master tactician and strategist. These qualities were sculpted and refined during his long incarceration on Robben Island. He endured with great fortitude and understanding, emerging as a mature statesman who knew what to do and how

to do it. Mandela was aware that negotiations with the South African government were not so much about principles, but a question of tactics. The most pragmatic of idealists, Mandela saw the world not in simplistic terms but as infinitely nuanced and complex. He knew to keep his friends close and his enemies even closer. In prison he studied the language, literature and mentality of the Afrikaaner rulers, so that he could arrive at a deep understanding of them and their current situation. He forgave his oppressors because he knew he would be destroyed if he did not. At the present time, only a few leaders of such quality exist in political, corporate, bureaucratic and religious domains of life.

A more mundane mantra of discernment is offered by the actor/singer Kenny Rogers in his movie “The Gambler”: *You have to know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em, and know when to walk away.* He was of course referring to poker! Another means of expressing this mantra would be: “Am I conducting myself in the appropriate manner for this exact moment?” This is all about the quality of discernment and being skilful, which can no longer be left implicit.

In writing a commentary on the Buddha’s Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing, I consulted texts and translations from different traditions. Yet in the back of my mind I felt there was something I was not locating. Then I came across Rosenberg’s 2004 book, *Breath by Breath*, which used translations from the Theravaddan tradition. In the translation of the sixteen exercises with breath, I found what I was looking for. Each exercise starts with: *One trains oneself* as in: *One trains oneself: Calming the whole body I breathe in. Calming the whole body I breathe out.* I admired the emphasis on training, as it assumes that we begin in a state that is not skilful and through training arrive at a state that is more skilful. This is to bring home that it is not intellectual notions that will get us through but a systematic re-training of the mind through the application of mindfulness, concentration and

insight. The vehicle for the entire process is the in-breath and the out-breath. This is the sum total of skilfulness. In my commentary on this sutra I took it an explicit step further to include skilfulness and transposed each exercise to the format:

*Skilfully training myself: breathing in and out, calming the whole body.*

*Skilfully training myself: breathing in and out, contemplating cessation.*

My practice of this sutra did not take root until I could truly see for myself that my body, feelings and mind were calmer. It takes me to a seemingly strange place where I see all of life as a movie – an illusion that I am in but do not participate with – well not much! From deep in the cave of formless – I use mindfulness to navigate the forms in everyday life and do my best not to get caught in those forms. It is not always a success story! Though the Matrix movies were right on. Then, when you meet the Buddha on the road you will know what to do. Kill him. More precisely - kill the perceptions and notions about the Buddha that you have become attached to. The raft is not the shore.

### **The Rescue Of The Nation      Cristián Warnken**

*Cristian is a noted writer in Chile. His reflection on what the 33 miners have to teach us was translated from the Spanish by Camila Reimers.*



In the last years everything has collapsed around us (institutions, convictions, the Republic as we knew it) but the last news brought us an unexpected surprise. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of March the earth spoke. Now is the man that speaks from the bottom of the earth and from the desert, the desert that was beginning to grow in our own soul. The look of those miners captured by the camera under the light of their lanterns has the effect of thunder and that's because we've been submerged in darkness without even noticing. The night of a country that has denied its own light in order to dazzle itself with the light of reflectors, cameras, reality shows, theatre, etc.

Compared with these 33 men down in the earth, all reality, all events are pale and disintegrate in front of this fact. The reality of stone and mineral doesn't give space to mockery. The light of these miners blinds us like the light in the cavern of the Greek philosopher. It's like we can see it face to face in all its power, Now we are blind, blind with the light of 33 small lanterns and we'll continue to be blind all the time necessary until we can see again. And, what are we going to see? Our naked essence, our most profound truth, our beauty, our hope buried under lies for so long.

These 33 Chileans are the heroes of an internal epic. Because this is an internal battle and we have to resist. To resist in the radical sense once expressed by the poet Rilke. To resist the songs of the sirens, to resist everything that takes us from our centre and gets lost. Because we had driven so far from our centre, we have lost contact with the control tower. But somebody has called us from the purity of the stone. Not an e-mail, not a text message: 33 characters written with their own blood. The miners are not in hell, we are the ones in a hell that doesn't make sense, with lack of truth and authenticity. They are our Orfeos. Orfeo saved his love Euridice from the Hades, the subterranean country of death. They with their lamps and their messages will take Chile out of our suffering. They are the rescuers.

Up to now we had celebrated a fake bicentenary, two hundred years of independence from Spain. Today, we are waiting to be born again. This is the waiting of a long delivery. Earth is giving birth to 33 men. But in reality we are the ones being born because we were sleeping and dead. An earthquake was not enough to wake us up; we needed a great myth to work around it. This is not just 'news,' it is a myth that was born from the unconscious of the Chilean people. Like the Republic wants to be born again, like these miners were their prodigal children ready to come back and until they come back, Chile still doesn't exist. So now we have to stop talking about our bicentenary, now we have to talk about our new nation being born from the depth of our own guts and soul. A country we'll deliver together.

A country may be poorer but richer, whose diamonds are the eyes of the poor; A country that wants to flower, like the desert every 100 years, with the pain of childbirth; A country with the lamps of the miners and clean eyes.

### **Greening Sacred Spaces      Kathryn Guindon**

In his book "The Sacred Balance", David Suzuki speaks eloquently about the interconnectedness of ourselves and the natural world, and the spiritual value of that relationship. Certainly when we extend our compassion to the rest of the planet, we begin to feel a moral obligation to care for it. Greening Sacred Spaces is a program that works with people of faith, of all religious beliefs, to strengthen this relationship and help take practical steps to walking more lightly on the earth. Some members of Pine Gate Sangha may be familiar with Greening Sacred Spaces already. Our network coordinator, Diana Brushey, was at Friends for Peace day this year, displaying materials and giving a short presentation. Pine Gate has been involved with the Greening Sacred Spaces program for a few years now – an article in the Peace & Environment News featured the sustainable living practices that happen at the Sangha, and those of us

at Greening Sacred Spaces have appreciated Ian's contributions to events in the past.

An important part of Greening Sacred Spaces is the steering committee. This group is made up of people from different walks in life and different faith traditions, all brought together because they care about the planet and feel caring for it is part of their faith. Diversity is what makes us strong, so we are always looking for more input from different faith backgrounds. We would welcome the participation of any interested Pine Gate Sangha member.

We meet every couple of months for about two hours to plan future events, brainstorm ideas, and generally help Greening Sacred Spaces be more effective in Ottawa. Come out to a meeting and check it out! Contact Kathryn Guindon: 613-851-3193, [kathrynguindon.fcg@gmail.com](mailto:kathrynguindon.fcg@gmail.com) for more information.

### **Ottawa's Great Forest      Julie Comber**

*Julie is a Ph D candidate at the University of Ottawa and is part of the campaign to save this wonderful and irreplaceable forest from development.*

Rugged and beautiful, the Beaver Pond Forest is scheduled to be clear cut and blown up to build a subdivision in Kanata North. Just a 20 minute drive from Parliament Hill, this urban wilderness has 679 known species including over 160 bird species, and 18 species at risk. It is rated as a Provincially Significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). It has archaeological and cultural significance that has not been adequately assessed. And yet, the developers who own the land are poised to destroy it. And the City of Ottawa is standing idly by.

Through a series of short-sighted decisions over the years, the part of the South March Highlands now known as the Beaver Pond Forest was zoned for development, and eventually was bought by KNL, a

partnership of Urbandale and Richcraft. They want to build houses as soon as possible.

The outgoing Ottawa City Council considered the grass-roots, community created Stewardship Plan – an alternative to KNL’s subdivision plan – as realistic, innovative, and inspirational. The stewardship plan demonstrates excellent vision, such as establishing an Education, Research, Peace and Eco-tourism centre, attractive to scientists as well as schoolchildren and tourists. The community has not been given the chance to make this plan a reality. Instead, on 15 December, the new City Council decided to “save” an ecologically meaningless corridor between the Beaver Pond itself and the protected Trillium Woods. And let the rest of the 70 acres of irreplaceable Forest be destroyed. Urbandale plans to start cutting it in early January.

How can the City of Ottawa allow a forest with 18 species at risk to be cut down when missing storm water management and environmental issues remain? How can the City of Ottawa allow this destruction when we are so close to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing on January 31st on this issue? How can the City of Ottawa refuse to require a new Archaeological Assessment in the spring time - when this has been requested by leaders within the First Nations Anishnabe/Algonquin Community?

It is time for the City of Ottawa to take its role as the Steward of the development process seriously. The City must ensure the developers follow each of the conditions of the subdivision plan and the laws of Ontario. These laws can fully protect this land - if they are actually followed. However, City Council is being told by City Staff that these conditions have been met. They have not and our proof is being ignored.

**What can you do?**

First, go visit the forest. Then you will understand why it should be saved and cherished. You may be

inspired with your own ideas on how to save it. But to get you started:

- Write to Mayor Jim Watson and your City Councillor. Ask them to ring in the International Year of Forests by saving what should become Ottawa’s Great Forest.
- Write to Urbandale. The company can be a Hero or Villain on this.
- Write to the media. Why hasn’t there been more coverage? The City’s own documents posted at OttawaLeaks.ca show problems with how Ottawa makes decisions. We need the media to get the word out and follow-up.
- Write to the NCC and Ministry of Tourism and Culture.
- You can email me at [julie.comber@uottawa.ca](mailto:julie.comber@uottawa.ca) if you are interested in volunteering. We also have a Facebook group: “I want to save the land North of Beaver Pond Park in Kanata Ontario”.
- More ways to help at <http://candle4kindness.wordpress.com/>

Thanks for reading this. It’s never too late to do the right thing.

**On Negative Emotions**

**Cynthia Handlen**



Some recent events have given me the opportunity to practice very deeply with emotions I used to label as "negative." Because I thought of them as negative, I believed I needed to try to eliminate them in my life. I see now that, as a whole feeling human being, the entire spectrum of human experience has great value, when used appropriately. In Nonviolent Communication, a practice begun by Marshall Rosenberg, we learn that all human beings share the same sets of

feelings (emotions) and basic human needs. Here is a list of them from the CNVC website:  
<http://www.cnvc.org/Training/feelings-inventory>  
 and <http://www.cnvc.org/Training/needs-inventory> .  
 These are not "authoritative" lists, but just lists compiled by people working in the field of NVC to approximate as best they can through language (our human form of communication), things that are very hard to define in discrete terms. However, with only language and pheromones to work with, and since pheromones do not register on this page, I will continue with language.

So, I have been awakening to "horrible" truths about my life, which evoked within me emotions, once thought of as negative. This awakening has come about so slowly, through another practice I use called mindfulness. There is a video of my Teacher, "Thay," the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh explaining mindfulness:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aubF7v-MIMM>  
 He has been a wonderful inspiration to me. My teacher taught me how to be happy in the present moment regardless of "horrible" truths. When I began to practice, I believed I had within me "negative" "destructive" emotions. When anger came into my consciousness, I was not aware of the transitory nature of anger. I was not aware that I could change the situation. I was captive of the emotion. In that state, the emotion was truly negative. However, through the practice of mindfulness, very slowly, very gently, I began to awaken to the true nature of the emotion. I could see that the emotion was impermanent. I could "change the peg" and redirect my mind to a beautiful image--or just the beauty in the present moment. A beautiful image might be "breathing in, I feel solid like a mountain, breathing out, I feel fresh as the dew." Or I could just be present to the solid mountains touched by the morning dew that is now a frost on the spruce trees.

But still I did not know what to do with the emotion. Why was it there again and again? It wasn't until I gained the stability, through this

practice of stopping, resting the mind, that I could sit and look deeply at the causes and conditions of the emotions--that I could see I had a choice. I could see the causes could be impermanent, if I was able to honor that emotion and the valuable message it carried - that my basic human need for safety was not being met. When I could see that, and take responsibility for meeting my need for safety, I realized the correct and appropriate path of action was not to endure the suffering. I could then see the appropriate action was to remove myself from that situation so that I did not allow the conditions to occur in which my safety was jeopardized.

It took me seven and a half years of practice to get to that point of taking right action to end the violence. I did it with the help of my mentors, teachers, and friends to whom I am most grateful. I bow to the Buddha in you.



## **Part II Seeking Integration: Bill Shields**

*Sustainable Living Ottawa West (SLOWest) is a very young grassroots network in the west end of Ottawa seeking to discover how to live in an environmentally sustainable, socially just and spiritually fulfilling way. Central to the vision of SLOWest is the integration of the inner and outer dimensions of our experience; the contemplative and the active; being and doing. The following is part two of an early discussion paper that we are using to initiate the development of a foundation for our work that will help us ground our actions in the deeper field of creativity that infuses all life. It offers some approaches for active groups to*

*manage projects and work with disagreements and conflict in ways that reflect the guidelines offered in part one of this paper which was published in the previous edition of Pine Gate.*

### *Working with Disagreements*

When disagreements arise in a group two or more points of view emerge in the discussion and these are held as mutually exclusive, either-or, right and wrong. The traditional response is for each group to try and convince the other that they are wrong. More progressive groups try and avoid this reaction but still experience disagreements as a problem. The following is suggested instead:

***Watch for and welcome disagreements as they arise:*** Invite the group members to avoid the pull to 'side' with one view or the other and explore each perspective more thoroughly.

***Hold both perspectives:*** Draw out the positive benefits of each perspective but also invite the group to recognize the limitations or negative possibilities that each view holds. As you 'hold both' and go more deeply into each point of view, tension may arise but this should be understood as energy for transformation.

***Explore them more fully:*** Allow the diversity to increase, and allow for intensity.

***Stay tuned for the integration:*** If this is held creatively the process can give birth to a 'third' idea that incorporates many of the benefits of the previous ideas and often balances them in such a way that their limitations or negative possibilities are mitigated.

The results of this approach can be a much richer idea, more likely to hold the qualities of a solution

that can address the complexity of the challenges we face. The group will also be much more united, aligned and committed to this new idea as it holds much of what the various participants brought to the process. The group can become quite skilled in the practice of working with disagreements as a creative opportunity.

### *Interpersonal Conflicts*

Whenever people come together, particularly when they are engaged in tasks they care deeply about, misunderstandings, conflicts, and unintended hurts are inevitable. Whatever we might wish, SLOWest will not be exempt. Glossing over these experiences will weaken relationships. Anticipating them as a normal part of working together, and choosing to become skilful in working through them, can strengthen relationships. A more detailed description of this process will be prepared to support SLOWest participants in achieving this potential.

### *Suggested Practices for Project Groups*

The following are suggestions for project groups to consider in addition to the guidelines above.

#### **Shared Leadership**

It is suggested that each project group have two people sharing the leadership functions for a period of time. This will ensure that the group is well supported but that no individual takes on too much. These leadership functions include engaging participants, promoting SLOWest's approach to working together, and ensuring that key functions are fulfilled (development of agendas for meetings, communications between meetings, linking to other project groups, facilitating group meetings, etc.).

## **Group Meetings**

To ensure that meetings are effective, use people's time well and remain grounded in SLOWest's approach the following are suggested:

**Agenda:** Have someone take responsibility for maintaining an agenda for the group's meetings, ensure that everyone is able to include items on the agenda and send it out in advance of the meeting so people can come prepared.

**Centering:** Recognizing that we are all coming from busy lives, take a minute or two to settle in, put aside other distractions, become present. Participants can be invited to recognize wherever they are at with without judgement. This awareness can help individuals be more aware that experiences from elsewhere (a hectic day, difficulty at work, etc.) may influence their participation in the meeting.

**Check-in:** Allow a brief opportunity for people to express where they are at/what they are with as the meeting begins. This is an opportunity to welcome differences and help the group to be more conscious in including the whole person.

**Facilitation:** This role can rotate through the group and the facilitator should find a way to include her/his point of view in the discussions. The facilitator may play a particular role in supporting the guidelines identified above but all members of the group should take responsibility for both the task and relationship dimensions of the work.

**Time management:** it is important to respect the start and end times for the meeting but it doesn't help to be too strict in doing so. Allow a few minutes for latecomers but then move into the meeting allowing others to join in as they arrive. The facilitator or another person acting as timekeeper should manage the time so all items on the agenda are addressed, but should remain open to new and important issues arising in the conversation. When choices need to be made about re-allocating time the whole group should make this decision. End at the agreed upon time allowing a few minutes for completion of the discussion and invite those wanting to explore further to do so informally after closure.

**Check-out:** At the close of the meeting take a few minutes for people to express what they are with as a result of the meeting, again welcoming diversity.

**Record of meeting:** A brief written record of what as discussed/agreed helps the group maintain momentum and progress. This need not take the form of minutes but should provide someone who missed the meeting with a reasonable understanding of what progress was made and what is to happen before the next meeting. This documentation can also support making the group's work visible to others.

**Make the Group's Work Visible to Others:** SLOWest has invited people to work on the 'piece' they are interested in while staying connected to the whole. This

helps offset perennial concerns of ‘*is this initiative I’m working on going to make enough difference?*’ For this to happen easily it is very helpful for each group to provide the others with regular updates on what they are up to, information about future meetings, etc. This will be incorporated into regular SLOWest gatherings but can also happen in written form through the website.

Visit <http://sustainableottawawest.ning.com> for more information about SLOWest.

## Nothing is Lost

Thay

*Bob Allen, teacher at Fish Lake sangha in Orlando, Florida, provides some insight on the 2010 Midterm U.S. Election, paraphrased from Thich Nhat Hanh’s comments on November 7th, 2004*

For those of you that voted for Democrats, we must look deeply to see the Democrat elements in Republicans. In this long and difficult campaign, Republicans have learned many things from Democrats and those who voted for them. We have to see that they inter-are. If there had been no election, Democrats wouldn’t have questioned their positions or approach. They would have been able to assume that their way is best. But because many democrat seats were lost, the President is aware that many of the American people don’t believe in him. Now, because of this loss, he is more observant and must realize that if he doesn’t listen to the other half of the American people, there will be a big disturbance in the country. So we have to see that now all of us are in the Republicans, the Democrats and the President. Those of you who didn’t vote for the Republicans are in them, are a part of them after this election.

We have to help our government so that people elected by only part of the population will not serve just that part but the whole country. We need to keep speaking out, daily letting our government know what we want, expressing our insight and understanding. We need to be very present, very firm and constantly let the government know we are here. We can support them in our own way, through being present, calm, lucid and compassionate. Being compassionate doesn’t mean we surrender and give up. It means we see clearly that our country, our government is us and it needs our help. Compassion means acting with courage and deep love to help manifest what we know our country is capable of.

Historically it has happened that the agenda of the left has been realized by the right and vice versa. We have to speak out and keep speaking out, and it is possible that the Republicans will accomplish what the Democrats, what the left, had hoped to realize had they won.

We also need to remember that even if Democrats had been elected, they would also have had to partly realize the wish of those who voted for Republicans. Nothing is lost because we are in the Republicans as well as the Democrats. There is a loss only if we respond with anger and despair. We have to continue on, to continue our practice, and remain strong in our role as bodhisattvas helping the other half of our country by our firm, clear and compassionate action for peace and compassion--the kind of peace and compassion in which both sides win because it is based on mutual understanding

## The Culture of Entitlement George Carlin’s Ghost

There is a seemingly immovable elephant in the middle of the culture of greed. This is the elite haven known as the Culture of Entitlement. It coddles our bankers, investment brokers and corporate leaders in a cocoon of corruption, greed

and power. Just what would the late George Carlin have to say about this entity?

George Carlin was gifted with an acerbic wit, impeccable timing and scathing satire. He created comedy routines that reduced world crises to hysterical tatters. Where is he when we need him the most? Which is right now amidst the global circus we all inhabit. He is of course deceased, yet I hope there is a George Carlin lurking in all of us, as I borrow his persona for a moment. I will temper his language a little, as I want the folks reading this to get the point rather than be put off by profane language!

*“Culture of Entitlement? What damn Entitlement? Don’t you see – the market took care of that problem for us – brilliantly. It destroyed the culture of entitlement – the bankers, investment bums, hedge fund managers, corporate bandits – the market took them all and threw them into the abyss where the suckers belong. It threw them off a cliff into the deepest, darkest hole where they could never, ever climb out. Why do you think the damn market went to the trouble of creating such a drastic economic meltdown? So what do we do with this victory? We hand out parachutes, life-lines and soft landings for the giant parasites of entitlement to keep on sucking off the public teat. We bailed the creepy, corrupt suits out. We provided idiots with huge bonuses to retain their skills – the same skills and idiots who got us into this mess in the first place. Are we Insanely Nuts or what? President Obama – do you get it yet? Those angry voters who shellacked you in the 2010 mid term elections – remember those guys? It was their tax dollars that bailed out the creepy suits on Wall Street. The same suits that foreclosed their homes. Connect the dots Mr President.*

*Do you know where the 700 billion dollars for bailouts came from? It’s from your damn hip pocket. Your taxes, my taxes, everybody’s taxes – spent to fix a corrupt system that is not just broken, it’s obsolete and unworkable. The market shook it off “like fleas from the backside of a dog!” So what*

*do we do? We put the broken system on artificial life support. We Are Ludicrously Nuts. And there’s more. The latest idiocy is to get private investors to buy the toxic assets of banks with government financial support. That’s our taxes again people: only 75 – 100 billion dollars this time. That guy Krugman, who got the Nobel for thinking straight, calls it by its true name – “cash-for-trash.” And our hip pocket is hung out to dry once again. We Are Indescribably Nuts. 700 billion dollars is just the start of retaining bandits in suits so they can stab us in the wallet over and over again. How many IRS deductions on paychecks are needed to ring up 700 billion dollars? It’s enough to drive a dead comedian to drink.”*

**Inside Job: The Movie**      **Katherine Monk**

*Directed by Charles Ferguson, narrated by Matt Damon. Ottawa Citizen, November 12, 2010*

Oliver Stone tried to make us angry by revisiting Wall Street, but it is Charles Ferguson’s tank ride through Lower Manhattan that truly promises to light a Molotov cocktail in your mind. *Inside Job* is an intricately detailed, journalistic solid and morally outrageous examination of the 2008 stock-market crash and ensuing bailout paid for by the American taxpayer. And the filmmakers who created it understand how tough it is to animate money.

Money just lies there, the ultimate pillow queen, waiting for someone’s twisted imagination to give it meaning. Money needs a master, a whip-toting miser with a masochistic streak to really be interesting, which is why it attracts people of questionable moral fibre. We meet a lot of these people over the course of this dramatic post-mortem. Assembling his suspects in the drawing room of his documentary, Ferguson gets interviews with people who played central roles in the bull-to-bear denouement, such as Glen Hubbard, chief economic advisor during the Bush administration

and current dean of business at Columbia, and Jeffrey Lane, former vice president of Lehman Brothers...

The moment bankers were not compelled to be fiscally responsible, the system was doomed. The current economy rewards greed, obfuscation and the siphoning of cash from the savings accounts of the masses. We know a lot of this now, because we watched the markets' plummeting red line on newscasts for the better part of a year. The ugly death spiral was analyzed and dissected by the media, where we get the outlines of the story, but lacked the lens quality to get the whole truth.

Ferguson's approach is very "Columbo-esque". Wearing his Everyman trench coat that says "I don't know anything, so explain what happened," Ferguson wanders into one corner office after another, soliciting the expertise of the subjects. He plays to their inflated egos, he listens with deference, and then he unsheathes his razor-sharp blade of truth and sinks it into their tiny, atrophied hearts before they even know what happened. Sometimes the subject sees the fine point coming and simply refuses to answer more questions. These moments are particularly amusing, because we see egos buckle, which is the unspoken underpinning for the whole narrative....

The beauty of the film's construction is the way it takes a very complicated market reality and breaks it down to a size that we can understand, because ignorance is the real villain here. The bankers told us the system was too complicated to change, and "too big to fail." Ferguson's two hour examination proves the truth is actually a lot simpler than we could have imagined: We Got Conned! Ferguson does not need a bullhorn to make us hear his message. By speaking to ordinary people with expert knowledge, Ferguson humanizes the story and reinvests in the power of an aware and engaged public.

## **A Failed Genetic Experiment?      Ian Prattis**

*This is an extract from a chapter by the same name in a forthcoming book – Keeping Dharma Alive.*

The Holocene epoch is a geological term describing the 12,000 year period from the last ice age to present time. Paul Crutzen, Nobel Prize winning chemist, notes that it has been replaced by the Anthropocene epoch, denoted by human induced geophysical changes to the planet. Result – a tough new planet. Antidote – there is none. Not unless we collectively change humanity's mindset and learn how to live in a sustainable manner on the tough new planet we have created. This is a sharp reminder about the Global Warming debate. Warnings are now so passé. Global Warming is here. We fail to recognize that our planet is radically altered and that humanity is totally out of sync with our home. Our present form of civilization is not sustainable, so we have to scale back, simplify, create self-sustaining communities and mature. Schumacher's "Small Is Beautiful" thesis has a very prophetic ring! Changing structures of greed and corporate dominance require first of all a change in consciousness. Mindfulness supports that outcome. Even deeper are the Buddha's teachings on impermanence to spur such a radical change. Can we grasp the insight of extinction – of ourselves, our civilization – even of the planet? Without the insight of impermanence we will not be able to move our mindsets. We have to find a way to adjust to our dramatically changed environmental circumstances and no longer hold on to a view of how it once was. It all starts in the mind, which has to wake up to reality as it is. The steps are the discussion of this chapter.

They arise from my current research on consciousness. Particularly the critical response to Lovelock's 2006 book "Revenge of Gaia" where he argues that the present self-regulating mechanisms of Gaia – the Planet Earth - are now working against us. The dependant variable of temperature

rise is the major product of Gaia's control system - beyond human control. This is amplified exponentially, according to Lovelock, simply because there are no systems known to counteract temperature rise. Hence his prediction in a January 2006 interview with The Independent newspaper that:

*Before this century is over, billions of us will die and the few breeding pairs of people that survive will be in the Arctic where the climate remains tolerable.*

Lovelock is a brilliant scientist, incorporating formerly separate geophysical studies into one comprehensive overview of the planet. Unfortunately, he omits the most essential variable in his model of Gaia as a cybernetic feedback system. That is consciousness – which is malleable, plastic and open to radical change. He relies on a third person observational stance, quite inadequate for 21<sup>st</sup> century science. Lovelock's neglect of consciousness change leaves us with a scientific concept of Gaia only. Gaia, however, has entered discourse as Metaphor and Social Movement in addition to Scientific Concept. The necessary inner work to change consciousness does an end run round Lovelock's conclusion about breeding pairs in the High Arctic!

In response to these dire predictions for a habitable eco-niche for *homo sapiens* I argue for a Failsafe in Consciousness. I coined the phrase in my 2002 book *The Essential Spiral* and developed it further in *Failsafe: Saving The Earth from Ourselves* (2008). I describe how consciousness expansion will be held in abeyance by wilful human ignorance until the global ecological situation deteriorates to a breaking point. This breaking point will then act as a catalyst, penetrating such ignorance and activating consciousness so it is propelled into expansion, deliberation and change. The three main components of this concept are: Innate Earth Wisdom, Counter Culture and Tipping Points in Consciousness. The components of my argument all

refer to attributes of mind. I refer to understandings of the mind drawn from the observational perspective of an awakened mind. I draw on teachings from the wisdom of the elders - aboriginal wisdom - and of Shakyamuni Buddha. Out of necessity I examine the flip side – that humanity may not take the quantum leap in consciousness fast enough, and then we face the question of whether our modern civilization is a Failed Genetic Experiment. We have to allow aspects of our out of control civilization to fail. I argued in *Failsafe* that the only hope for our embattled civilization is to shift our mindsets from a culture of greed to a culture of sustainability.

## Quotes and Jokes

### House Cleaning:

Why was the Buddha not able to vacuum the corners of his hut?

The Buddha had no attachments.

**Larry Dossey:** Make no mistake: the fear of death is humanity's Great Disease, the terror that has caused more suffering throughout history than all the physical diseases combined. As Ernest Becker said in his book "Denial of Death" - *The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is the mainspring of human activity – activity designed largely to deny that death – the final destiny of man....* Non-local mind is the great cure for this affliction, because it assures us that the most essential aspect of who we are cannot die, even though the physical body perishes.

**The Dalai Lama:** Material progress and a higher standard of living improve comfort and health but do not lead to a transformation of the mind, the only thing capable of providing lasting peace. Profound happiness, unlike fleeting pleasure, is spiritual by nature. It depends on the happiness of others, and it is based on love and tenderness.

**Thay:** What I've been doing is presenting the teachings of original Buddhism in a Mahayana spirit. Mahayana Buddhism has a very open view, not restricted, and it is wonderful to study original Buddhism with that kind of spirit. . . . . It is like Master Linji, who learned a lot of Buddhism but found that learning Buddhism was not enough. So he abandoned the learning and began to practice.

Transformation at the base means transformation in the depths of the store consciousness, because it is the base of all other consciousnesses and ultimately of the entire universe. . . .

Our sense bases – our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind – are all deep oceans filled with danger. . . . . A practitioner who does not light the lamp of mindfulness to guard his or her six senses is not really able to practice.

**David Korten:** Wall Street operates as a criminal syndicate engaged in financial scams and extortion rackets that impose unbearable costs on society while serving no beneficial function not better served in other ways. The need is not to repair Wall Street but to replace it with institutions devoted to serving the financial needs of ordinary people in ways that are fair, honest, and consistent with the reality of our human dependence on Earth's biosphere.

### **Rev Michel Dubord's Christmas sermon**

A snowstorm blew up in Northern Ontario. The weather network broadcast that to help the snowploughs get through – all cars should be parked on the LH side of the road. Sarah immediately put her coat on and went outside to park her car on the LH side of the road outside. Two days later another snowstorm and the weatherman advised people to park on the RHS of the road so the snowploughs could get through. Sarah once more obliged. A week later another blast of snow – and before the weatherman could get his message out – the broadcast went dead. Sarah was distraught. "What shall I do now?" she asked her husband. With great gentleness he said to

Sarah "Maybe this time you just leave the car inside the garage!" To reflect deeply on Christmas as a tipping point for awakening, we should stay inside.

### **Triplets as Koans                      Michael Goguen**

Reflecting on recent dharma talks by Dharmacharya Ian – The Lion's Roar about the Buddha's first dharma talk; and then its application in the Dharma Detective talk – I was struck by the significance of three's. Here is a preliminary mapping – perhaps the reader may wish to add their points of view. I have shaped it in koan form to organize my own reflections. We also have to tape and record these dharma talks and post them on the Pine Gate Sangha page of facebook. Techies unite for this task!

OK here it is in three triplets:

*physical*

-matter

-space

-time

(template is form/ ground/ function or dynamic element)

*mental*

-life

-mind

-spirit

*spirit triplet further refines into:*

-prime (ether, consciousness, essential building blocks of the universe of creation)

-entropy (source of destruction/ change / decay)

-forces (the intermediary through which these changes take place)

*Levels of power in each sphere;*

The first level was perception or sensing of that element, but there are greater degrees of control/ creation of those elements, i.e. first by manipulating, and then creation of it itself or being absorbed by a higher level.

## Shift Happens! – Changing the World Sat Hari Kaur Khalsa

*Pine Gate Sangha is the nucleus of Friends for Peace Canada* [www.friendsforpeace.ca](http://www.friendsforpeace.ca)

I've been to a lot of peace days – Peace Prayer Days, Friends for Peace Days. I've been part of the original ones in New Mexico that started a world-wide movement of such celebrations. But one of the most moving ever was this year's Friends for Peace Day at Ottawa City Hall on October 2, 2010. The music was fabulous; the merchants' and exhibitors' tables, interesting; and the food, delicious – as always. We celebrated our love of peace, social justice, and environmental care, as always. But this year there was something different in the air - a new energy, a commitment to connecting and to being in action. There was a feeling that we can do more than just celebrate – as wonderful as that is – a feeling that we can actually make a difference, that we can effect real and important change and raise the consciousness of our country and, therefore, the entire world.

For years people around the world have been circulating petitions to establish official governmental departments of peace. Countries have departments of defence. Why not departments of peace that would pro-actively promote peace, understanding, and conflict resolution! It's not so far fetched. Costa Rica, Nepal, and the Solomon Islands already have, and talks are underway in other countries. Why not Canada! Why not a rash of countries taking a stand?

This year the directors of Friends for Peace took a stand to support the Department of Peace initiative. We established a Connections Center and greeted people, petitions in hand, encouraging them to sign. The Connections Centre also provided the opportunity for people to connect with one another around projects or issues important to them and to write or draw on a parchment scroll their vision of a world that works.



The timing was perfect! We found out that *a bill to establish a Department of Peace has been introduced in Parliament* and has a number of prominent supporters, including Ottawa's own MP Paul Dewar. Our support re-inspired the committee for the Department of Peace, and they contacted their other chapters, and the other chapters stepped up their efforts. As a result, over 300 petitions were recently delivered by post to Paul Dewar's office, and we just received word that he is now getting them ready to table the package in the House of Commons!

I'm incredibly inspired by what we all have accomplished and am reminded of Margaret Mead's words, to never underestimate the power of a small group of dedicated citizens to change the world and that, in fact, is the only way change ever happens. Personally, if my small efforts, combined with those of the other directors, combined with those of the Ottawa committee for a Department of Peace, combined with those of all the other committees around the country and around the world and all those individuals who have or will sign the petition – if all that moves the ball of consciousness down the field, closer to the goal, my life will have had impact and legacy and count for something important. Let's all keep up.  
Wahe Guru!

*At a delightful ceremony at Pine Gate Meditation Hall in October 2010, three Peace Grants were presented. To the Journey Woman art exhibit for aboriginal women's healing; to Peace Camp Ottawa supporting the peace process among young Israelis and Palestinians; and to Big Soul Project for their support of Pakistan Flood Relief. The photo is of Sat Hari presenting a \$1,000 cheque to Tam Mathews representing Peace Camp Canada.*

### **Journey Women: Aboriginal Women's Healing Experiences**

**Lucy Lu**

*Lucy - Harmonious Joy of the Heart - is an Art Therapist and Child Counselor at Minwaashin Lodge –Aboriginal Women's Support Centre in Ottawa.*

Friends for Peace Grant Empowers Aboriginal Women

Healing is a journey. Sometimes the road meanders, sometimes it is rough and rocky, and hopefully along the way there are helpers and guides who help us navigate the uncertain parts of the journey. As a sangha at Pine Gate, our mindfulness practice helps us become aware of our own suffering and to generate compassion to help alleviate the suffering of others. Through the Peace Grant, from Friends for Peace, our sangha was able to support Aboriginal women from Minwaashin Lodge on their healing journey.

Aboriginal Women from Minwaashin Lodge - Aboriginal Women's Support Centre - shared their stories of their healing journey in an art exhibit for Women Abuse Awareness Month that ran at the Orange Gallery from November 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> 2010. "Journey Women" was an art exhibit of 'body-map' images created by 8 women in a 3-day arts-based workshop on the healing experiences of Aboriginal women. The project was a part of a collaborative research between Minwaashin Lodge and Concordia University in Montreal. The goal of

the project was to gain an understanding of the conditions that contribute or challenge Aboriginal women in their process of healing from violence or the impacts of violence. The Friends for Peace Grant was able to provide support in order to run the exhibit and hold a celebration for the community to witness the art images created by the women.

I facilitated the art therapy workshop with eight aboriginal participants/artists to map out their healing journey through the body-map process. This body-mapping process was based on Jane Solomon's work "Living with X" – a Body Mapping Journey in the time of HIV and AIDS. The process was adapted for the exploration of the healing experiences of Aboriginal women, and the model of mapping out the life journey was adapted from a linear viewpoint to a circular life-cycle to fit the Aboriginal life perspective. The workshop incorporated traditional Aboriginal ceremony of prayer, smudging, drumming and singing, which were led by the women; as well as movement and grounding activities, poetry and art creation. In pairs, women helped trace each other's body outlines in the pose that depicted how they see themselves today. Then they created an outline of another image that would represent their support network – people, agencies, events, spiritual supports and anything that has given them strength. They used colours, textures and symbols to fill in their own body images of their pain and healing, as well as filling in the support person depicting how they have felt supported by their support network. The outline of themselves and their support were placed in communication with each other and showed how each woman views their relationship to their support networks. Some women showed them walking side-by-side, some in a warm embrace, one woman was held as if swinging from a tree, while another woman showed herself able to stand up taller due to the sacrifices from others. The women were then asked to create symbols depicting different aspects of their life journey.

Using the traditional native life-cycle based on the medicine wheel, women mapped out their origins, the challenges they have overcome in their life, where they are now and where they see themselves going. They also marked their points of power on their body, with a personal symbol to mark themselves. Women were encouraged to choose how to depict their self portraits and to add words or a personal slogan that gives meaning to them and their journey. There were powerful words that stand out from the images, such as “my voice”, “I love myself”, “Violence hurts us all”, “bruises heal after you see yellow”, “acceptance” and “love”. Throughout the process, women were encouraged to share to the level they felt comfortable and they were always reminded that they could exhibit their art piece anonymously in order to protect their confidentiality. It was an emotional process, yet the women felt proud of their images. When it came time for the day of the celebration, the women had felt so empowered by the creative process and the support from the people at the celebration, that six out of the eight women were able to share their story with the attendees. They each explained their body-map process and the meaning of their images. One woman felt the strength of her voice to speak out her story and shared a song with her drum. Each of the women who shared felt validated and witnessed by the viewers who were asked to share what they “saw” in the body-maps. The art exhibit marked the celebration of a journey of courageous women empowered to tell their stories with the support of a community, which was there to celebrate the resilience and strength of women on their healing journey.

More information about the Journey Women Project will be published in journal articles in the future and will also be posted on Minwaashin Lodge’s website: [www.minlodge.com](http://www.minlodge.com)

### **Journey Dance: Conscious Dance That Welcomes Everyone** **Dodie Sobretodo**

*Dodie brought this wonderful dance form to Pine Gate during the summer program.*

For many of us, the thought of attending any type of dance class is accompanied by some trepidation. "Am I co-ordinated enough? Am I fit enough? Do I have enough dance experience?" Luckily, there is a new wave of dance class that welcomes everyone. Generally referred to as conscious dance, this new style combines gentle instruction with free movement. Dancers are given seeds of inspirational instruction throughout the class, and are left with the freedom to follow their own curiosity and to express themselves creatively through movement, all while in the safety of a community of like minded souls.

As an instructor of a particular style of conscious dance form known as "Journey Dance", I have found great joy in expression through movement. However, prior to finding Journey Dance, I was that hesitant person asking whether or not I had the ability to dance. A few years ago, while I was watching the RCMP Musical Ride, there was a band playing, and I noticed these two vibrant young girls dancing with complete joy and abandon. I felt in my body this great desire to dance with the same abandon as these girls but I felt paralyzed by the voice in my head saying, "No, that would be inappropriate, you will only embarrass yourself." I pondered this event for a long time afterwards noting the children's innate ability to freely express themselves with their whole body. I came to the conclusion that children haven't developed that cynical voice in their heads that so many adults carry. The realization came to me that although we all have the physical ability to dance anywhere and at anytime, it is simply our minds that imprison us from doing so. This realization marked the beginning of my path towards conscious dance.

What I've found along the way, was that conscious dance was an opportunity to peel back the protective layers that we develop as adults in order to be reunited with those lost parts of ourselves that are longing to be seen and heard. It has given me an opportunity to find desperately needed connection. Connection to the earth beneath us, to our own unique rhythms, to community, and to all things that surround us. Like a yoga or meditation class, conscious dance provides a sanctuary for us to practice conscious movement, free from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. It offers the spaciousness to breathe and come to know ourselves. A chance to slow down and to simply be.

What I continue to find extraordinary is how much dance can teach us about living consciously.

Things like, listening to our own inner voice, finding our own inner teacher and recognizing the teacher in every person that we encounter. We learn to move in ways that honour our own needs and the needs of others, noticing the beauty that surrounds us in all directions. Like other mind-body practices, dancing provides an opportunity to engage and integrate the mind, body and spirit such that we have the sense of moving wholly through life, rather than leading with the mind as so many of us do in this fast-paced world in which we live.

Journey Dance is typically practiced barefoot while wearing loose comfortable clothing. The dance starts with grounding and finding our own rhythm, progressively moving towards movement with others and movement in community, and typically ends with lying down in Savasana allowing for a quiet mediation and reflection. The dance is typically accompanied by World music but a wide variety of musical styles are employed.

Recognizing that people are craving connection with others, there is time allotted either before or after each class to connect with one another, which I have found builds a sense of community amongst the participants. Journey Dance absolutely welcomes all souls, with deep honour and respect

for each and every person who graces us through their simple presence.

For more information about Journey Dance:

[www.journeydanceottawa.com](http://www.journeydanceottawa.com)

or join us on Facebook at "Journey Dance Ottawa"

### **Review of the Great Turning Donna Colterman**

*The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems.* Ghandi

So begins the prologue to *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* by David C. Korten, internationally renowned economist, writer, international development professional, and visionary proponent of "local living economies." This is a book aimed at those who are interested in moving through these times of global transformation with intention and hope for a more equitable, sustainable society.

In Korten's book, he contrasts the notion of "Empire," defined as a dominance hierarchy in which direction flows from top to bottom, with "Earth Community," which emphasizes the value of teamwork and self-direction. These two models flow from contrasting worldviews. The view of Empire, says Korten, assumes that humans are incapable of responsible self-direction and that order must be imposed by coercive means. The view of Earth Community assumes a capacity for responsible self-direction and partnership, and thereby, the possibility of creating radically democratic organizations and societies. These competing worldviews are examined against the backdrop of climate change, failing economic systems, rising poverty and mass environmental degradation.

Korten grew up in white, middle-class, conservative, small-town America. In his senior year of college, he took a course on modern

revolutions, partially in a bid to understand the communist threat to America at that time. What he learned – that communist revolutions were often instigated by the desperation of the poor – led him to dedicate the next 30 years of his life to working in international development to help alleviate the causes of such poverty. This experience eventually changed his worldview in profound ways. He came to see that when power resides with people and communities, life and innovation flourish, but when power is centralized in distant government agencies or corporations, life is drained from the community and services are geared toward the interests and expediency of the providers. Korten views this as the “tragedy of unrealized human potential.” He came to the conclusion that, to create a world that works for all, leadership must come from the bottom up through the creative work and political activism of ordinary people.

In *The Great Turning*, Korten traces the history of Empire from ancient times through to monarchies to modern day corporations and bureaucracies. He notes that the twentieth century has been Empire’s “most profligate period of excess,” and that we are only now awakening from “the stupor of petroleum intoxication,” i.e., our overuse of cheap oil to create economies and lifestyles that depend on the unsustainable consumption of the Earth’s resources.

He contrasts the assumptions and values of Empire with those of Earth Community and makes the case that mutual learning and partnership are integral to the whole of Creation. Empire is not inevitable nor is it the “natural order.”

In his final chapter, and his most hopeful, he outlines a strategic framework for bringing forth a new era of Earth Community. He describes how “self-organizing processes of citizen action, based on grassroots leadership, can advance an agenda of cultural, economic, and political democratization that roots power in people and liberates the creative potential of the species.”

In 1996, to speed the awakening of a new consciousness and help people engage, Korten teamed up with Sarah van Gelder to found the Positive Futures Network, which publishes *Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures*. The publication is a go-to place for readers of *The Great Turning*, who wish to keep up with new developments and find new ways to engage ([www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org)). He also sits on the Board of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), an alliance of local groups across the US and Canada committed to the vision of a planetary system of local living economies ([www.livingeconomies.org/](http://www.livingeconomies.org/)).

In closing, Korten offers up three suggestions to avoid being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the work before us. First, remember that, although the work may at times seem lonely, tens of millions are already engaged in it the world over. Secondly, every contribution, no matter how seemingly insignificant, helps shift the balance. Third, we can each do no more than our individual best.

On Friday, October 31, David Korten was in Ottawa, presenting his ideas to a near-capacity crowd at The Bronson Centre. His rapport with the audience was immediate, and he especially endeared himself to all when he led us in a dance to the music of Raffi’s activist song, “No Wall too Tall.” David Korten is a man with a vision for our times; moreover, he offers avenues for exploring the practical means of moving vision to reality.

### **Thay in Vancouver 2011 – At the University of British Columbia**

For the Retreat at UBC: August 8 - 12, 2011

***"Awakening the Heart" - A retreat with the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and monks and nuns of Plum Village, Deer Park Monastery, Blue Cliff Monastery and Magnolia Village"***

For the Public Talk at the Orpheum: Sunday  
August 14, 2011

**"Open Mind, Open Heart: *Touching The Wonders Of Now*" - An evening with the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and monastics of Plum Village, Deer Park Monastery, Blue Cliff Monastery and Magnolia Village".**

For registration go to: <http://tnhtour.org>

Also Check with [www.plumvillage.org](http://www.plumvillage.org)

**The Fruit of Awareness is Ripe                      Thay**

*When Thay was young he wrote this poem and penetrated the heart of the Buddha with a heart that was deeply wounded.*

My youth  
an unripe plum.  
Your teeth have left marks on it.  
The tooth marks still vibrate.  
I remember always,  
remember always.

Since I learned how to love you,  
the door of my soul has been left wide open  
to the winds of the four directions.  
Reality calls for change.  
The fruit of awareness is already ripe,  
and the door can never be closed again.

Fire consumes this century,  
and mountains and forests bear its mark.  
The wind howls across my ears,  
while the whole sky shakes violently in the  
snowstorm.  
Restless, tossing and turning  
in agony all night.

Thay says of this poem in *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*:

"I grew up in a time of war. There was destruction all around – children, adults, values, a whole country. As a young person, I suffered a lot. Once the door of awareness opened, you cannot close it. The wounds of war in me are still not healed. There are nights I lie awake and embrace my people, my country, and the whole planet with my mindful breathing.

Without suffering, you cannot grow. Without suffering, you cannot get the peace and joy you deserve. Please don't run away from your suffering. Embrace it and cherish it. Go to the Buddha, sit with him, and show him your pain. He will look at you with loving kindness, compassion, and mindfulness and show you ways to embrace your suffering and look deeply into it. With understanding and compassion, you will be able to heal the wounds in your heart, and the wounds in the world. The Buddha called suffering a Holy Truth, because our suffering has the capacity of showing us the path to liberation. Embrace your suffering, and let it reveal to you the way to peace."

**Ottawa Drum Circles                      Julie Tierney**

*Julie facilitated an exciting drum circle during the Lazy Days of Summer Program at Pine Gate*

Ottawa has a vibrant drumming community that includes various drum circles that meet at different times and places throughout the city. What is a drum circle you ask? A drum circle or rhythm circle is a group of people who get together in a circle to create music in the moment.

For thousands of years, drum circles have been a part of almost every global culture-- they were used at harvest rituals, solstice gatherings, fertility and manhood rituals, marriage ceremonies, and all manner of celebration. Drums are among the earth's oldest instruments. The oldest documented drum dates to 6,000 B.C in Mesopotamia. Today,

this ancient ritual is coming alive in western cultures and cuts across all lines that divide us. People come to the drum circle for various reasons. Some come simply for the pleasure of playing or listening to the drum, others because they love to dance to the drum. Still others recognize the drum circle as a way to connect with others and to communicate. Some see it as a healing and/or spiritual experience. Benefits associated with drum circles include community building, stress release, development of new skills, creative expression, increased health and well being and, of course, simply to have fun.

Drum circles are also increasing in popularity as a platform for meditation and alternative therapy for a number of diseases. Study results demonstrate that drumming is a valuable treatment for stress, fatigue, anxiety, hypertension, asthma, chronic pain, arthritis, mental illness, migraines, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, stroke, paralysis, emotional disorders, and a wide range of physical disabilities.

For me, the drum circle is a transformative and spiritual experience that is hard to put into words. It seems to put me in touch with a part deep within me that has been long forgotten and is greatly missed. Drumming can start off for me as a form of prayer and connection with Spirit and then transcend into something quite powerful. There is a magic that is created when the group is really in sync and through the playing of the instruments, the sounds and the moving of my body I feel the transformation of accumulated stuck energy into a state of being where I am joyful, energized and free.

People who attend drum circles range in skill level from never having picked up a drum before to seasoned players. Because the emphasis is on recreational drumming and the group experience, anyone can participate regardless of skill or experience level and there are usually enough other

people there that if you are not confident of your abilities, your playing will not stand out. The new drumming groups that have formed in the last year and a half in Ottawa attest to the increasing popularity of drumming. Maybe what makes the drum circle so popular is that it brings us back to, and conjures up within us a simpler time in history where people could bond, express themselves artistically and share true community together, something we all could use more of in these modern times.

Here in Ottawa there are various circles that meet at different times:

**Earth Tones Drum and Dance Circle** meets at The Arts Court on Sunday nights and in the summer at Confederation Park on Sunday afternoons. <http://e-tones.ca/>

**Full Moon Drum and Dance Circle** takes place every month as close to the full moon as possible in Crystal Beach, just west of Bayshore.

<http://www3.sympatico.ca/julie.tierney/index.html>

**Remic Rapids Drum Circle** gets together in the summer by the water along the Ottawa River Parkway and in the winter at a private home. <http://www.meetup.com/Ottawa-Drum-Circle/>

**Winter Drum Circles** at Champlain Fieldhouse 149 Cowley Ave. near Island Park Drive the second Saturday each of month from October to April. See <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6462555865>

All of these groups are open and welcoming to newcomers. Check out the facebook group Hand Drummers of Ottawa where many of the events in the drumming

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community are listed.

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6462555865>

New in Ottawa this past summer was the **Ottawa International Drumming Festival** <http://ottawadrummyfestival.com/> a free event that takes place on Parliament Hill in August.

### **Dana (Donations):**

*Dana* is a Pali word meaning generosity or the act of offering. One offers *dana* to express the gratitude and generosity that arises in one's heart to support the dharma. *Dana* can be offered by way of financial donation, sharing of material resources or sharing of time. Spiritual communities rely upon *dana* to support them.

Pine Gate does not have a membership fee. It does, however, encourage friends to practice the art of *dana* in accordance with one's means and abilities.

At various times Pine Gate will support a cause for the benefit of others. Donations also contribute to the cost of books, CDs, DVDs and other teaching materials which are made available for Sangha members.

### **Pine Gate Sangha**

Pine Gate is a meditation community practicing Engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. It has created an engaged expression for peace, social justice and planetary care, as the community is the nucleus of Friends for Peace. The coalition, with Pine Gate at the core, has created annual events to celebrate peace, social justice and planetary care. Fierce Light in practice.

[www.ianprattis.com/pinegate.htm](http://www.ianprattis.com/pinegate.htm)

At Pine Gate the resident teacher is Dharmacharya Ian Prattis - True Body of Wisdom. Ian is a poet, scholar, peace and environmental activist. As a professor at Carleton University he taught courses on Ecology, Symbols, Globalization and Consciousness – reflected in his 2008 book: *Failsafe: Saving The Earth From Ourselves*. As an ordained meditation teacher he encourages people to find their true nature so that humanity and the world may be renewed. He has trained with masters in Buddhist, Vedic and Shamanic traditions.

The sangha, located in the west end of Ottawa, had very modest beginnings. Inaugurated in 1997 following Ian's return from teaching meditation in India, early gatherings featured Ian, his wife Carolyn, and their pets – Nikki the dog and Lady the cat. Since then the sangha has grown, and presently has over 250 members on the e-mail list. In the summer of 2001 major renovations took place to the lower level of Ian and Carolyn's home. A new meditation hall emerged from the dust and knocked down walls - the Pine Gate Meditation Hall - named after Thich Nhat Hanh's story in the book: *The Stone Boy and Other Stories*. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh provided a gift of calligraphy, naming The Pine Gate Meditation Hall. This now hangs on the wall for all to see. The new meditation hall has become a source of sanctuary for many friends,

There are regular meetings for meditation and study every Thursday evening from 7.00pm – 9.00pm. Duong Sinh - Bamboo Stick Qi-gong classes, known as the Life Sustaining Way of the Heart, are offered in addition to regular qi-gong classes throughout the year. Potluck vegetarian suppers, Hikes, Sweat Lodges, Pilgrimages, Days of Mindfulness, and Meditation Retreats are organized on a regular basis. The voice of the sangha is now on Facebook – search Pine Gate Sangha. It is also heard through the sangha journal Pine Gate - available online at:

<http://www.ianprattis.com/007new.html>

*“Our engagement with society and the environment rests on our quality of being. When that quality is rooted in stillness there is a different ground for subsequent actions and so events take a different course. We simply go home to our true nature. We are very active in this way and bring harmony to those we interact with. The most significant interaction is with our true nature. To connect to its boundless quality in daily life, and then to connect to others and the world in the same way is surely the ticket to ride!”*

### New Year’s Eve At Pine Gate

*Friday Dec 31, 2010, 8.00pm gather – midnight closing, ceremony 9.00pm – 10.00pm*

At Pine Gate we conduct a special ceremony to welcome the next year of 2011 with a powerful affirmation of ethics, interconnection, community, joy and the path to happiness and wholesomeness. The theme of personal integrity interweaves with planetary care, social justice and peace – it’s all there in the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings Recitation. For friends who are unfamiliar with the 14 Mindfulness Recitation Ceremony, step-by-step explanations to the practice are given. Folk feel great afterwards, as hope and confidence are re-kindled.

There is some “Prior Homework”. If you wish, make a list of all that you want to move on from and what you wish to move forward to. This can be personal or planetary – or both. You can state this out loud if you wish and then “whoosh” it into the fire with sangha blessings to make it so. Bring some snacks – and whatever homework emerges. Also bring your songs, stories, musical instruments and poetry to accompany the whooshing. There is great fellowship to experience. This is the best New Year’s Eve party in town!

### January 2011 Teachings – Healing The Inner Child

Thursday January 13 – Healing The Inner Child – Dharma Talk and practice

Thursday January 20 – Healing The Inner Child with Breathing

Thursday January 27 – Deep Relaxation and Touching the Earth

### DIRECTIONS TO THE PINE GATE MEDITATION HALL:

In Ottawa, take Queensway to Woodroffe South exit; go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (2nd lights) RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the Crescent round to 1252, which is always lit up with Christmas lights in the winter and full of flowers in the summer.

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### Impermanence and the Planet Ian Prattis

#### *Extract from Chapter Two: A Failed Genetic Experiment? in Keeping Dharma Alive.*

Once we can accept that we have created the conditions for the present form of global civilization to die, then and only then can we find a respite from our fear and anxiety. During this respite it is possible for insights to emerge that will bring radical change to our values, habits and mindset.

It is very difficult in our western culture to accept death – whether of a loved one or of our civilization being denied a place on the planet. The usual response is fear and denial. We have to re-educate our minds to get past these two obstacles. When we can recognize that our present form of civilization is dying, we know for sure that despair and denial will do us no good. Such a loss presents great obstacles

to our minds, but such obstacles can be the way through. We need only find the courage to surrender and rely on our practice of mindfulness to pull us through to something different. There will be a rough ride, but our deep practice provides a measure of safety. Instead of fear and denial, a space opens in our mind for lucidity and steadiness to enter, which could propel our species to live differently. Such a future on planet earth requires a mass awakening of attributes that run counter to the bottom line of turbo-capitalism and the ecology of greed. It does require a candid acceptance, without fear, that our global civilization in its present form is coming to an end. Such an acceptance can free the mind from its chains, enabling a mindful mode of existence to naturally arise. Such a way of life, such an acceptance of our true reality on the planet, can be the springboard to alleviate the course of environmental collapse. The energy and power to avert the disaster facing us rests in our minds and in a new collective choice to live very differently.

Thich Nhat Hanh brings this home to us in a direct and challenging way, making it very clear that a view not based on impermanence is a wrong view. He shows how the Buddha provided meditations on impermanence for his followers to recognize that the only thing that follows death is our actions, the fruit of our thinking, of our speech and of our acts during our lifetime. Specifically on global warming he is very blunt:

*If we continue to consume unwisely, if we don't care about protecting this wonderful planet....the ecosystem will be destroyed to a large extent and we will need millions of years to start a new civilization. Everything is impermanent.... We are our environment, which is in a process of self-destruction.*

With the Buddha's Son's Flesh Sutra he recounts the teaching that we are eating the flesh of our children and grandchildren. We are eating the flesh of our mothers and our fathers. We are eating the flesh of our planet.

*A couple with their little child were crossing a desert to seek asylum in another country. They ran out of food when they were only half way across. They realized that all three of them would die in the desert, and they had no hope to get to the other country. Finally they made the decision to kill their little son. Each day they ate a small portion of his flesh, in order to have enough energy to move on, and they carried the rest of their son's flesh on their shoulders, so that it could continue to dry in the sun. Each time when they finished eating a morsel of their son's flesh, the couple looked at each other and asked: "Where is our beloved child now?"*

The Buddha's point with this graphic story was that we have to consume in such a way so we can foster compassion in our hearts. We must consume in mindfulness, for if we do not we are eating the flesh of our own children. The application of the teaching to our present planetary circumstances is clear.

Once we learn to accept the end of our civilization in its present form, we touch the truth of impermanence. This brings a certain peace and clarity to our minds and just perhaps we can implement structures and technology to save this planet of ours. Fear, despair and nihilism are useless. The means exist – the required mentality is not there – yet. So we have a job to do in terms of cultivating a transformation in our consciousness to bring about a new way of living on planet earth.

Because of all the warning signals to humanity, however, allow me to be starkly realistic. If the Failsafe in Consciousness does not kick in, the field is open for James Lovelock's conclusions to take root – remember his epitaph for modern civilization as a few breeding pairs in the Arctic Circle. But perhaps after all the Arctic Circle may not be such a bad evolutionary staging point, as digital records,

carefully preserved as archaeological relics, could provide clear guidelines for future civilizations to conduct themselves more appropriately with respect to the Earth Mother. A million years from now is merely a blink of an eye in geological time. After Global Warming destroys the present habitable econiche, any future civilization that evolves will be able to draw on the triumphs and failures of our present civilization.

As a counter to this possibility, the Failsafe in Consciousness concept and its components all refer to seeds of potential stored in our minds, buried under a general amnesia from which the global community is just beginning to awaken. To nurture these aspects of mind it is necessary to draw on liberating teachings about the mind. Thus, I take refuge in the Buddha, whose understanding of the mind came from his awakened consciousness. The Buddha's teachings are about the mind and what to

do when the mind is so overwhelmed by suffering that there seems to be no way out. To institute lucidity and compassion as the basis of action, the Buddha provides guidance with a consistent set of teachings, all derived from his first dharma talk on suffering and how to get out of suffering. In *The Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha taught that humans and nature are totally interconnected and that if we want to look after humans we have to look after mother earth. And just as important: if we wish to take care of mother earth we must also take good care of ourselves. The "taking care of" is through meditation, the practice of mindfulness, the actualization of interbeing and being aware of the consequences of our actions. These aspects of meditation, mindfulness, interbeing, and awareness with respect to the earth are found in many spiritual traditions, particularly aboriginal ones.