



Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

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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 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. His wife, Carolyn, 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.



Peace Prayer Day
Ottawa City Hall
Saturday, October 4, 2008
10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Wisdom of the Elders**Ian Prattis**

Sacred Ecology is not a term that indigenous elders would likely use. They quietly assume that the proper relationship between human beings and the earth *is* a deeply spiritual one. An elder is recognized as a holder of wisdom, the repository of a precise, well articulated earth science. Such wisdom is based on extensive investigation of how the threads of world order are woven together into one single brilliant tapestry. It may be understood only through the eyes of intrinsic humility and reverence for all of life. The knowledge passed on by elders about how to live a good life arose from that essential spiritual relationship between a person, the earth and the cosmos. This venture was encouraged by a worldview that every item in the tapestry of life interconnects with everything else. The wisdom of the elders, expressed through ceremony and myth, provided the guiding means to care for the sacred balance that held earth, humanity and cosmos in harmony. The world view of the elders also encouraged a vision of looking ahead seven generations into the future by taking good care of these intricate inter-relationships NOW – in the present moment. Lifeways evolved that were anchored in a sense of thankfulness for the garden bequeathed to us. Hunting patterns relied on sophisticated and intimate knowledge of animal interactions with habitat and humans. Respect and empathy were shown for the slain animals through rituals of thanksgiving that did not portray the hunter as superior to the life form taken. Such an ethos of gratitude fostered care for a sustainable eco-system that was enough, as the hunter and the hunted shared one mind in the landscape that nature provided.

Our modern world has to a great extent abandoned all humility and sense of interconnectedness. With respect to a relationship with nature we have refashioned Reverential into Referential. Even if we have cultivated a respectful awareness we still manage to smash through the threads of cosmic order as innocently as children running through cobwebs – simply because we do not know what is

there. We remain unaware of the natural epiphany that is waiting. If we are lucky enough to somehow experience the epiphany there is no world-view by which we can understand its significance. Just marked down as an un-natural high! It is at great cost to ourselves and to the Earth Mother that we ignored the repository of Earth Science from the Elders. In the 21st century we cannot replicate the conditions of indigenous culture, yet there is much we can learn about regenerating a commitment to planetary renewal from aboriginal ceremonies that unify peoples with their ecological insight. Several years ago at the beginning of spring after a severe winter in Canada, I had the privilege of participating in a sweat lodge ceremony with respected elders from the Ojibway, Dene and Mohawk First Nations. The prayers offered made deeply personal and collective commitments to serve the Earth Mother. At the end of the fourth round of the ceremony we emerged into the pristine beauty of a late snowfall under a clear star studded sky. There had been a two-inch snowfall while the sweat lodge was in progress. We walked barefoot in silence to where we were camping. Quiet smiles, not thinking too much. My smile grew immense when looking back at our footprints in the snow. It was as though these were the first footprints witnessed by Mother Earth to strengthen our commitment and resolve. Business as usual was no longer possible for us. Share the epiphany, as it is no longer possible for you either, dear reader. What can help us? We can use instruments of mindfulness with their effect of freeing the human mind from suffering. Another way is to remember the Wisdom of the Elders and what our myths have been telling us from time immemorial.

Joseph Campbell in *The Hero's Journey* was adamant about the redundancy of the great religions of the world for the hero's task of transforming the planet and the world social order. The great religions are all complicit in the partisan fracturing of the modern world with outmoded expressions of cultural nationalism. The vigorous propagation of any religious form such as fundamentalist Islam or Hinduism, or fundamentalist Christianity or

Buddhism as “The Way” is totally inappropriate for our modern times. Their “monkey holiness” is not the stuff that can aid the hero. Cultural nationalism is a redundant force in the 21st century – an impediment to the task of transforming the social and ecological order of the world. However, the religious right in America and their identical twin – the Taliban in Afghanistan – and other religious groups like them refuse to recognise that they are obsolete, still appealing to the ignorant and fearful. Fortunately, the hero does have the “all” within him, within her and it is essential for humanity to wake up to that. Transforming the fabric of the entire social order asks world citizens to do the work of becoming spiritually responsible rather than remaining spiritual captives. This is to enable the revealed knowledge and wisdom gained from the Hero’s adventure to be applied to society and the environment.

Asinabka William Commanda & Romola Thumbadoo

Grandfather William Commanda is a revered elder of the Algonquin Nation. He is 93, trilingual and lives in Quebec. He has received an honorary doctorate from Ottawa University and was presented with the Key to the City of Ottawa in 2006. He is a remarkable, internationally recognized man with a passionate interest in the environment, Canada and all its citizens. As founder of the Circle of All Nations, he holds a broad vision for the entire area focused on two themes that predominate in his work: Respect for the Earth Mother and Racial Harmony and Peace-Building. Here is his vision.

www.circleofallnations.com

We propose the development of a special National Historic centre at the sacred Chaudiere Falls in Ottawa, Canada. This vision calls for a fully inclusive Eco-City Park, Historic Interpretive Site, Conference Centre and Aboriginal Centre at the sacred site of Asinabka/Chaudiere Falls, Chaudiere and Victoria Island within the nation’s capital city.

Since the arrival of Samuel de Champlain in this area in 1613, the area around the Chaudiere Falls has been acknowledged as a sacred meeting place of great importance to indigenous peoples, having been used as such for easily five thousand years. Indeed, it is one of the earliest sites of human occupation in this country. Later, it served as a significant meeting place with the earliest settlers, the French and the English. Today the world finds a home on its shores. This special area holds singular sacred, archaeological and historic value, and has been the site of cultural convergence, political evolution, and internationally influential industrial development and innovation over the past centuries. The Ottawa River Heritage Designation History celebrates this remarkable heritage of the watershed, and the heart of the story lies here in the National Capital Region, at the meeting place of three rivers, with the mighty Ottawa, the heritage river of the Algonquin, connecting with the Gatineau from Quebec and the Rideau from Ontario.

We hold a bold four-fold vision, which calls for:

1. Freeing the Chaudiere Falls
 2. Creating a City Park and Historic Interpretive centre
 3. Building a Peace Building Meeting Site, and
 4. Building an Aboriginal Centre.
1. It is a vision of potentially significant international influence for symbolic reconciliation with Nature, both water and land, by undamming the sacred Chaudiere Falls to the extent possible, and returning it to its former magnificence; planting the Chaudiere Island with trees and creating an educational eco-city park in the heart of the country, expressive of both its history, and its future, offering a modern day reclaimed green sanctuary and pow wow grounds to offset concrete urban sprawl; it also calls for developing a historic interpretive centre to commemorate the history of settlement – pre

and post contact; ceremony, ancient trade routes, exchange of goods, logging, hydro-electric power, industrial development, inventions etc.

2. Consistent with the ancient history as a meeting place, and current need for creative meeting spaces designed to serve as collaborative think tanks for reflective contemplation on global and local issues during this UN Decade for Culture of Peace, for international cross-cultural exchange and training, the remaining portion of the vision calls for a Tipi Village pod-style conference hotel on the western portion of Victoria Island, fully accessible within the core area of the capital city.
3. Finally, for almost four decades, the eastern portion of Victoria Island has been designated the site for an Aboriginal Centre; Over the past decade we have worked to develop a vision for the centre; Metis architect Douglas Cardinal, with support from Canadian Heritage, developed the conceptual architectural plans to a high level, a draft memorandum to the federal cabinet was negotiated with a National Capital Commission consultant. At the Circle of All Nations gathering of August 2006, the NCC expressed full support for this proposal.
4. The entire site will be a great attraction for Aboriginal peoples, citizens of the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, the country at large, children, new Canadians and international tourists.
5. Though damaged over the years, the sacred Chaudiere site of the Algonquin peoples remains a beautiful and national treasure waiting to be recognized and honoured.
6. This vision offers a unique opportunity to correct mistakes of history and look towards the future.

7. It is recognized that this work spans many federal departments, jurisdictions and responsibility centres. It needs a collective and collaborative national will and leadership to create the momentum for its successful realization.

The timing is propitious for bestowing a lasting and indeed international legacy commemorative of the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace, in anticipation of two key dates: 2010 when the world comes to Canada for the Olympics, and June 4, 2013, the four hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Champlain in this area (June being also the time Heritage Rivers Day is celebrated). An early announcement will ensure the timely actualization of this vision.

The core vision pulls together and interconnects with the Peace Building Centre, the Indigenous Healing Centre, and the reclamation of the Chaudiere Falls and Victoria Island as an eco-park. They are interwoven with the lands to be held in trust by Algonquin elders.

Adapted from www.asinabka.com/geninfo.htm

FIVE CONTEMPLATIONS FOR FAMILIES

**THIS FOOD THIS DAY, AND THIS FAMILY
ARE GIFTS OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE –
THE EARTH, THE SKY, THE STARS,
NUMEROUS LIVING BEINGS AND MUCH
HARD WORK**

**MAY WE RECEIVE THEM WITH
STABILITY, JOY, AND FREEDOM, AND SO
BE WORTHY OF THEM**

**MAY WE TRANSFORM OUR UNSKILLFUL
STATES OF MIND, ESPECIALLY OUR
GREED, AND LEARN TO EAT IN
MODERATION, AND LOVE IN ABUNDANCE**

**MAY WE KEEP OUR COMPASSION ALIVE
BY EATING IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE
REDUCE THE SUFFERING OF LIVING
BEINGS, PRESERVE OUR PLANET AND
REVERSE THE PROCESS OF GLOBAL
WARMING**

**WE ACCEPT THIS FOOD, THIS DAY, THESE
FRIENDS, SO WE MAY NOURISH OUR
SISTERHOOD AND BROTHERHOOD,
STRENGTHEN OUR FAMILY AND
NOURISH OUR IDEAL OF SERVING ALL
BEINGS**

Climate Change Greg Chin and John Pollard

While many feel that the environment is an important aspect of not only our lives, but also of Canadian values, we have quite the road to take when it comes to getting people to radically change the ways they live - for that is what this task calls for. Climate-Change is a long-term risk, but surprisingly, little has been done to mitigate its effects. If we challenge this question on a moral or political tangent, we will experience emotionally charged answers that rile everyone up. But, will we find our answer, or will we merely be parroting history when it comes to societal outrage and response? Perhaps a better answer lies in first understanding our evolved psychology, and then our history, before we go about informing our policy changes.

The notion that our species may very well drive itself into extinction should make us collectively get ourselves together and come up with a plan to ameliorate any possibility of this happening. Perhaps there is a divide between the evolutionary quality of our minds and the current environment we have created. If one looks at our history, many of our responses to danger would have been to short-term occurrences (like encountering a predator), hence the emergence of our fight-or-flight response to danger. Our ancestors did not apply extraneous cognitive analysis to risk, because by and large, the majority of risks were immediate.

When it comes to cognizing risk, we are often far more emotionally motivated than we are rational. So we need evolutionary work-arounds. We are dealing with a problem that our species has not encountered before, thus we lack any historical precedent. The trick is to develop the policies that our advanced intelligence produces around the evolutionary constraints of our species. We make an appeal to the following qualities: hierarchical status, social and territorial familiarity (i.e. kin networks), bonding and meaningful socialization. We are looking for these qualities to be etched into the minds of the populace as environments that enhance social stature, maintain current social bonds and characteristics of the individuals involved. While at the same time promoting the forging of new meanings and bonds that are of social, cultural, and planetary importance.

Canadians would likely be quite receptive to this. 64% of Canadians agree that environmental concerns in relation to global warming are very real, and not exaggerated and public opinion is in favor of some sort of reform. Turner, a well-known symbolic anthropologist, spoke quite positively of the uses metaphor and myth can come to embody in a society. They provide conceptual frameworks for the minds that accept them, and can almost instantly provide an experiential basis for understanding new material in the following ways:

- 1) Exhibit how environmental degradation is immediately affecting our well-being. Family values are of sincere importance to Canadians and we would suggest strongly playing up the reality of what the last few generations have bestowed upon their future kin without a concurrent action to correct it. Startling imagery may be of use in this instance.
- 2) Promote such projects as being inherently Canadian by noting that these activities of preservation are not only valiant, but our duty as citizens of the world. It is a metaphor that can incorporate the

multicultural make-up of the country by being broached as a means of further unifying us in an effort that affects all peoples.

- 3) Paint the idea as one that puts our nation at the forefront of a new and profound social and technological change that the world may just accept. Canada has a chance to have an incredible impact on the global market in appealing to sustainable development. With this open-minded stance, Canada then has an opportunity to provide eco-friendly technology to the world in its coming narrative struggle against environmental crisis. We have a chance to be progressive and find new and innovative approaches to creating a strong economy based on eco-technology and a carbon neutral economy.

We are confident in our initial analysis, and even in the event that none of these ideas are implemented, we strongly hope readers who have power to act upon some of these ideas to at the very least keep them in mind. As a species, we have allowed our cultural, moral, and political constructions to lead us in deleterious directions. There is no better time to re-consider such history, and take a chance at giving new avenues of action a try. The life we have come to live, and perhaps even our very existence is at stake.

Carbon & Livestock Diet www.carbondiet.org

Computer expert James Smith has invented the Carbon Diet. His website is an interactive carbon calculator. It calculates your daily carbon footprint, which can be updated by entering data on a regular basis. This allows you to see exactly how your footprint varies based on activities. The site also suggests customised actions you can take to improve your footprint. This could well turn out to be the Facebook of Climate Change. For instance, all teachers and sanghas could use this website to measure the carbon footprint created by their air travel and then see just how much their vegan food

style, solar energy, no car days etc., offsets their air travel carbon footprint. Are we prepared to be scientific about this and carefully calculate our sangha footprints?

While this is pondered do check out dietary preferences following the November 2006 FAO report, a radical proposal to save the planet by reducing the consumption of meat products by 50%:

Livestock's Long Shadow

www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.htm

Also check out: www.goveg.com

Environmental Ed Rebecca Taft & Sam Gunn

It is often taken for granted by school administrators that children are taught ethical responsibility by their parents, whereas ethics should be reinforced in every social environment – particularly schools. Administrators and teachers should consider it a primary duty to make sure that their students are caring and compassionate community members. Such an education system will require an increase in co-operation between community leaders, administrators, teachers, and parents. To learn from the drawbacks of conventional public education, we must investigate how the relationships between community members can affect educational policies. Public education has to be a combined community initiative particularly in a venture like an eco-village development. There has to be community forums comprised of teachers, parents and administrators that focus on a more holistic approach to educational policies. The community has to change their perspective about conventional education, and consider school as a means of personal development for children, and a means of building social relationships and strong communities.

To ensure the continuation of sustainable development and ecological living, education must be at the core of every project with this goal in mind. Without teaching and training future generations to continue the task of recovering the

environment from global to local scales, any attempts made are merely temporary. For the environmental revolution there needs to be people on the front lines; protestors and demonstrators such as Greenpeace. There needs to be those in the vanguard who fight for change through bureaucratic means with wisdom and intelligence. There needs to be heroes in the public eye such as David Suzuki and Al Gore who can bring public attention to surface issues. Finally, there needs to be an empowered public, which is what an eco-community project should have as its foremost goal. The goal is to create an informed public who can change their individual actions, and apply public pressure for change at all levels of society.

It is ineffective to tuck away the few who are conscious enough of the damages caused by unsustainable living in an eco-community, without making a strong attempt to reach out to the minds of the wider public. The society that is left uninformed and excluded may cause unthinking damage that will far outweigh the good done by creating eco-communities. We need to move beyond having a handful of natural stewards battling to save the earth against the masses of uniformed people. We need to educate the latter about the ecological crises that face us, so that we may work together for a better future.

It has been shown through countless attempts that we cannot solve global crisis with the same mindset that created the problems. We need a global change in consciousness in order to understand the connections between ecology and culture. A new planetary myth must be developed in which ecology of mind is the central focus. This has to begin at the early education level in order to reach the majority of minds and allow for a full understanding of the issues to develop. An ecologically sound school can act as a beacon to which the call for change can be applied. The attention of our civilization has wandered and been distracted from the real issues for too long. In order to change this cultural attention deficit disorder we

need to start with the generations from whom we have borrowed this planet from.

To understand environmental ethics we must move beyond separation distinctions and concepts and see the web of creation. By doing this, humans can reach a state of enlightened freedom from our modern materialism and adopt an environmental ethic with the power of vision and action to release false identifications of self, ego, and body. We can create a new mindset, adopt a state of interconnection that ties us to the world; examine the consequences of our actions in order to create a new world myth of Gaia that we learn to live by. By achieving this, students will be able to move beyond the materialistic myths that traditional modern culture creates and expand into new areas of thought and action. Environmental education needs to move past simply teaching students about the physical characteristics of the world and towards understanding more complex human interactions and effects upon the natural world. Students leaving this eco focussed secondary school program will be able to engage in intelligent debate, critically assess, and act upon the pressing environmental issues that are shaping our world.

What To Do

Resurgence No. 247

- 1. Seek genuinely renewable local and sustainable energy solutions.**
- 2. Commit to low-carbon lifestyles and energy efficiency.**
- 3. Lobby for a full re-evaluation of carbon trading and carbon offsetting.**
- 4. Recognize that oil is near to peak production and plan with this in mind.**
- 5. Demand moratoria on agro-fuel plantations and genetically engineered trees, food and farming.**
- 6. Press for full protection of all natural forests and bio-diverse rich marine and terrestrial areas.**
- 7. Revise the Kyoto Protocol.**
- 8. Regenerate bio-diverse, resilient and vibrant local economies and food systems.**

- 9. Reduce excessive global trade and consumer culture.**
- 10. Reject the disposable consumer culture.**
- 11. Support a diversity of sustainable approaches by communities, networks and movements. 1 – 11 leads to:**
- 12. Integration of biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods into all climate strategies: a solution for one should be a solution for all.**

On Love

Lester Levinson

Wait a minute!” he thought. “If happiness is when I’m experiencing love for the other one, then that means happiness is a feeling within me.

“And if I felt unloving in the past? Well, I know I can’t change the past, but could I possibly correct the feeling now inside myself? Could I change the feeling to love now?” He decided to try it. He looked at his most recent unhappiness, the day he left the hospital.

“First,” he asked himself, “was I experiencing a lack of love that day?”

“Yes,” he answered aloud. “Nobody gave a damn about me, not the nurses, not the orderlies, not even Dr. Schultz. They did not care. As sick as I was, they threw me out, sent me home to die so they wouldn’t have to watch one of their failures . . . well, the hell with them. They can all go to hell.” He was shocked at the vehemence in his voice. His body trembled with rage and he felt weak. He really hated the doctor: He could feel it burning in his chest. “Oh, boy,” he thought, “this sure isn’t love.”

“Well, can I change it?” he asked. “Is it possible to turn it into love for the doctor?”

“Hell, no,” he thought, “why should I? What did he ever do to deserve any love?”

“That’s not the point,” he answered himself. “The point is not whether he deserves love. The point is, can you do it? Is it possible to simply change a feeling of hatred into a feeling of love—not for the benefit of the other person but for yourself?”

As the thought crossed his mind, he felt something break loose in his chest. A gentle easing, a sense of dissolving, and the burning sensation was gone. He didn’t trust it at first. It seemed too easy, so he pictured again the scene with Dr. Schultz in the hospital. He was surprised to find that it brought only a mild feeling of resentment rather than the previous intense burning hatred. He wondered if he could do it again.

“Let’s see,” he thought, “what did I just do? . . . Oh, yes. Can I change this feeling of resentment into a feeling of love?” He chuckled as he felt the resentment dissolve in his chest. Then it was totally gone and he was happy. He thought of Dr. Schultz again, pictured him in his mind and felt happy, even loving. He saw now, reliving that last meeting, how the doctor had hated to tell him the things he had to say. He could feel the doctor’s pain at having to tell a young man in the prime of his life that his life was over. “Dr. Schultz, you son-of-a-gun,” he said, grinning, “I love you.”

“Well, it worked on that one,” he thought. “If my theory is sound, then it should work on everything.” Eagerly, he began trying it on other moments, and the results were consistently the same. Each time that he asked himself if he could change the feeling of hostility or anger or hatred to one of love, the dissolving process took place. Sometimes he had to repeat it over and over until he felt only love for the person. At times, the entire process would take only a minute or two; at other times, it might take him hours of working on a particular person or event before his feelings were only loving, but he would doggedly stay with it until it was completed on each person and each incident.

His entire life came up for review in bits and pieces. One by one, he changed to love all the old hurts and

disappointments. He began to feel stronger as the weight of his pain dropped away. He was happier than he had ever been in his entire life, and he kept it going, feeling even more happiness with each new thing corrected.

LesterLevenson.org
325 View Drive
Sedona, AZ 86336

A Real “Kicker” Shakyamuni Buddha

In the “Discourse on the Teachings to Be Given to the Sick” in the Plum Village Chanting and Recitation book there is one paragraph that really brings the dharma home – a real “kicker.”

“Because there is ignorance, there are mistaken impulses. Because there are mistaken impulses, there is mistaken consciousness. Because there is mistaken consciousness, there is the distinction between the perceiver and the perceived. Because there is a distinction between the perceiver and the perceived, there is the distinction between the six sense organs and the six objects of sense. Because there is the distinction between the six sense organs and the six objects of sense, there is contact. Because there is contact, there is feeling. Because there is feeling, there is thirst. Because there is thirst, there is grasping. Because there is grasping, there is becoming. Because there is becoming, there are birth, death, and the subsequent pain and grief.”

Who is Mara? Marvin Schwartz

A thumbnail sketch of the mythic recounting of the Buddha’s life reads like a cross between the hero’s quest and a fairy tale. His mother, Queen Mahamaya (Mother of the temporary but very real Material Universe also known as the Great Illusion) gives birth to Siddhartha (he who accomplishes his objectives) and then Queen Mahamaya dies. The Queen’s sister takes over the role of mother. Meanwhile, King Suddhodana (he whose food is pure) has heard a prophecy that two paths are open

to Siddhartha. One path is that of kingship and if he follows that path he will become a great king. The other path is that of awakening and if he follows that path he will become a great spiritual teacher. To engage his path of awakening the prophecy names four parts of life which would create the conditions for Siddhartha to question the path of kingship: he will come in contact with an old person, a diseased person, a corpse being cremated, and a holy man.

King Suddhodana has aspirations for Siddhartha to be king and sets about to control his reality. If anyone has seen the Truman Show, then you will have an idea of what Siddhartha was living with. Truman has lived in a bubble from birth and he is the only one who does not know this.

Similarly, King Suddhodana organized everyone in his control to ensure that Siddhartha would not come into contact with an old person, a diseased person, a corpse being cremated, and a holy man. In other words, the four events which would derail the King’s plans. Siddhartha was living one great illusion. His life was totally controlled by his father and his reality was created by his father. According to the story, at the age of 29, Siddhartha comes into contact with all four human events. Suddenly, his world is thrown into turmoil and he does what a little boy might do who is afraid of a tyrannical father – he runs away from home. He steals away from home in the middle of the night. And then, to complete his rebellion he discards everything that indicates rank in society and begins to search for a solution to the pain of his disillusionment. He wanders from teacher to teacher seeking the answer to his suffering. Finally, after starving himself and still not achieving enlightenment, he begins his now famous night (in reality lasting many nights) of enlightenment where he contends with Mara.

Mara is referred to as the devil and as the trickster. On that famous night Mara sends armies against Siddhartha and then beautiful women to tempt him. However, the women like the armies are illusions. And as Siddhartha maintains his contact with the

earth, he is able to see through these illusions and realize the end of illusion and suffering. There have been various interpretations of what Mara was really about, and yet none seem to pick up on the most obvious. Mara represents Siddhartha's father, the master illusionist, who created a world that his son could not depend on. It is no wonder that Siddhartha's liberation from suffering occurs while he is on his own. He needed to be in a state where there was no one else to rely on or trust. Six years, day and night, every minute devoted to ridding himself of the demons that resided in him from life with his tyrannical father. Unable to face his father because of the depth of the wounding, he finally liberates himself. One can almost hear the argument. Father, how could you lie to me like you did? How could you manipulate my life the way you did? How could you create a life for me that was so unreal that I couldn't know what was real and what wasn't? Finally, by facing these questions he illuminated the illusion at the very core of his being, and was able to shake it off for good. Mara, his father, was subdued. He was free to see the world clearly, through eyes unclouded by his father's desires and whims.

Siddhartha's freedom from suffering came about as the complete relinquishing of all ties to his own stories. He effectively ended his addiction to his unhappiness and also his addiction to his ego. As Thay puts it:

“ According to the Buddha, every situation has a way out. When the Buddha sat under the bodhi tree, he was stuck. He didn't know what else to do but sit and do nothing. And that is the first answer - to do nothing, but sit still. This is very difficult. We feel we are sitting on hot coals of resentment, hatred and despair.

The Buddha teaches us that we have to master ourselves first. Before we can act, we have to cool these coals beneath us. To succeed doesn't mean triumphing over the one who causes us to suffer, but over our own ignorance and resentment...” (Page 83 Nothing To Do. Nowhere

to Go Waking up to Who You Are Thich Nhat Hanh)

This teaching has tremendous implications for our practice as it relates to the four noble truths. The Buddha's example demonstrates that everyone suffers, that there is a cause to suffering and that there is an end to suffering. However, some of the Buddha's disciples did not pay attention to the story as a learning story. Instead, they tried to explain what happened by developing an explanation for how other people could achieve enlightenment (liberation from suffering) through a fourth noble truth, the eightfold path. This did not accord with the Buddha's experience. The eightfold path is slowly realized as our suffering ends. Otherwise we are masquerading as enlightened beings and don't follow the Buddha's example of sitting still, doing nothing and ending our addiction to our suffering. This is not to say that there is no value in trying to act in a way that accords with the eightfold path; rather, that this will not lead to enlightenment. Enlightenment begins by letting go of addictions (for me a better term than attachments) whether they are to pleasure or to pain.

So, if you have been practicing for a long time and you are still suffering, you might consider looking at what it is that you are expecting to free you from suffering. Know this, if you expect a practice to free you, life might feel better, but you are not following the Buddha's example. You can make all sorts of rationalizations, but in the end it is about sitting with all of your stories, the good, the bad, and the ugly and seeing how they affect you. When you no longer feel a charge from the stories, you have begun to tap into your Buddha nature! You are able to live in the present.

The Buddha's first realization came about when he let go of his stories relating to his father. He had realized the end of suffering. But what about Mom. She after all was Mahamaya, the Great Illusion; she who gave birth to Siddhartha. Following his end of suffering, Siddhartha was able to realize full awakening by seeing the great illusion that while

the body was born, he was not the body. He knew that Buddha nature was not born and could not die. He was awake. May we all awaken.

Enlightenment Poem **Eileen O’Hea**

I wonder,
have for some time,
if consciousness, heightened consciousness,
is enlightenment,
and, if so,
what relationship
does it have with Wisdom?

I had thought
enlightenment was a prize –
the reward of a good life.
You know,
the fasting, self-denied life;
the beating the be-jabuz
out of your ego-life!

To me, it seems,
Wisdom is a sitter.
You meet her
at the centre of your soul.
Like a salmon swimming upstream
you strive and strive,
then flop,
you are sitting on her lap.

Here, Wisdom gathers
the energies of consciousness,
like eggs in a nest,
and sits with them,
mothering, fathering them
in Her silent presence –
a presence of light.

Soaked
in wisdom’s light,
energy moves out again
into the stream of life,
creating a presence,
like fireflies

on the blackest of nights.



Is this enlightenment?

Refuge in the Sangha **Jude Lux**

I had the pleasure of spending New Years Eve with the Pine Gate Sangha, where we recited the 14 Mindfulness Trainings (MT’s) of the Order of Interbeing. I often feel that walking in the forest is like “coming home”, but when I recited the MT’s it was really like “coming home”. I felt that the meaning of the words touched a place in my heart that was waiting to receive them, it was like a key that fit neatly into a lock.

The second Mindfulness Training, nonattachment to views, is something that I am working on in my own life. There was a time in my life when I took pride in my open mindedness. I thought that I could see both sides of an argument, and all of the issues impacting on a decision. However, I have now come to see that when people are kind and gentle with me, I find it particularly easy to be open to what they have to say. And, I have also come to realize that I find it difficult to stay open to people

whose values are different from mine. I value relationships, view conflict as an opportunity for growth, and love to ask questions, as I see it as an opportunity to understand people better and to expand my knowledge. At work, people hold a myriad of values, and some of them conflict with mine. Some people see questions and conflict as a threat, and others value the bottom line more than relationships. Before I communicate with people who hold different values, I am now trying to sit for a moment in a different space than I am used to – a space of different values. I am not abandoning my values, just temporarily taking a different view. I am finding that this helps me to better hear what people have to say and to choose words that others will be more open to hear.

Although I have a joy for life, which is rooted in my spiritual connection to Mother Nature, the world news of wars, environmental destruction, sexual assault and murder, puts a dent in my hope for a better world. I am able to find comfort and renew my hope when I spend time with the Pine Gate sangha - a group of people who are committed to living a more mindful life. I wish all my new brothers and sisters a peaceful year.

Into The Depths

John Tarrant

From Shambhala Sun July 2007

*In the sea,
ten thousand feet down,
there's a single stone.
I'll pick it up without wetting my hands.*

The sweetness in the path of using a koan is that it assumes we can change. If it really is possible, in this life, to have a complete and liberating shift in the way you come at things, well, that's an amazing idea to consider. If you understand that an awakening really is possible, then the rest comes down merely to questions of method. And that's the kindness of the path: the old master says, "Sometimes it seems crazy to think it, but

transformation really does happen. So try it out. Go at it. And here's a method for you."

Koans offer a kind of imaginative mindfulness; they bring attention to reality beneath the level of our usual thoughts about life. Then you can notice what it's like without those usual thoughts about an issue – death, love, work, children, marmalade. If you have an unanswerable question, the koan is designed to open it. This koan bridges images and sensations with it. There's water, earth, depth, sinking, light from above, pressure, breath, moving in the dark, finding, meeting, meeting yourself, rising up, shallowness, an impossible feat, getting immersed, and being untouched. You can keep company with the koan day and night, without any need to assess or measure your state of mind. Sitting, walking, talking, cooking – they are all in the sea, ten thousand feet down. The koan is something alive that you interact with. You might repeat the koan to yourself continually and notice its presence wherever you look. It might shorten to "in the sea" or to "a stone," or it might become an image, a sound, a slight movement of the world, an alteration in your view. When you are connected with a great koan whatever happens in the mind is something the koan is showing you.

If your view is unforgiving, the koan might show you this by drenching you in it. If your mind attacks itself, the koan will show you the dreamlike quality of bitterness and grief. You learn that you can endure your own mind states. Then you might have epiphanies, a waking up that leaves you laughing for months, or you might simply notice that your life is changing and that when you reach for them, your habits of thought have gone missing. The world you inhabit is up to you. The koan takes away our belief in empty worlds. And here is the real point: the koan can surprise you. There is nothing wrong with fear, disappointment and the rest of the pains of life, but they are predictable and the koan is not. You could sink down beneath any unhappiness you have known. In the sea ten thousand feet down lies a stone. With the koan, you can move with ease in the depths of your own life.

The Devil's Sister

The Sunday morning service in a small Ontario church had gone wonderfully well. The choir sang beautifully and the minister's sermon was well received when suddenly the church doors flew open and a bitter chill crept through everyone's heart. The Devil had come to pay a visit to this congregation. In alarm the minister and the congregation ran for the doors to get out – all except for one elderly gentleman sitting in the front pew. The Devil approached him in full ferocious form and roared: "Don't you know who I am?" To which the elderly gentleman replied – "Of course I do." Then the Devil puffed himself up and bellowed "Aren't you afraid? Don't you know that I can crush you in a second?" The man replied: "No I am not afraid and there is really nothing you can do to me." The Devil was very perplexed and took on a terrifying form and roared; "Why are you not afraid?" The elderly gentleman calmly looked the Devil in all three of his eyes and said: "I have been married to your sister for forty years and you are nothing compared to her!"

The Cow

The mother superior of a convent in Northern Scotland was coming to the end of her life. She had been a paragon of virtue in the region for over fifty years, extending her kindness and compassion to everyone irrespective of faith, nationality or position in society. If any family experienced difficult times, she would send two nuns to their door with a basket of food and medicines. Often she would deliver the baskets herself until poor health made this difficult for her. People from all the surrounding counties made their way to the convent to pay their final respects to their kind and generous benefactor. In the last days the nuns gathered around her, as it was a custom for their mother superior to pass on wise guidance on her last day. As the nuns gathered in her well-lit and simple room, she had some difficulty with her breathing. One of the nuns excused herself and

went to the kitchen to prepare the mother superior's favourite cup of warm milk and herbs. To assist with the breathing the nun reached into the medicine cabinet in the kitchen and took out the small bottle of whisky kept there for emergencies. A generous portion was added to the cup of warm milk and herbs.

The mother superior accepted the warm drink with a smile and slowly drank it all. She rested back on her pillows and seemed to be asleep. One of the nuns gently reminded her of the custom of delivering wise guidance. The mother superior opened her eyes, sat up and said; "Dear sisters, please listen carefully to what I have to say. Whatever you do please make sure that you do not sell that cow!"

Decorating Death

Anne Fleming

The act of decorating is the outer manifestation of an inner need to connect the new present with the old past. Life is only constant change. That's what makes it life. Without that, it is death. But it takes time for this on-going 'change' to register. With every breath we are changed, but we don't recognize that until months, years, decades of breathing have allowed us the opportunity to see the change that breathing has made in us.

Changing the way our home looks, reflects the changes that have taken place in ourselves. Discarding items that gave substance to the past allows us to recognize how much we have grown since those items were acquired. Re-arranging other items and allowing them to remain in our lives - but in a different location - reinforces the integrity of the life we are living now as a tangible connection to our past. Acquiring new items allows us to realize the strength of our ability to re-create ourselves. A newly decorated home literally opens the door to a different set of possibilities than were apparent before the decorating, simply because now we can 'see' the change that has taken place in our being. A shift has occurred, that we often were not

aware of. Our newly appointed dwelling opens us to new friends, new activities and new challenges.

A baby who has just begun walking suddenly becomes overly clingy because the new skill has suddenly taken her away from her mother - by choice - and she becomes anxious. In the same way, we are nervous about this new 'face' we are presenting to the world. We seek reassurance from 'old' friends and family that we still 'belong' to that past, even though we are recognizing our desire to move away from it. The physical change we have wrought in our home is linked to the physical changes in ourselves. The items that get discarded, moved around, purchased or put into storage equate to our ability to deal with the insecurities, frustrations, fears, successes, wisdom, and capabilities that identify us as unique and memorable people. We literally wear our homes like we wear our personalities. Those things that determine our individual lives, like the activities we are drawn to, or the people we associate with, or the places we travel to, or the simple routines we undertake each day are reflected in our homes: how expressive or reclusive they are, how comfortable or austere they are, what the contents reveal about the lives of the people who live there - the depth and breadth of the reality of us. In the act of decorating we offer ourselves the opportunity to celebrate the wonder of our amazing human journey.

The final passage in each life's journey is a darkly veiled one. And yet, that event evokes so much light. Memories of a loved one's lifetime intersect with our own, haunt the senses, flooding today's mourning with yesterday's presence. Perhaps it is the light that opens sorrow's door, invoking tears to purify the darkness, and uniting us with the suffering we all share in our journey from cradle to grave.

What sacrifices did each passing life make to ensure the continuation of blood, bone and culture? How do we respect those sacrifices responsible for some of our own framework of family? So much of life's

common ritual is based on the awareness of this loss. Each unique character, developed over a lifetime is a custom-made garment enabling us to engage our world as a distinct and memorable person. Every meal selected, prepared, presented and consumed within its framework of culture and tradition connects us to those who define our identity. Each conversation is an act of remembrance of the strengths and weaknesses of our individual heritage. The reality of each person's life is a keystone in the foundation of his family. The loss of any one person within a family creates a void.

How does a family acknowledge the reality of that void as it lives into the future? By reaching into its stored wisdom, frustration, joy, anger, melancholy, passion, creativity and pain. By celebrating the depth and breadth of the shared vitality that is that family's identity. By being grateful for the experience of that life passed on. And by offering solace and support to those who mourn the loss. Honouring the void requires recognition of the missing one within those who remain. And in that recognition, we find that he is still here.

Tibet Crisis, Sangha Calm Barbara Mueller

My husband Pema is from Tibet. He ran away from Tibet when he was 18 years old, a 34 day treacherous hike through the Himalayan Mountains in the winter took him into India. He lived in India for nine years as a refugee. We met in India at Dharamsala when I was a volunteer teacher there, and knew we were life partners. After we got married, Pema came back to Canada with me and has got a job in the health care field. He was so happy in January 2008 to become a Canadian citizen. The first time for him to be a citizen of any country! Ian was there at the citizenship ceremony to welcome Pema as a new Canadian. Pema and I have been members of the Pine Gate Sangha ever since my fluke encounter with Ian on a plane from Paris in the summer of 2006. We sat next to one another and only talked during the last thirty minutes before landing in Montreal, discovering

that we had both worked in Arctic Quebec and knew the same Inuit people who lived there! From that brief conversation I learned about Pine Gate sangha in Ottawa. Pema and I have since enjoyed going to Sangha and receive a very warm welcome there. We find it helps us to calm down in our busy schedule. Pema meditates regularly, from sitting meditation to truly being present in every moment and my own practice of mindfulness has deepened from my exposure to the teachings at Pine Gate.

I was so happy the Sangha did a special evening for Tibet. Since the riots on March 14th 2008, Pema and I have been very worried and very involved – and Pine Gate has been a haven of calm for us. You see, all his family are still in Tibet. On March 17th, the Chinese police did house to house raids. They usually do these every two months in search of any illegal items, such as pictures of the Dalai Lama or a history book of Tibet, or a Tibetan flag. However, this time they were in search of any able bodied youngsters... they took most people aged 20 to 50 years old. They arrested Pema's brother and sister, who were not involved in any demonstrations. In the building where Pema's family lives, they took 13 people, and from the building next door, they took 20 people. There are now 20,000 Tibetans in detention of one kind or another. When I wrote this in early April 2008, my brother in law and sister in law were still in jail and we were very concerned for their safety. Our prayers and meditations were answered as we got the recent news that Pema's brother and sister have been released from prison. Thank you everybody!

The pro-Tibet organizations have stated very clearly that they do not support a boycott of the Olympic Games. Neither does the Dalai Lama. What they are asking for is: no torch through Tibet; talks with the Dalai Lama; an independent investigation into the riots of March 14 2008; and a boycott of the opening ceremonies at the Olympic Games if China does not meet with the Dalai Lama. China invaded Tibet 50 years ago. It started in 1949 and completed in 1959, with the failed uprising, which caused the Dalai Lama to flee to India. Thousands of Tibetans

were killed by the Chinese army. The People's Liberation Army has since destroyed 1,600 monasteries and more than 1.2 million Tibetans have died as a direct result of Chinese occupation. China claims that Tibetans are better off since China returned Tibet to the "motherland." But if that were true, then there would not have been protests in Tibet this year in 40 different areas. If that were true, China would have no problem allowing foreign media and diplomats to see just what is happening inside Tibet. Now is the time for the world to act – and the protests in Europe and North America have sent a very strong message – to ensure that China has open discussions with regards to the future of Tibet.



Pema and Barbara

For both of us it is a real comfort going to Sangha and finding support from sangha members as well as from Ian and Carolyn, who were with Pema at the Tibet rally on Parliament Hill. Ian placed two little Tibetan flags from the demonstration on the altar at Pine Gate and seeing them on the altar always fills me with such hope. Hope, because I

think that things will change for the better, as there is now a greater consciousness about Tibet. People are more aware of the situation, and they pray for peace and for Tibet. We have done meditations with the sangha envisioning peace there and Ian has offered the merits of sangha practice for the benefit of the people of Tibet and also for the benefit of Chinese politicians to encourage compassion to flood their hearts about Tibet and the Dalai Lama. The support from Pine Gate gives us strength and courage.

Linji

Thich Nhat Hanh

Linji was a 9th century mountain monk in China. A renowned Zen Master with a distinct and direct style of bringing his spiritual friends to awakening. Some pithy statements from Linji and Thay from "Nothing To Do, Nowhere to Go" by Thich Nhat Hanh. Parallax Press 2007

"Bald-headed fools!" Master Linji scolded the monks. We say that we are disciples of the Buddha, but we utter unkind words, the words of the jackal. We are a lion, a liberated person, but we utter the words of someone who feels he has no value at all. We follow whatever spiritual teacher crosses our path. We are like a goat, eating everything. Don't mistake words for truth. Master Linji said that his teachings are like a painting in empty space. It may be colorful but it's temporary; don't bring it home to worship. Master Linji taught, "Friends, Buddha isn't something you can grasp, nor are the teachings of the Three Vehicles, the five natures, sudden enlightenment, the historical and the ultimate dimensions. They are all nothing but medicines and diseases, which arise together and are used as antidotes to each other. They aren't real objects that truly exist. Even if there were something real, it would only be a trap that appeared to be real, a temporary manifestation, the form of a contract for the public to use for the time being. It is only a matter of words." (p. 188)

Master Linji said that when we meet the ghost Buddha, we should cut off his head. Whether we're looking inside or outside ourselves, we need to cut off the head of whatever we meet, and abandon the views and ideas we have about things, including our ideas about Buddhism and Buddhist teachings. Buddhist teachings are not exalted words and scriptures existing outside us, sitting on a high shelf in the temple. Buddhist teachings are skilful means to cure our ignorance, craving, anger, as well as our habit of seeking things outside and not having confidence in ourselves. Insight can't be found in sutras, commentaries, or dharma talks. Liberation and awakened understanding can't be found by devoting ourselves to the study of Buddhist scriptures. This is like hoping to find fresh water in dry bones. Returning to the present moment, using our clear mind which exists in the here and now, we can be in touch with liberation and insight, as well as with the Buddha and all his disciples as living realities in this moment. (p. 11)

"Friends, there are a number of monks who practice the daily practice of turning inwards thinking that they are aspiring to the supramundane dharmas. They are wrong! If you aspire to Buddha, you lose Buddha. If you aspire to the Way, you lose the Way. If you aspire to be the master, you lose the master. Monks, do not commit this mistake! I do not need you to give a good explanation of the sutras or the shastras. I do not need you to be the king or high dignitary. I do not need you to be so eloquent, talking non-stop like a torrent of water. Nor do I need you to become wonderfully penetrating and wise. I just need you to have correct insight into the way things are. (p. 56)

In the past, when I had not yet seen the Way of practice clearly, I was still in dark obscurity. I did not dare waste any time in idleness; a quantity of hot blood in me was always pushing me to wander around looking for someone to learn the Path from. Thanks to the power of understanding that I received later on, I am now able to sit here and talk to you. I advise you not to waste time over food, clothes and honors. To meet a good spiritual friend

is something very rare. People come here from all directions because they have heard about the old monk Linji.....When this old monk displays his whole person in order to expose the effect, they sit with eyes blank and mouths as dumb as fish, utterly confused as to how to answer me. Let me tell you this: "This ass is not able to withstand being trampled on by the dragon-elephant." (p. 57)

My friends, if you want to live in the spirit of the dharma, you just need to put an end to doubts. Expanded, it is vast enough to embrace all the dharma realms. Contracted, it is not too small to be gathered in one strand of hair. It shines out on its own and has never lacked anything. A man of old said: "To say that it is something is not correct." You should look into it for yourselves to see if it is any different from this. I could keep on talking without end but the important thing is that you make the effort yourselves. I wish you good-bye." (p. 58)

A few more (provocative) tidbits selected by Joseph Emet:

Ancient teachers gave us sutras and the teachings to help us study and practice. But if we think of them as absolutes, then we have lost everything. For example, we say we should do walking meditation, that it brings about wellness. But if we do walking meditation because we think we should, making slow and exaggerated steps, then it just looks funny and does not help us feel happier. (p. 96)

Master Linji taught that each of us has a bright and shining mind. If we can find our way back to that bright mind, then we can be as the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas are. When our shining mind is dulled, that means it is covered by afflictions. With the practice of mindfulness we can restore our bright mind. Our mind is a garden and our garden has been ignored for a long time. The soil is hard and brambles and wild grasses are growing everywhere. To practice is to come back and care for our garden. We are the gardener, our mind is the earth, and in the soil there are good seeds. (p. 191)

Green Roofs Xena Bancroft, Jan-Michael Charles and Clement Ndegeya

The vision of an ecologically sound community and plans to offset urban sprawl in a conscious and responsible manner is a goal that appeals to us. After careful review of the general principles of eco-community design, we propose three distinct concepts – urban reforestation, green roofs and waste management. We hope to demonstrate that natural and eco-friendly alternatives can be simple in their application and have positive long lasting effects on the environment. The methods proposed are interactive; in that composting will operate as fertilizer for the urban canopy – which then provides a variable resource for plants necessary in the application of green roofs. In this short essay we concentrate on green roofs.

To offset industrial damage the presence of Green Roofs in an eco-village is an essential feature. Green Roofing refers to a thin layer of vegetation installed over a conventional roof; including flat and slopping roofs. Green Roofing incorporates gardens and planted vegetation; with current advances in technologies and research, green roofs can be installed in most climates. Moreover, this includes areas in which there is a variation between seasons such as Ottawa. Green Roofs are being used around the world in a variety of contexts. In Egypt for example, green roofs are used to provide families with fruits and vegetables. They are encouraged in big cities such as Chicago where they are used to combat heat as well as insulate houses during the winter months. This is achieved by preventing heat from escaping through the roof.

Research conducted in Ottawa by Karen Liu of the Nation Research Council Institute for research in construction demonstrates that green roofs in cold climates reduces heat loss [http://www.ec.gc.ca/EnviroZine/english/issues/62/feature2_e.cfm]. The winterized green roofs were adapted with Evergreen Juniper shrubs, which are

very tolerant to heat, full sun, poor soil conditions and urban environments. A thick soil cover was utilized to demonstrate the reduction need for air conditioning in the summer [<http://www.greenroofs.org/>]. The simulation of the winterized green roofs has demonstrated a great amount of energy efficiency compared to traditional homes. Studies show that a one storey building with a grass roof and 10 cm of growing medium would result in a 25% reduction in summer cooling needs. Field experiments by Karen Liu, found that a 6 inch extensive green roof reduced heat gains by 95% and heat loss by 26% compared to a conventional roof. These economic benefits demonstrate the long term saving potential of the green roof, which not only influences the homeowner but also extends into the community. The presence of green roofs in the community encourages the local and regional market to participate in a green economy. In addition to the latter, green roofs reduce the size of required heating, cooling and air conditioning equipment. A green roof may also provide an aesthetic aspect to the neighbourhood. Flat roofs can provide an area to plant herbs as well as flowers. The most important aspect is the ability to filter the air we breathe. One square metre of grass removes 0.2 kg of air particles a year. 1.5 m² of grass provides a person with enough oxygen for a year. Due to the location of the eco-village's proximity to the nation's Capital, the presence of green roofs can have a positive influence on surrounding neighbourhoods. Since, green roofs are very versatile they can be installed on a variety of surfaces including roof decks. To a greener tomorrow.

Geothermal Option Ian Baldwin & Evan Bullen

From a number of suggestions for green building plans – rooftop gardens, straw bale houses and so on – in this note for Pine Gate we focus on the geothermal option. Living in Ottawa it is hard to believe that anything can retain heat in the dead of winter. Most people would never expect that the ground beneath them maintains an average temperature of 13 degrees Celsius. By tapping into

this constant energy source, the heat from the Earth can be extracted in order to warm our buildings. Known as Earth Energy Systems (EES), geothermal heaters are becoming more common throughout Canada.

EES gathers heat from the Earth by pumping water (or antifreeze) through a system of underground pipes where the natural heat from the Earth warms them. The liquid is then pumped into an exchange unit where the heat is removed from the water and placed into a condenser coil. The condenser coil releases the heat, which is then moved throughout the house using forced air. In an open system the water that was pumped underground can be released back into the water supply with only a minor difference in temperature. In the closed loop system antifreeze is recycled and continually reheated by the warm earth. Regardless of which system is used Earth Energy Systems are environmentally friendly alternatives to natural gas and electric baseboards. Essentially you are tapping into a massive all natural solar panel and turning the Sun's energy into household heating.

The Earth is constantly warmed by the Sun, so the geothermal energy systems have a natural and unlimited source of energy. The environmental benefits of an EES are seen in the reduction of natural gas and electricity needed to heat a home. This translates to emitting a significantly less amount of pollution, green house gases and at the same time conserving energy. Electricity is needed to operate an EES but the overall conservation created far exceeds this expense. The use of EES is an innovative and eco-friendly heating solution. It would work well with eco-communities, which have proximity to rivers or lakes. In theory water could be diverted from the river to supply the whole development with their heating needs. Once the water has been utilized, it can be cooled and released back into the river as 'pure' as when it came in. This would create a unique feature in the community and maintain our responsibility to the environment.

Although the pumps and heating systems can be expensive, the overall savings come in the form of reduced hydro or gas bills. Estimates put the cost of installation of an EES at roughly \$12,000.00 for a regular size suburban home, nearly twice as much as any other heating system. However, over the course of a year, the energy bills for a house is expected to be half as expensive as any other heating systems. Therefore the return on the initial investment for a moderate sized suburban home would be roughly six and one-half years (see Natural Resources Canada Online at: http://www.canren.gc.ca/prod_serv/index.asp?Cald=163&Pgld=914). Implementing something like this on a larger scale and during the initial construction will only increase the savings. Overall it is a great step in creating an eco-friendly community and atmosphere.

Although eco-communities may play a small part in the overall process, the healing of our world is something very important to us. Readers may be parents or even grandparents and have many hopes and fears for the future. We are your children and our fear is that we may not be able to worry and hope for children of our own. We may not understand what this whole grand experiment is about, the only thing we can do right in life is to make sure our children get a chance to wonder about it too. Humanity has been irresponsibly greedy and it is the job of those who can, to fix this problem of reckless excess to the best of our ability. Global warming and environmental deterioration are not nuclear bombs, they are not communism, and they are not terrorists. They are warning signs of our planet earth getting fed up with how it has been treated. Some may feel the worst of it first (New Orleans), while others will sit around wondering why it still has yet to snow on December 25th. Things are changing for the worse because of humanity's short sightedness, and it is our job to provide the necessary vision to fix it.

We are students who believe that what little we can do counts for something. We do not have corporate interests and we are not being influenced by

monetary gain. This report is meant to show our outright passion towards instituting measures that will benefit the environment and subsequent generations to come.

What's in a Name?

Marty Clark

On February 3rd, 2008 I received the Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission from Ian in Orlando, Florida. I had known for several months that I was going to take my vows and had several concerns. First, having Fibromyalgia, I was concerned about being able to do the touchings of the earth, even though I was assured that bowing from the waist was perfectly acceptable. Secondly, remaining mindful through the ceremony. This was the first time in my religious history to make a commitment as an adult with adult seeing eyes. I wanted to be 100% there.

As a young girl I had been baptized into the First Baptist Church. This ceremony is often affectionately referred to as 'getting dunked,' and required little of me physically. Later in my youth, I was again baptized a second time - into the Catholic Church. Now a 'sprinkling' of water would suffice. My parents who were also being baptized, were required to prostrate themselves before the altar. Seeing my parents from this perspective was startling. Why did I not have to do that? Was their commitment more serious than mine, requiring them having to take this humbling gesture? Looking back I realize that it was also frightening to see my parents bow to anyone! Even God! Many questions were raised that day, but never asked. After finding a home in Buddhism some forty years later, I was ready to make a commitment. This time though with adult eyes. I had participated in Sangha meetings where I did The Three Earth Touchings - no water involved...I felt it only right that I 'touch the earth' when I was requested to do so. I was ready. My other concern, probably like many others before taking their vows, I wanted to remain mindful during the ceremony. In preparation, I borrowed a zafu and zabuton from our Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Zen Center. I removed just

the right amount of buckwheat hulls from the zafu to be comfortable. I brought a small blanket for prostrations in case we were outside. I went through my Plum Village Chanting and Recitation book and marked all the pertinent information for my husband, who does not practice, so he would have a better understanding of who was who and such, so that I would not be concerned with his enjoyment of the ceremony. (Of course I forgot to give it to him and kept it with me during the ceremony!) We even splurged on a 'good' hotel. We went the evening before the preceding Day of Mindfulness in order to be well rested. I was ready.

My husband and I arrived at the home of Bob and Pam Allen, the usual gathering place for the Fish Lake Sangha. We could not have ordered a more beautiful morning for such an occasion. A small alter had been set up on the open-air deck, with flowers, growing and blooming plants and items of personal practice from the Allan home. I felt instantly welcome, as if I had been there hundreds of times before. Clothing, hair, flowers, and tiny sparkling waves on the lake were gently blown through the morning sun, providing a natural fan for our comfort. The community was convened and Carolyn's chanting was beautiful and clear as she invited the bell. The ceremony continued and strength was found to do all the earth touchings that were required. I had no worries for mindfulness. I could have been nowhere else! Before much time had passed we were finished and Ian asked if I was ready to hear my new Dharma Name. Of course I was! Who has not thought about what their new Dharma Name would be? Would it reflect something of what we are and what we aspire to be? Would those that know it and know us, understand it? Would they notice growth in us as well as the seeds that still needed watering, according to the standard the name now set? Yes, I was ready. Ian smiled big and bright and named me: "Ancestral Compassion of the Source." I was instantly elated and filled with gratitude, for having been so thoughtfully named. But before I could respond, every head was turning skyward to see and hear an Osprey. A Fish Hawk was circling and calling,

inviting itself to join with our Sangha and share it's own mindful words of wisdom. "How auspicious that was." "Yes, auspicious." "How wonderful..." I heard these words repeated reverently in hushed voices by various Sangha members. Wow, it was auspicious! Then Ian presented me with a leaf from the Bhodi Tree, another 'simply grand' element, brought to our celebration. Following were lots of bows, hugs, smiles and a generous offer to 'dunk' me in the lake - which I graciously declined. Then tea and bagels were served. My husband enjoyed conversation with Sangha members while Ian shared with me his valuable insights on Sangha Building.... I had just facilitated the first Thich Nhat Hanh Sangha meeting at the UU Fellowship of Gainesville several weekends prior.

When I returned to the Fellowship our co-Minister, who is Buddhist asked, "So...how does it feel to be Buddhist?" "I don't know yet." Was all I could think to answer. I showed him the leaf, my Mindfulness Trainings Transmission card, told him my Dharma Name and about the Osprey. Being the husband of an Avian Veterinarian (and our other co-Minister) he seemed impressed. But somehow I knew I was not answering his question. There had been no bells or whistles or fireworks, no instant 'mega' awakening. So I would have to let things perk and find the little jewels of awakening along my path.

One of my aspirations was to be like my great grandmother, a gentle and compassionate woman of American Indian decent. Investigating the Osprey's role in American Indian cultures brought me to a better understanding and appreciation for my newly given Dharma Name. The Osprey is known as a 'good bird' that can warn of 'bad things'. Hearing its' call is a reminder to evaluate a commitment you have made or are about to make...to watch your step, watch where you are going, NOW! The Osprey had come quickly to give me my first Dharma Lesson. He said to me: "Ancestral Compassion of the Source," you should have gratitude for your wonderful and unique Dharma Name. It is not just a name it is a 'tool for skillful means.' Just as my uniqueness is among the hawks

in the way I catch fish. You see, I can rotate my inside talons backward to better grip my prey. No other hawk can do this. This uniqueness is one of my 'tools for skillful means'. My call in the back of your mind, will be a 'mindfulness bell.' It will call you to 'stop' and 'think.' Ask the right questions. "Do you know for sure?" "What attachment to that anger, that object, that object of mind or feeling is causing you to suffer. Think, "Ancestral Compassion of the Source"... You are your ancestors, you are your Great Grandmother, you have her compassion, you just need to water the seeds. You will always have me the fish hawk, your brother in the Dharma as a source of comfort from your suffering and an inspiration for your prayers. A guide on your path, if you will... a Refuge." "Namaste, Namaste, Namaste, and Amen."

So ended the final Transmission of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, begun by Ian and my first Dharma lesson from Brother Fish Hawk. Although it took some time to translate from the heart to words. Now I know how to answer when my Minister asks, "So...how does it feel to be a Buddhist?" I will answer him, "I feel like Brother Fish Hawk when he is fishing!"



The Altar at Fish Lake

To Hell With Religion

Renee Rojas

And man said, in his ego state
 "Let us create religion
 As a means of worshipping our intellect.
 Let us exalt ourselves higher than God
 (Forget the Goddess)
 Let us write 'It is written'
 The incessant rules that will rape the soul.

In the name of religion
 Let us separate race,
 We'll trample with war,
 Fleece man of his gold,
 Make slaves of the free,
 Sexually assault the young,
 Force women submit,
 We'll call it surrender,
 A yielding of will."

And the God/Goddess cried
 "Oh man, look what you have become.
 What good is your religion?"

I attended a Celebrate Recovery meeting several years ago. This program was being held in a church fellowship hall. I was introduced to several people who were eager to let me know what they were "recovering" from (alcohol, drugs, sex, etc.). Without hesitation, I stated I was recovering from religion. It was not that I had an addiction, but that I was recovering from the psychological and emotional abuses of religion.

Everyone across this planet is affected in some way or another by religion, whether or not they belong to an organized religion. Religion is defined in the Webster Dictionary as a system of religious beliefs. We can clearly see that these religious belief systems have never served the **whole** of humanity. And they never will, religion has been created by man and his ego! As stated in the poem opening this letter, many horrendous acts have been committed in the name of religion, in the name of "god(s)".

Everything on this planet has changed as we as a human race have evolved. It is amazing the progress in technology we have created. Yet we have not updated organized religion. It appears it has been set in stone, thus throwing us back to the stone ages. We need a new set of beliefs that will benefit the **whole** of humanity. Paradigm is defined in Webster's Dictionary as: 1a) a pattern, example, or model, b) an overall concept accepted by most people in an intellectual community". I laugh when I read this definition. How intellectual we humans think we are and yet how much in the stone ages we are with regards to religion and "holy books". We need new paradigms that will embrace and unite humanity in love and peace, instead of separate us by judgment, hatred and war.

The patriarchal "ole time religion" has got to go. It's time to break free, but how do we when the wounds run so deep? What direction do we have in leaving religion? What punishment awaits us? Will we be deemed to Hell? There is a great void with the subject of recovery from religion. This book gives this authors experience on leaving the hell, fire and damnation of religion. This book offers guidance for walking out of the fear and into freedom of trusting your own spiritual and worship experience. When we see religion for what it really is and was intended for, we can begin to break down the power it holds over us.

Some of the chapter titles are: Holy Terror and the Lake of Fire, The Missing Voice, Breaking the Ties that Bind, Pieces of the Divine, Finding Your Way Out, The Author's Story.

I do not have all the answers. This book is being written to give humanity something to think about. Religion isn't working anymore. As we know, in most religious practices, we have not been allowed to think for ourselves. We have been taught to just swallow whatever we were given. It's time to think and chew through what we've been taught as "truth" by religion. My responsibility is to address the issues, ask the questions and promote dialogue

in hopes of freeing ourselves from the "ole time religion". If we, as humanity, need a set of beliefs because it's too frightening to stand alone on our beliefs, then let us root our beliefs in love and peace.

Again, everyone on our planet has been affected in some way or another by organized religion. This book is for the millions who want to leave religion but are instilled with fear about doing so or those who are suffering from emotional and psychological abuses of religion and are in need of healing those wounds.

Living Dharma & A More Perfect Union **Ian Prattis**

President Carter pointed out in 2005 that the Christian Right's takeover of the Republican Party has a fundamentalist agenda of rigidity, domination and exclusion driving American policies with equally disastrous consequences at home and abroad. In the same year Bill Moyers points out chillingly: "They use the language of faith to demonize political opponents, mislead and misinform voters, censor writers and artists, ostracize dissenters and marginalise the poor."

Yet, as Barack Obama demonstrated in a speech of soul wrenching honesty, Living Dharma can penetrate these barriers. His March 19, 2008 speech – "A More Perfect Union" addressed racial issues within America. He presented new parameters for America's Christian community to break the mould and transcend the historical justifications and resentments that keep racism in a persistent stalemate. In a stunning, eloquent and evocative address to America, Obama presented a quality unheard of in America for many years. He made it clear that racial division could not be ignored. Not this time. He provided deep understanding of black anger and white resentment, both trapped in an impasse he sought to break through by blazing a different path to follow. A

path built on dialogue and a real sense of interbeing across racial, class and political boundaries; a path that resonates with young people in America who are living examples that the human spirit can regenerate and soar. They are not the leaders of tomorrow; they are the leaders of today.

Very skilfully Obama addressed the current circumstances of suffering caused by racism and provided understanding for the mind states and social pressures that prevail on all sides of racial discord. Furthermore, remedial actions are proposed. He relentlessly discounted all static views of American society and opened the door wide for a fresh dialogue to emerge. This door had been slammed shut by blacks and whites, both groups trapped by their running of old racial tapes brimming full with anger, injustice and self-righteous resentment. His insight and understanding caught fire with the American public, inspiring churches, universities and community associations across the country to think anew about racial discord and come together in the spirit of reconciliation. Should this continue through the millions tuning into YouTube, then a wake up call to America will have been heard. Barack Obama has unleashed a hurricane of Living Dharma that encourages fresh dialogue to bridge the chasms that can destroy America's wellbeing. A second renaissance in America is now a distinct possibility.

Nothing less than our future depends on making this example a reality in our own lives.

Lazy Days Of Summer 2008 Program

The summer program at Pine Gate from June to August, 2008 provides an opportunity for the special interests of sangha members to find a forum for appreciation. Topics and practices are brought forward from different expressions of healing and meditation, broadening our knowledge and appreciation of different forms and traditions. If you have a topic or speaker and are also interested in facilitating and being a bell master please get in

touch with Carolyn Hill at chill.carolyn@gmail.com 613 726 0881. There will be gentle guidance and much support for the new leaders stepping forward.

All sessions are on a Thursday evening at Pine Gate Meditation Hall from 7.00pm – 9.00pm. Each practice opportunity begins with sitting and walking meditation, with a further period of silent sitting meditation, then the presentation and dharma discussion about it. At 9.00pm the main event is tea and goodies upstairs or in the garden, which should be in full abundance. Please don't be shy – it would be so nice for everyone if you step forward and bring your special interests to the fore.

Directions to Pine Gate Sangha: Take Queensway to Woodroffe S. exit; Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout to 1252, home of the Pine Gate sangha. No reindeer grazing the lawn in summer, but new flowerbeds to greet you.

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