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SHAMBHALA CONGRESS

Reporting Back :

The first Shambhala Congress took place in Halifax between November 4 and 9. It was attended by 220 people from the Americas and Europe. It met in Pier 21, the Canadian equivalent of Ellis Island, starting and ending each day with sitting practice. The event was largely self-organizing, with twelve working groups forming from the input of all the delegates. A preliminary official report can be found at <http://www.shambhala.org/programs/congress/> The only group which made a substantial report to the Congress was the "13th group," which is discussed below. The work of all the groups is continuing over the internet, and a more definitive report is expected by Shambhala Day.

The Congress was attended by our official delegates Madge Rossinoff and Newcomb Greenleaf, and also by Gerry Haase. The following reports give a few impressions and memories of this remarkable event.

Madge:

For me the most pervasive quality of the Congress was Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's joy and spontaneity. His gentle and powerful energy kept us awake and engaged at every level of body, speech and mind. When he was there the space was brilliant. When he wasn't there, President Reoch maintained the sacred environment with his own sense of purpose and boundless humor.

Participants were respectful and receptive. They carried the weight of dignity and broken heart. Often the mood was generous and solemn. At times, our lineage of wisdom and sacred view was palpable.

The room cried.

Everything offered was considered workable.

We created enlightened society on the spot.

Camaraderie, contemplation, vast heart and heavy burden commingled with devotion and blessing from the guru, and the world was enlightened.

On the horizon the sky and water shared the same hue of gossamer gray blue and at a cellular level all was united.

I want to thank you all for giving me this opportunity to bask in the radiance of the GES. May I be at your service.

Gerry:

The overall theme of the congress was the third jewel-- namely us, the sangha. It remained the focus throughout, although issues were also raised concerning the teacher and the teachings. The Sakyong laid down the gauntlet when he said [I am paraphrasing] "I think by now you will have decided that I am worthy of being the leader here, that I am up to it, and that I have committed my life to it... What about you?" He went on to say, "I can't do it alone. I am just one human being. Will you do your share? Will you be involved?" When people tell him, "you should do this or do that," the Sakyong often asks, "Will you participate?" He told the Congress that when people reply, "Well...I am kind of busy," that means it probably won't get done. The message is clear: it's up to us. Richard Reoch can't do it all.

The first day I joined the finance group. Richard Reoch gave a "state of the union" report. There were many areas of concern and they were all addressed. The head of Shambhala Europe especially impressed me. Europe has a very different view of fundraising and administration than we do in North America-- and after 3 years of hard effort it seems to be working.

Then there was the "13th group," which addressed all sorts of questions about the Vajra Regent from new and old students alike. That was quite an event! I spent most of the day taking part in the most amazing "talking circle" I have ever experienced. For once, people with very differing views were able to talk, be respected and be heard by others. Their report to the Congress made a deep impression on people.

Newcomb:

Let me say a little bit about that because I was in the audience when the 13th group, the group devoted to the Vajra Regent, made its presentation. It was a group that had started out with a mind bogglingly wide range of experiences and feelings about the Regent, and in their presentation they replicated a bit of what their process had been, going around the circle, everyone having the chance to speak and be listened to. They conveyed so palpably their healing journey that we in the audience felt healed by hearing it. They conveyed the intensity with which they had listened to each other so that we in the audience listened with a similar intensity. They made us laugh and cry when previously we may have felt like sneaking out of the room to avoid a painful topic.

After they finished, they asked President Reoch for his response. He was totally silent for quite a long time. I'd say five minutes, and then he began to cry and he cried for a long time. And then he was quiet again for about another 5 minutes and then he said something like this: "What I am thinking of is how I wish that instead of one throne behind me there were three. On the three thrones would be the Vidyadhara, the Vajra Regent, and the Sakyong. And then they could see how the wisdom that they have transmitted to us has come down to us in a true, unbroken way which has allowed us to create enlightened society on this spot. If we can create peace in this situation in one day, where we start from such pain and divergence, think what we can do when we take this out into the world."

Meanwhile I was in the Social Action group, which Madge also joined. After half of the members left for the 13th group, it became a perfect size for a working group with intense and interesting discussions of what social action could mean for Shambhala and what kind of training there could be for a path of social action. We also asked the Sakyong to write a sadhana for the earth, which would empower those who practiced it to be earth protectors, and he responded that he would like to do that.

CENTER PROGRAMS

Fearless Buddha, Peaceful Warrior, an introduction to Shambhala Buddhism with Ken Ketchum. December 6 & 7. Saturday and Sunday 8:30 to 5:00. Light breakfast and lunch are included.

Ken Ketchum has been trying to practice since 1977 or so. He lived at Karme Choling from 1978 through 1983.

Ken has been working, raising a family and involved with the Hanover/WRJ group as he does so.

The weekend will be grounded in meditation practice. We will discuss the lineages of Buddhism and Shambhala warriorship, brought together originally by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, and now flourishing under the leadership of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. There will be four talks:

Overview

Three yanas of Buddhism

Great Eastern Sun

Community resources, local and world-wide

\$15 to \$40 suggested donation

You're not too late forA 5 week discussion of **Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism**, by, Trungpa Rinpoche. The program is lead by Sarah Littlefeather, a long time student of Rinpoche. It meets at the Northern Lights Bookstore & Café, a wheel-chair accessible facility. The class meets Tuesday nights (weather permitting). There is a brief period of sitting meditation prior to each class. Books are available at Northern Lights Bookstore. Time 6:30 pm. Please call 748-4240 or 563-2866 to register. Suggested donation \$25 or \$5 per meeting

Ken McLeod is now fairly committed to a teaching here the week-end of June 12. The program would start either Wednesday or Thursday evening and would continue through Sunday noon. Our Center will have the honor of hosting this very well regarded teacher.

The Ken McLeod discussion group will be meeting every other Sunday at 1:30. One may join in at any point. Check the Center Calendar for specific dates. Meetings generally end with a Qigong workout sessions called Eight Pieces of Brocade.

Acharya Gaylon Ferguson will be teaching Taming the Mind Wednesday nights, a six week course likely to begin January 21. Stay tuned. \$25-40 suggested donation.

The Heart Sutra Jan 30-Feb 1, a weekend program with Roger Guest. What we know as the Heart Sutra is a pith instruction of the Buddha which condenses several seasons of his most profound teaching on a very deep topic (Sunyata or Emptiness) into a couple of short pages. Thus, it is no wonder that it sometimes comes across as a kind of intuitive riddle. \$15-50 suggested donation.

PRACTICE

Tuesday Morning Practice Session at the Center That's right! We have added Tuesday mornings, around 7 to 8 to our practice schedule. The reports are all laudatory. Try it.

The **Learn to Meditate** sessions continue on the second Sunday of the month. Instructors are needed.

Full day **Nyinthuns** will continue 1st Sundays of the month though shrinerroom staffing is needed. Beginning with the January 4 nyinthun the schedule will be sitting from 9-12 and 1-3, with lunch from 12-1.... provided, initially, by Vicky Giella.

A new Friday **yoga class** begins on Friday mornings in January. Andrea Thibaudeau has very wide training and certification in yoga and has worked with physical therapists. She already has a strong connection with Tibetan Buddhism.

MEMBERSHIP

Most of you have already notice an initial questionnaire aimed toward compiling a well focused view of who needs to get what information and how it can be delivered most efficiently. Please look for the next iteration and if you want any changes in the information you receive and how you get it we'll make it easy for you to tell us. The compiling of membership data has been adeptly handled by Arthur Jennings for the past few years. Barry will now try to fill those entries.

The Scholarships Fund is a reality that is not well enough planted in our consciousness. The Executive Committee has decided to seed the fund with \$100 monthly. We are also considering the hosting of events particularly aimed at both increasing the Fund and raising the knowledge that money is available for those caring to attend various programs. Money should not impede pursuit of the Dharma. After the fixed overhead, this is our priority use of funds. The Executive Committee will be putting more focus on scholarships, inviting all members to participate.

A KARME CHOLING CONGRESS?

As proposed by Sarah Littlefeather

Now that the Halifax congress has come and gone and in keeping with the energy and momentum and apparent extraordinary communication that occurred there, I would like to remind you of President Reoch's enthusiasm for a community gathering along similar lines to address issues pertinent to our local sangha. Our issues are unique due to our close proximity to Karme Choling and motivation for many of us living here.

In his last email to me Richard said he was participating in a March Dathun at Karme Choling and if we could coordinate with that it would make it easier for his schedule.

I received responses from several folks who are enthusiastic to attend such a gathering. So now is the time to begin the organizing process. Please let me know if you would like to participate or attend. We have 3 months to put this together. Contact Sarah at 563-2866 or nyingje@vtlink.net

NOTICES

Fine Arts: "Narratives" is a collection of recent paintings and mixed media by Judith Salmon. Collectively the works explore impermanence, the passage of time, the days and seasons of life. It will be at the Quimby Gallery in the Harvey Academic Center of Lyndon State College through December 20, with hours 8am-4pm, M-F.

Work Camp News: Sal DeMaio, David Horton and Robert Norton have completed their training to become registered volunteer meditation leaders.

This Newsletter needs a new editor. Systems are well in place and David Wilde provides excellent design and line editorial support. Please, if you have any interest in considering this very gratifying job you should contact Tune or Newcomb. Unless someone can step forward this Newsletter will end with this issue.

Greatful thanks to Troll Press for printing of this newsletter.

