

Davis Shambhala Center

Davis Shambhala Meditation Center held a community meeting to discuss the Congressional matters. In general, the proposals were accepted as common sense. The one area that generated a lot of discussion was the desire for relationship with a Vajra Master. This is an increasingly important matter for many members and potential members.

Ottawa Shambhala Center

The Ottawa Shambhala Centre convened a special community meeting on Sunday, January 30 to discuss the various working group proposals that have been being submitted to the Shambhala Congress.

The community members present were in general agreement with the intent of all the working group proposals. Many of our members have followed the working group proceedings through conference calls and by reviewing various related documents.

There are however three specific points that I would like to bring to your attention:

1. There was general agreement that the questions posed by the **Leadership Development and Succession Planning** working group (see Section IV - Job Descriptions and Succession Practices) need to be addressed and resolved as soon as possible.
2. Within the **New Economic Model** there needs to be more clarity concerning the relationship concerning revenue transfers from centres and individual fundraising appeals. One of our members noted that some people might wish to contribute more to their local centres with the understanding that a proportion of their contribution would be automatically transferred to Shambhala.

Others had hoped that the proposed transfers would be based on net revenue. Our treasurer has calculated that using gross unrestricted revenue will result in transferring approximately 75% of net income. For centres trying to save money for major capital or operating expenditures, this would be a significant obstacle.

3. Our discussion of the **Membership Policy** led to a recommendation that Centre membership coordinators be responsible for providing new members with pins and related materials, rather than having these sent directly from Shambhala International. We felt that it was important for prospective members to receive the full package of membership materials

from their local Centre.

Our members were generally supportive of the very open description of membership contained in the proposals.

The proposals on **Diversity and Accessibility**, **Community Care** and **Outreach** were also well-received. We recommended that the Centre create its own working groups to study these proposals in greater detail and submit recommendations for priority implementation.

The **Mandala Structure and Governance** model was also presented, and members felt that it was a reasonable model for governing the world-wide Shambhala mandala.

The Karmê Chöling Congress

Two Congresses Survey: Summary of Responses

Prepared by Newcomb Greenleaf, Gerry Haase, and Merle Thompson from 22 returned surveys.

The following issues received significantly more support than the others.

I. Vision and Mission

How do we understand the mission of Karmê Chöling?

II. Power and Decision-Making

How are decisions made and communicated to the sangha?

How can a voice in decisions be given to those in the sangha who feel vitally interested?

III. Financial Issues?

How much does the business model determine decisions regarding policy and programming?

How can programs be made more affordable to those of limited means?

IV. Acharyas and Senior Teachers?

What is the role and authority of the resident acharya?

What is his or her relationship to the board and director?

How are resident acharyas and senior teachers chosen and evaluated?

V. Welcoming : How are those who come to Karmê Chöling

welcomed, particularly when they are:

A. new to Karmê Chöling or to the Shambhala teachings, or

B. students, or those of limited financial means

Here are the comments and additional issues which were written in:

How about more interfaith dialogues and programs such as the annual Lutheran visit.

There should be co-directors chosen by the Sakyong. Their ability to lead in a relational and collaborative fashion is vitally important.

It is hard to volunteer when calls are not answered.

Can Kubera and Saddharma be used for more outreach and fundraising?

Sangha is at the heart of questions about resident Acharyas and senior teachers.

How available are resident Acharyas and senior teachers to new students?

Are they paid too much?

Let's invoke dralas to end the erosion of staff lungta.

How can Karme Choling be more welcoming to new staff and to area sangha?

Should Karme Choling provide Shambhala Training for area sangha?

Can the programs of Karme Choling have more diversity of practices, views, and teachers?

The cost of following the Shambhala path makes for a country club atmosphere and makes it difficult to bring new folks to the dharma.

The sense of community at Karme Choling needs to be stabilized.

Policies for staff to study and for program credit need to be clearer.

There needs to be greater access to resource material.

Could Karme Choling have programs like arts fairs.

Better communication is needed at all levels. Perhaps there should be a roving facilitator for communication and kindness.

There is a lack of female participation and the feminine principle in power at Karme Choling. Why aren't there more women on the Board?

Could there be more outreach and social engagement?

The following is an essay from a member:

Developing Heartfelt and Powerful Communication

I would like to comment on the sentence in "The Ground of Openness and Trust" which resonated most with me: "We need to explore further the ways in which we can all work with the balance of feminine and masculine energies in ourselves and throughout our mandala, developing heartfelt and powerful communication with each other."

Through long and largely negative experience in this sangha, I have been contemplating the question of communication for a long time. There are certainly many wonderful exceptions to what I'm about to say, but in general I have found communication in the sangha to be at a level far below what it ought to be. An awful lot of rudeness, coldness, disrespect, unkindness, even cruelty. I have often felt as if so many people come into the sangha, read a lot of Trungpa, decide they are a crazy wisdom master in the making, and then try to imitate specifically Rinpoche's cutting qualities, his outrageousness and

inscrutability—with predictably woeful results. There are more than a few senior students in the sangha who come across this way, to me and others. And so then new people come along and after 2 months of sitting start developing “the syndrome”, as I sometimes call it to myself.

When I came across this sentence in “The Ground of Openness and Trust” my first thought was “right on”. My second, immediately following, was, hmm, what was it that Mr. Gandhi said when he was asked his view of Western civilization?: “That would be a good idea.” In other words, it’s the kind of thing that is said often. But I feel strongly that our societal conditioning with regard to communication is so powerful that unless we make firm and *concrete* commitments to deepening our view and practice of it, nothing will change. We need to *privilege* communication, to create certain structural changes at our centres so as to be continually reminded of it—for example, by informally instituting one or more rotating facilitators, whose job it would be not only to act as bridges / peacemakers when called upon but who might also, when it would seem helpful, gently intervene of their own accord to encourage better communication. (If we have roving gekkos to encourage people to practice shamatha, why not “roving gekkos” to encourage people to practice kindness?)

I’ve lost count of how many newcomers to the sangha over the years have brought this whole subject up with me or in my presence. Words I’ve often heard are “cold”, “unfriendly”, and “patronizing”. One antidote might be to try and learn something from the style of Thich Nhat Hanh, who highlights the truth of *interdependence* in every teaching I’ve come across of his. I feel the practice of “heartfelt and power communication” really could not be overvalued.

Shambhala Congress in Halifax

Almost everyone checked the following eight issues, while less than half of respondents checked any of the other six.

_____ The need to respect the diversity of transmissions and different allegiances that people hold within Shambhala;

_____ The fault lines resulting from differences of individual loyalties and devotion to different lineages and teachers;

_____ The importance of working with different points of view resulting from the new Shambhala ngondro, the emergence of the Rigden as a central image for our shrine rooms and the introduction of a new shrine in Shambhala Centres;

_____ The need to address fears that Shambhala could be seen to be cutting itself off from the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages, and that practitioners of those lineages could feel themselves excluded from the Shambhala community;

_____ The importance of communicating properly and giving genuine feedback

to the Kalapa Court;

_____ The importance of dealing with divisions in ways that avoid polarization, do not force people to choose between "one side" or "the other" or lead people to fear exclusion;

_____ The feelings people have that they are not represented in the consultative and decision-making processes of the mandala;

_____ The concern that discussions around diversity must be based on real commitment and not be a matter of lip service.

The following additional issues were listed:

- The need for someone to represent the Sakyong Wangmo principle.
- The need for more women as acharyas.
- The difficulty in developing loyalty to a Sakyong who is not very available.

The importance of transmission of the dharma to the next generation, facilitated by free teachings for students and other young persons. The problem of the cost of following the path, which makes it difficult for newcomers to enter and seem like the dharma is for sale.

New Haven Community meeting: feedback to the Congress

1. Community care:

Community care should address not only mechanisms for addressing complaints and transgressions, but should more positively address building a sense of community, social networks, ideas for how we could actually care for each other.

Should address not only child care, but care of other family members including elderly parents. There are many individuals in our community caring for elderly parents who would like to be able to bring them to programs and have assistance provided.

Development of retirement communities, co-housing, etc.

2. Governance/Structure

Clarify the distinctions between large centers and small groups

What is the definition of a center versus a study group (administrative distinctions, programmatic distinctions, etc.)

How will small groups be represented on the Mandala Governing Council?

How will small groups be included in regional planning and scheduling?

Develop guidelines for small groups, what could they be doing to grow and stabilize.

Activities for small groups

Acharya visits to small groups – making sure this is considered in regional planning and scheduling,

Financial support for acharya visits (smaller groups may not be able to afford all the expenses of an acharya visit)

3. Practice and Study

Meditation Instructor support for sadhakas when there is no local MI available (example – Cakrasamvara practitioners in small groups). Can regional telephone MI support be made available

4. Programs for teens, Sun Camp in more centers (more easily accessible for families who cannot afford the cost of sending a child to Nova Scotia or Colorado).

More effort to be put into developing a curriculum for children, beyond family camp/rites of passage

HALIFAX TOWN HALL MEETING

3 February 2005

Approximately 50 Halifax Shambhalian participants participated in a Town Hall meeting that was organized as an open discussion in preparation for the upcoming Shambhala Congress. An opportunity to raise questions and to express views and concerns in relation to the topics covered by the Congress over the past year, as well as on any issue related to the state of the mandala in general. All views and opinions were welcomed and contained in an atmosphere of listening and speaking from the heart to what arose. President Reoch was in attendance along with the director of the Halifax Shambhala center Acharya Richard John mainly to hear what people had to say. The meeting was organized by the Halifax Town Hall Committee and facilitated by David Quinn, the chair of Halifax Dekyong Council.

The meeting began with 15 minutes of sitting after which topics were identified and the discussion began. The following is a brief summary of the topics discussed:

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COMPUTERS AND COMMUNICATION/DELEKS

Concern regarding the over dependence on email and computers in general for communication within the community at large and within deleks.

Concern regarding the loss of The Banner (the Halifax Centre news paper)

connecting deleks with questions from the sakyong to empower delek

meetings empower deleks politically by giving dekyongs a representative seat

MONEY/ORGANIZATION

Lack of money and where the community/organization focuses its financial resources (eg. too much is spent on the Kalapa Court which is unoccupied for much of the time)

The need to be more than just heard at a Town Hall, but for there to be response from the leadership

VIDYADHARA/ SAKYONG 1

the Vidyadhara's teaching and Sakyong's teaching. Concern that the crazy wisdom of the Vidyadhara's teaching is being lost with the Sakyong.

NYIDA DAYS

The importance of supporting and reviving the 4 nyida day celebrations

SUPPORT FOR SHAMBHALA TRAINING / YOUTH & PASSING ON CULTURE

Support for Shambhala Training financial and otherwise. To ensure that it is perpetuated. That our culture is fully transmitted to the next generation.

A request that the Sakyong do a public program when he is in Halifax to draw new people and youth.

CHILDREN

Programs like family camp need to be offered in NS and to be supported

The view of how we relate to children in general needs to be looked at. They are a source of sanity that is often overlooked

VIDYADHARA/ SAKYONG 2

The experience of the most recent seminary was that the Sakyong is protecting the magical core of shambhala.

Not everyone gets the seminary experience, and so there is concern about what the Sakyong is doing

Our ability to hold this question fully and skillfully is critical at this time. It is the key issue for our community to address. Community leaders in particular (acharyas government etc needs to hold this question openly and skillfully)

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN "SHAMBHALA" AND SHAMBHALA BUDDHISM

shambhala is inclusive of all traditions and cultures/shambhala Buddhism is a form of Buddhism qualified by Shambhala specific practices.

DISSENT & THE VIEW

the experience of "group-think within the community and wanting to object the importance of airing a dissenting view. Not keeping a lid on it. The unhealthiness of silencing it

TALKING CIRCLES AND FOLLOW THROUGH FROM THE LAST CONGRESS

Where do these initiatives stand?

Group 13 has led to further use of talking circles. Halifax Dekyong council is

exploring them to develop skill in having compelling and meaningful dialogue at delek meetings.

PROTECTING OUR SPACE / FEMININE PRINCIPLE

the need to protect the purity of our practice spaces and forms. Crowds and activity at the center are a sign of health and robustness, but often results in the infringement of forms when a level 2 practice has to give way to a Sunday gathering for example.

Kalapa center/the need for more space. Shambhala International should support a kalapa center project or other local projects that are “essence points” for the international community

SUPPORT OF KINGDOM OF SHAMBHALA

how to send a stronger invitation to wider sangha to come to Nova Scotia to create KOS

DIVERSITY

need to support multi-lingual translation

develop cultural exchanges within the global shambhala context

Nova Scotia gov't recently passed new immigration legislation and are looking to work with community and religious organizations to help bring people here

AGE REPRESENTATION

youth is not well represented at the meeting. many leave Nova Scotia

GOVERNANCE OPENNESS, ACCOUNTABILITY, VIABILITY & INTEGRITY OF MANDALA AS IT IS NOW IN THE KINGDOM

doesn't see or feel Sakyong's interest in Kingdom of Shambhala in Nova Scotia

concern with corruption / abuse of absolute power. the governance report doesn't seem to say anything about a check on the Sakyong's absolute power

experiencing the disintegration of KOS and arising of Shambhala buddhism

expression of appreciation for the congress process

the situation seems to be like the sand mandala that is painstakingly worked on and then wiped clean

The following item was submitted in absentia by e-mail and was not brought up at the Town Hall:

RECENT CHANGES TO THE HALIFAX CENTRE STAFF

Richard as Director handing most of his responsibilities to others. We do not need a paid, resident acharya. We have four acharyas who live here...we don't need to pay them.

Annapolis Shambhala Meditation Group

Governance:

- It seems that everyone in the mandala will have an avenue to center of the mandala and that is a good thing.
- At the Mandala Council, how will decisions be made? It's quite large for a consensus. Will there be votes? Do the representatives speak for themselves or for their groups?
- Is the Mandala Council advisory to the Sakyong Council or will it bring issues directly to the President or the Sakyong?
- The charter document should contain a brief statement of who we are and be suitable for posting at the centre.
- The Mandala Council may have trouble meeting twice a year due to time and expense issues. Hopefully we can find a way to communicate in a practical way for those who cannot attend.
- The role of Mediation Groups which are not centres needs to be clarified. If they are not included in the council, how can they be included in the governance process?

Membership:

- We discussed the issue of tying membership to a financial contribution. In the end the group that attended our meeting concluded that it was a good idea as it is a concrete way for members to indicate their commitment. However, other members who emailed me indicated difficulty with this issue. That opinion is "If it ain't broke don't fix it" and we could define membership as those who put their name on a coffee cup.
- What is the difference between a member and a non-member?
- What does membership mean in relation to teachers? Does it mean that the member accepts the Sakyong as their primary teacher? Does it indicate that the member will take refuge?

Lexington Shambhala Center

- Want to know more about a network of Courts.
- Need to clarify the roles of Dekyong and Desung.
- Shambhala Buddhism needs "glaring clarification"!
- What if one is not a buddhist? Will we be cut short?
- Need more clarification of responsibility of ST staff during "difficult situations" - when do we need to call in a mental health professional? Is there going to be a training addressing these issues? - need better training for teachers!
- Some irritation about "unfunded mandates" - we are told to do something from SI but not given the \$ to accomplish this - time and people

shortages also create problems in responding to SI. (ex. given "directives" about the Sakyong's birthday. This gives the impression that the Sakyong is whimsical and people fluster around to implement his directives, "the King has ordered ... and the serfs must comply without consideration ..."

- Kasung practices and purpose are still unclear to quite a few in our Center.

Chicago Community Meeting

On January 16, 2005, members of our community gathered to discuss the Governance Plan and Working papers from Membership, Outreach, Diversity/Accessibility, Community care/conduct, and Economic Model groups. Brief summaries were presented by members of our executive council. In general we were pleased to have so much information about plans for the future. Having a formal plan is good, and it is not overly constrictive, offering structure but allowing centers to adapt.

There is no reference to the Three Pillar approach (Kasung, Governance, Clergy). How does Kasung fit into the model, aside from the Makpon being on the council. Will the Rusungs or Desungs play a role?

Most comments were directed to the Economic Model, with its recommendations for Center contributions. There was discussion of the % level of contribution, suggesting that a range of 3-5% might be more appropriate than 4-6%. It was noted that many of our members contribute directly to S.I. and there is uncertainty about how these contributions might change if people start funneling their contributions through the center. We want to be one of the charter centers to try the model, but what happens to our donations if the plan is eventually nixed? Questions were raised about what the payoffs are for our contributions, why would it be good to be an early center to adopt the model?

We are looking forward to the emphasis on outreach--we have already begun outreach programs in Chicago and the coming materials will be very helpful. Appreciation was expressed for the emphasis on getting Acharyas and senior teachers everywhere in the Mandala, including the Midwest.

The Delek system was discussed briefly, wondering how best to apply it. One mention was made that perhaps our interest groups (young people, queer dharma, livelihood) are a kind of delek system. A fresh look is needed. Everyone was looking forward to our bringing back more information from the Congress on how other centers do things, from open house/cafe programs to setting program fee structures, to choosing leadership.