

# Gitche M'Qua News



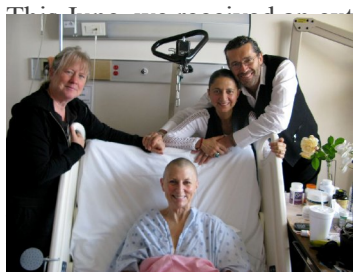
Without knowing it, you might be exactly where you need to be. Anonymous

August 2008

## Lessons From Nature and Buddha: Emerging Maps for Community

After 10 years of service and evolution, we have a bit of wisdom, that backward gazing wisdom that reveals the lessons learned. Like nature we've had great compost from challenges faced, we've found resilience from seeing the hidden potential in those obstacles, and we've found the compassion to stay with it. For those working social service and/or in any organization, you understand well the challenge in building a healthy organization. As a "founder-based" organization, we currently engaged in a process whereby we can re-emerge as a "community-based" centre, which was our original goal. We are well versed now in the pitfalls of a founder style. In exploring new leadership and organizational models, we continue to investigate new maps, and to test them to see how they can serve. One new model, known as Systems Theory, explores how healthy systems operate by looking towards the self-organizing behaviors that can easily be found in nature. Instead of maintaining a hierarchical model with heroic leaders sitting at the top, we are asking ourselves and our community many questions: how do we draw from the gifts and passions inherent in our community and self-organize like nature herself? In our Western ways we have a "I can make it happen" attitude, but at what price? By approaching this self-organizing principle, we are learning to stop, reflect and allow things to emerge (without getting too stressed out about it). By trusting what is called Zen beginner's mind or "not knowing mind" we develop trust in what is arising, rather than thinking we should know. By stopping and then resting into this moment, we are allowing what is old and not useful to fall away. Although it takes courage "to know," this process brings us renewed strength and commitment to serving. Our world needs new patterns, new leadership, and new styles of serving, which has inspired us to educate ourselves in how to better serve you. So with compassion we learn to stop, reflect, and see what emerges, as we look forward to serving you again and again. Now onto our latest programs and fall classes and a belated catch-up on Centre life.

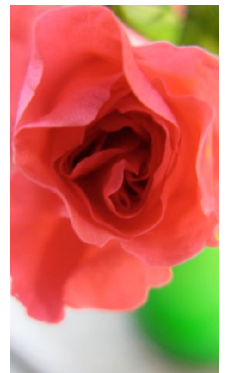
## Heartfelt Gratitude for your support: Expect the unexpected.



This is an extraordinary teaching from us to be present for every expected; life is fragile, especially; and each moment we our dharma practice, which things. This time Roshi Joan terrible fall happened at our her talk *Practicing Compassion in an Endangered World*. Each of us in our humanness is fragile, and quite literally we can fracture our hip in four places and end up in hospital for 12 days. We need kindness, care, nourishing food, and even a few

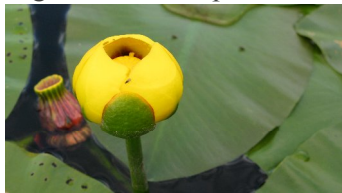
flowers beside us, no matter who we are. For us it was a true gift to care for Roshi. We know that she cares and serves so many in her work at Upaya, in her End-of-Life and prison work, and in her tireless teaching schedule. This time it was our turn to give to her.

The outpouring of letters and financial support from all of you was tremendous. Thank you dear friends and community.



Each year Roshi's visit has been our biggest fundraiser, and this year is no exception. Your kind donations from the lecture/workshop fees have continued this tradition. Over \$4,000 was raised through your support, which covered our expenses and meant we didn't suffer a loss. Hear us when we say, there were tears of gratitude. Your giving opens a door that allows us to see that giving and receiving are one in the same. And one day it's me needing care and the next it could be you.

Life is teaching us lessons, or opportunities where we learn to awaken, which isn't about being perfect. It is about being a compassionate being and stepping outside of our own agenda to be there for another. Compassion flows from an open heart and creates a space between us where we feel our interconnectedness; it's near enemy pity creates separation. Buddha saw the Universe as a jeweled net, he called Indra's Net. This net stretches the entire Universe where at each cross on the net is a jewel. The jewel is that we are already awake; the path is to awaken. Nothing is excluded in this net and each of us have this same diamond-like potential, an indestructible source which is both wisdom and compassion. This net or universe includes all without exception: teacher, student, healer, wounded, ignorant, enlightened, and criminal, saint, caregiver, and one needing care. So this fall programs like Sharon Salzberg's Fierce Compassion explore the practice of being compassionate so that we may offer our kindness in any situation, including facing our death.



This intention to generate compassionate towards oneself as well as towards others brings another realization drawn from community life and from nature: we need each other. Our dream for the Centre was to be community-based, where each of us could bring our passions and sources of wisdom forward to serve our larger community and the world.

### What are you passionate about?

So this fall represent a turning of the wheel, as almost all of our fall programs have emerged from a new intention:



to build community act in collaboration. The Earth shows us this interdependence as we observe our land up north, where we see a healthy ecosystem teeming with life. Roshi Joan reminds us that community life is a skillful means for seeing who we really are. However this is easier said than done, which is why we would all benefit from some good therapy. Steven Young's program explores contacting and healing these old wounds. By knowing these wounds and finding compassion towards them, we engage our spiritual practice. If we don't learn how to get ourselves out of the way how can we truly serve others?

So in this spirit of emergence and collaboration we held an agenda-less, self-organizing board meeting in early summer, where we posed the question: why are you here and what are you passionate about? It was another shifting towards our community, where we wanted to find out what others were excited about, rather than a 5-year strategic plan. So our fall programs has arisen from what from the passions of some members of our community who all share the vision of serving others.

We are happy to support the passion of Theodore Tsaousidis, an old friend & centre supporter. Theodore is seasoned Zen practitioner and has been authorized to guide people in a Tibetan shamanic journeying practice. Knowing that. Angie and I steward 171-acres of meadow, mixed-wood forest, and wetland near Owen Sound, he approached us with his idea to hold this retreat. Wow, we thought, our intention is becoming a reality. September 26-28, Theodore will lead **Mindfulness into the Shamanic Journey**. If you are interested contact Theodore directly at: [theodore@sittingatthegate.ca](mailto:theodore@sittingatthegate.ca)



Our Being With Our Dying council, who are developing our end-of-life courses, are all passionate about this field. Each offers direct service to the dying and have studied with Roshi Joan. Our fall series begins **Oct. 4** with Andrea Warnick's, **No Joking Matter: Talking to Kids about Death**. Due to illness this program was cancelled in the spring. Andrea works professionally with kids and parents at the Max and Beatrice Wolf Centre at Mount Sinai, and at heart she is truly a kid. Andrea has a deep passion for death education and received her Master's in Thanatology.

Then **Nov. 1-2**, with 4 members of our council, we will offer a 2-day workshop called, **Deathwalking**, that invites us to face our own death and then to come up with a plan. This workshop dovetails with important celebrations of death, like the Mayan Day of Dead and All Saints and Souls Day. We see this essential work as meaningful to everyone as we must all face death one day, whether we work with the dying or not. Our council is a collaborative team-in-action as we look at how to bring awareness and compassion to the dying and to those who serve them.

New board member, Noah Howard, has been working with, Steven Young from Colorado for many years. Steven Young's workshop, **Making Contact Nov. 8-9**, embodies the Peoplemaking model developed by Virginia Satir and focuses on the field of family systems and communication. Like Noah, we believe working through our personal family "stuff" is urgent, not only for our kids, but for the whole world. We need to stop projecting; attendance is required!

And finally a deep wish of both Angie's and mine manifested, when Genevieve Walker asked for our support to bring her friend and gifted Buddhist teacher, **Sharon Salzberg**, to Toronto. Sharon is one of the early pioneers who brought the Buddha's teaching to the west. She will teach **Nov. 21-23**, sharing with us her work in bringing **Lovingkindness and Fierce Compassion** to the world. Genevieve, a musician and yoga practitioner, has brought us so much inspiration in her passion to see Sharon teach in Toronto. We are also thrilled to have the support of Downward Dog Yoga Studio, Ascent Magazine, and Snow Lion Bookstore in promoting this exciting event.

## **Committing to the Path of Engaged Practice**

As many may know, Angie and I have entered a 2-year training as Buddhist chaplains. This means that we are deepening our commitment to the Buddha's teachings and practices, learning to sustain our lives through the 16 precepts taken by lay practitioners, and finally by engaging the practice of compassion-in-action through service. In conjunction with this training we must create an 18-month service project that we hope some of you will support. Our work will include active fundraising, managing the project, working with volunteers and a deep attention to daily meditation practice as well as the wisdom of collaboration. Our project efforts will focus on both the city and the land. In the city our goal continues to focus on support to the dying and their caregivers, through education and direct services. On our land we wish to combine two ministries--environmental and end-of-life--by offering retreats for individuals and families faced with a life transition, where the land offers a space for enrichment, support and healing.

Under the guidance of our spiritual mentors, we have chosen the name **Sarana Springs** for the land, which both expresses our intention towards the land relationship and towards this work with the dying. "Sarana" comes from the Pali language, the language of the Buddha, and means "refuge" and "sanctuary." With the word refuge we express the notion of "protection" where the land offers us a space to rest into our inner nature and in the word "sanctuary" we express connecting with our spiritual center on the land. On a literal level, we have pledged to keep this untouched land as a refuge and sanctuary for the beings who already call it home. Please watch for updates on both these projects. And lastly a reminder: one of the deepest ways we can support the world at this time is through our meditation practice or whatever means you use to center and calm your mind. This fall we continue to offer "open" Tuesday meditation classes, where we sit for two period of mindfulness practice interspersed with walking meditation followed by engaged meditation practices like lovingkindness meditation and a short dharma talk.

May this fall's offerings truly serve, Angie and Andrew Blake, Cofounders, Gitche M'Qua Centre

## Programs/Classes at a Glance

STARTING SEPT 16: TUESDAY OPEN SITTING PRACTICE, 7:20-9:15pm with Andrew Blake. Please see details below or call in advance if you are attending. This is a dana or by donation class.

SEPT. 26-28, MINDFULNESS INTO THE SHAMANIC JOURNEY with Theodore Tsaousidis, Chatsworth, ON. Contact Theodore directly, [theodore@sittingatthegate.ca](mailto:theodore@sittingatthegate.ca)

SAT. OCT. 4: NO JOKING MATTER: Talking to Kids About Death, 1:30-4:30pm with Andrea Warrick, M.A. [www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm)

SAT-SUN, NOV. 1-2: DEATHWALKING: Exploring End-of-Life and Engaged Living, Sat. 10-5 & Sun. 10-1pm. with Pauline Abrahams MD, Kanae Kinoshita MA, Angie and Andrew Blake, Cofounders. [www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm)

SAT-SUN NOV. 8-9: MAKING CONTACT: A weekend workshop with Steven Young. [www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm)

NOV 21-23: SHARON SALZBERG VISIT--Friday Night Lecture: Lovingkindness. Workshop: Fierce Compassion, 2-6pm, Sat-Sun. [www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm)

Full Course Descriptions Below or go directly to website: [www.gitchemqua.org](http://www.gitchemqua.org)

## Fall courses at Gitche M'Qua



## MEDITATION CLASSES with Andrew Blake

### STRONG BACK, SOFT FRONT: THE HEART OF MEDITATION

**OPEN COMMUNITY PRACTICE TUESDAYS\*\*\*: 7:20-9:15pm. By Dana or Donation**

**NEW STUDENTS ARRIVAL: 7pm for meditation and sitting posture instructions.**

**By arriving promptly at 7:20, this allows us time to settle the mind & body before we begin our first meditation at 7:30. If you arrive late, please sit in the hall on the bench and then join in for walking meditation. Each class will include: 2 periods of sitting meditation, walking meditation, a short dharma talk, and an engaged meditation practice such as metta (lovingkindness), as well as time for questions and sharing.**

The essential ground of meditation comes from the Buddha's teaching; this is the dharma. As we sit together to practice meditation, we become like forest of strong trees; this is called the sangha. And the space of our meditation practice is the awakened mind; this is our buddhanature. These three are known as the 3 Jewels or Dharma Treasures. The word "dharma" has the same root as the words—tree, trust, and truth—so we practice meditation to learn to stand rooted like a tree and trust the truth of things as they are. Roshi Joan Halifax calls attention in our sitting practice to a "strong back, soft front," where we learn to have the strength and balance of equanimity to stay with each moment with a strong spine, and where we cultivate a soft and open space in our heart that allows compassion to awaken within our practice.



Sitting is not about spacing out or avoiding anything; it is an engaged practice of finding the tenderness and strength to face our own minds!! Buddha realized that our suffering arose from within us, not from the world outside of us. As we deepen our practice we mediate between the inner world of thoughts and emotions and the outer world of actions. And when we establish a strong ground of meditation, we drop seeds of compassion from our branches into every relationship and every aspect of our lives.

Meditation, like yoga, is now household words. Latest scientific research is actually revealing what is happening, both in terms of brain activity and the effects of meditation on our heart rate, immune system, breathing, etc. So it just makes sense to practice. Whether you are just beginning or seasoned, join us for this precious time to be one wave within an ocean of oneness. All Buddhas realize that we are not separate from another; may this be so.

**Please contact us if you plan to attend, as there is no registration for this program: [info@gitchemqua.org](mailto:info@gitchemqua.org) or call us 416-651-1846.**

**\*\*\*Our intention is to hold this class weekly. We will keep an active mailing list in case Andrew is away or in case of illness so we can notify you. In the future we will have back-up teachers, like Angie, who can also lead the class. Please come as often as you are able.**

## **FALL 2008 BEING WITH OUR DYING COURSES:**

### **No Joking Matter: Talking to Kids about Death, Andrea Warnick, MA, RN**

Supporting children through the dying and death of a loved one is incredibly challenging for parents and health care providers alike. When facing a death in the family adults often struggle with questions regarding what to tell children, when to tell children, and how to support children. While the research on children and grief advises a policy of honesty and inclusion when supporting children living with dying and death, many adults are unaware of how much children need this openness. In addition, many health care professionals are uncomfortable with giving advice on how to support children through the impending death of a loved one due to a lack of formal training.

This workshop will identify common barriers for both family and health care providers regarding talking to children and adolescents about an impending death. It will include stories and important messages from children and their families that illustrate "best practice" guidelines for supporting children through the death of a loved one. In addition, the workshop will offer practical suggestions regarding how to move from a model of 'protecting' children from death to a model of 'preparing' children for a death. This workshop is appropriate for health care providers, volunteers, caregivers, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles - any adult who comes into contact with a grieving child.



**Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup> from 1:30-4:30pm**

**Suggested Fees: \$40 (\$60 Sponsor) Seniors/Students \$30**

**Bio:** Andrea Warnick is a Registered Nurse with a Masters of Arts degree in Thanatology. She has extensive experience domestically and internationally with ill, dying, and bereaved children and adults. Andrea's passion lies in both working directly with the dying and their families, and in teaching others how to optimize their care of the dying, particularly when children are involved. She works at the Max and Beatrice Wolfe Centre for Children's Grief and Palliative Care at the Temmy Latner Centre for Palliative Care, Mount Sinai Hospital, where she provides counseling support and education for children and their families who are living with dying.

**To Register:** [www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm) **Call us:** 416-651-1846

# **DEATHWALKING: EXPLORING END-OF-LIFE AND ENGAGED LIVING**

## **Pauline Abrahams, Kanae Kinoshita, Angie & Andrew Blake**

With our Western tendency to glamorize just about everything, death is rarely a popular. However, with the advances in palliative medicine and hospice and with publications New York Times best sellers like *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, our views are changing. Death may arrive as reality that we all appreciate needs to be faced. Although in some traditions death is celebrated, death in most cultures involve a process of fear, transition, meaning-making, and grief. For many, it opens a spiritual door.

In the Mahabharata it says:

*Of all things in life, what is the most amazing? The sage, Yadhishthira answers: "That a man [or woman], seeing others die all around him, never thinks that he [or she] will die."*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, clearly a proponent for reincarnation, once remarked to a man who believed that death was final that because we can't be sure what happens when we die, it is good to have a plan.

Through mindfulness practice and guided meditation, expressive arts, council, and some humour, we will delve into our fears, beliefs, and visions of dying. As well as creating a living plan for our own death, we will explore various views of death, including the Tibetan Buddhist, alongside exploring the deep work of meaning-making and reconciliation where look at our incompleteness today and then look to where compassion and forgiveness may act as healing balms. As this day-and-a-half workshop also corresponds with celebrations of the Day of the Dead and All Saints Day, we will include a short ceremony to acknowledge our Ancestors.

This workshop is essential work for anyone working in the End-of-Life field, for therapists, doctors, chaplains and counsellors, as well as for anyone of us because, inevitably, we must each walk our deathwalk, where we must live with the truths of our lives and walk towards an unknown road.

**DATE: SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1-2 10-5pm (Sat.) & 10-1pm (Sun.)**

**FEE: \$150\*\*\***

**REGISTER:** [www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/courses.htm)

\*\*\*Limited scholarships are available for most programs; please contact Andrew for more information [info@gitchemqua.org](mailto:info@gitchemqua.org) or call 416-651-1951

**Pauline Abrahams MD** is a palliative care physician in home hospice offering psycho-social support to individuals who are approaching death and also to families facing the loss of a loved one.

**Kanae Kinoshita MA** (Buddhist Studies) is a Spiritual Care Professional/Chaplain working at Toronto General Hospital, as well as offering over 10 years with Toronto hospices as a volunteer and as a facilitator.

**Angie Blake** is movement therapist, past hospice volunteer, and cofounder of Gitche M'Qua. Currently she is training as a Buddhist Chaplain with a focus on environmental, woman and end-of-life ministries.

**Andrew Blake** is a Counselling Psychotherapist, facilitator, meditation teacher and, with his wife, cofounder of the Centre. In addition to training as a Buddhist Chaplain, he visits and supports those facing death.



# MAKING CONTACT: A Workshop with Steven Young

**DATE: NOVEMBER 8-9TH, 9:30-5:30PM**

**Fee: \$200\***

**Location: Gitche M'Qua Centre, 69 Heathdale Rd.**

With the support of the Ontario Centre for Human Validation and board member Noah Howard, we are pleased to offer this in-depth and powerful weekend program. Both Noah and his brother, Sheldon, have benefited greatly from Steven's family reconstruction work as well as his Fathers, Sons, and Brothers work. So, we are thankful for their help in bringing Steven to Toronto. This weekend invites us all to make contact with ourselves and beyond.

Steven's work combines his intensive studies in Virginia Satir's renowned model of Peoplemaking or Human Validation, as well as studies in traditional folkways that reveal our deep psyche. In this weekend workshop he will present a humanistic model of interpersonal communication where we can:

- explore and build the ground of self esteem;
- nurture the roots of intimacy;
- deepen our connection with Self and Others;
- hear and be heard by others

This work explores not only the personal but also the transcendent, where we touch into the space beyond what we know. Steven's encourages us to live by the glint in our eyes, as he presents us with a clear model of how to look at the world, making contact and living with integrity.

For details on Steven Young's work, [www.gitchemqua.org/stevenyoung.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/stevenyoung.htm)

For more info or to register: [www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm)

\*Limited scholarships are available, please contact us, [info@gitchemqua.org](mailto:info@gitchemqua.org)



# Sharon Salzberg Lecture & Retreat: November 21-23, Toronto, Ontario

## **LECTURE: LOVINGKINDNESS**

**NOVEMBER 21, 7-9PM (doors open at 6pm)**

**FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH, St. Clair Ave.**

**Fee: \$25 (advance) \$30 (at the door) Tickets Online: [www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm) or Downward Dog Yoga Studio (Queen West) and Snow Lion Bookstore (Pape/Danforth)**

Lovingkindness is a meditation that cultivates our natural capacity for an open and loving heart. It is traditionally offered with meditations that enrich compassion, and joy in the happiness of others, and also deepen our own sense of peace. These practices lead to the development of concentration, connection, fearlessness, and genuine happiness. Sharon Salzberg will introduce these teachings and support us in our own experience and cultivation of these qualities through direct instruction and guided meditation using classical techniques in a modern idiom. There will also be opportunities for questions.

## **RETREAT: FIERCE COMPASSION**

**NOVEMBER 22-23, 2-6PM**

**MULTI-FAITH CENTRE, U of T Spadina Ave**

**Fee: \$180**

**Register: [www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/events.htm)**



His Holiness the Dalai Lama has stated, "My true religion is kindness." Although frequently denigrated in our culture as simplistic and weak, the quality of kindness has an inherent power to transform our worldview from one of fear and isolation to one rooted in clarity, courage and compassion.

This workshop will explore the powerful, sometimes fierce side of kindness, known in the teachings as wrathful compassion. Through talks, guided meditations and question and answer sessions, Sharon Salzberg will explore the terrain of right intention, right speech and right action in the everyday challenge of bringing together compassion, honesty, strength and balance.

All programs are suitable for both new and experienced mediators.

For details on Sharon's work, [click here](#).

Some scholarships are available for this lecture and retreat.

Please contact Andrew at [info@gitchemqua.org](mailto:info@gitchemqua.org) for more information.

## MORE ABOUT THIS EVENT:

For many years Angie and I have wanted to invite Sharon to speak in Toronto and to share her unique presence and teachings. So we must offer great thanks to Genevieve Walker, a friend of Sharon's and a sometimes resident here in Toronto, for sharing the same dream and asking us to help manifest this event. Thanks as well to the following groups for supporting this event: Downward Dog Yoga Studio, Ascent Magazine with Chris McCann, and Snow Lion Bookstore.

Sharon Salzberg's teaching and prolific writing gives voice to the role of kindness, compassion and mindfulness in our lives; she is a preeminent voice of Buddhism today. From one of the first wave of westerners trained in the East, she believes not only in the transformative power of kindness, but sees this as a means of bringing peace to our challenged world. Her presence in gatherings, such as the Mind and Life Institute with H.H. the Dalai Lama, combines years of mindfulness training, and contributes to the interface between science and practice that is leading to some remarkable findings. One of these latest findings explores the difference between empathy and compassion on our bodymind and suggest it may be empathy that is causing so much caregiver burnout.

Our intention in holding event such as Sharon's is to bring the Buddha's teachings to our community in practical forms that can be applied to our lives. Sharon's teachings on kindness and compassion are particular helpful to all of us, whether we are yoga practitioners, Buddhist practitioners, Buddhist-friendly folks, or those who work as caregivers. Buddha taught a path that reminds us to place our heart and concern for others at the centre of an engaged practice as well as through the practice of mindfulness meditation. This engagement of our good hearts is at the core of practice here at the Centre, especially in our work with the dying.

We are delighted to be offering this program and encourage you to attend and to help us by letting other's know about this exciting event.

In Kindness & Service

Andrew Blake, Program Director

Gitche M'Qua Centre for Healing & Dying

