

Life is full of comings and goings; what is important is how well you arrive at your destination. anonymous.

# Gitche M'Qua Newsletter



January 2007

## Gitche M'Qua New Year Blessings

2007 has a good feel about it; may your life and work flourish this year. Lots of "new" planned this year including 3 new board members, a new fundraising strategy, and a new & first structure for the retreat land, what we hope will be a small 3 season log-building for gatherings.



## Gitche M'Qua

ended 2006 with great joy as we hosted our 3rd Bi-annual Holiday Show with sales for the one day event exceeding \$10,000. The spirit of joy and celebration this year

was unheralded, as we expanded the show to 17 presenters and an estimated 300 guests, who left smiling. P.S. Thanks again to the over 50 volunteers....and the food was excellent everyone!!

Last year, we entered into the world of fundraising and creating abundance. By initiating our membership drive in June of 2006, we brought 55 members into Gitche M'Qua and we received cash contributions of over \$9,500. This year fundraising is crucial for our growth, for it's through all of our collective resources that we have the support to manifest Gitche M'Qua's vision. **Our goal this year is simple: If we can find 1000 people to become Sustaining Members by contributing \$120/year or \$10/month or 2 cafe lattes/month**, our projected operating budget is covered. It means the bills are paid, and then we can look to private and corporate sponsors to expand our volunteer & community services like our Being With Our Dying, scholarships, etc.

Please become a sustaining member today at:

[www.gitchemqua.org/membership.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/membership.htm)

Together, we can build a thriving education centre dedicated to spiritual awareness, healing, and support in our living and dying.

## Roshi Joan Halifax returns to teach in Toronto May 31-June 2

In 2006, Roshi brought us teachings on the six perfections or qualities of mind, which assist us in bringing awareness to our work as caregivers. We have asked Roshi to



deepen this training in understanding the importance of the pause and in mindfulness training as we open compassionately with others. Reserve your space today!!

Also in 2006 we launched a new program & our Spiritual Living Evenings (SLE) as a way to offer ongoing classes to practice and study from a variety of spiritual, healing & meditation traditions. The series offers evenings & workshops with local teachers, who share their teachings with the community. We believe in the benefits of applying spiritual & healing practices in our lives and the benefits that arises from the group practice of prayer, meditation, and healing. Watch our website for these classes and our Being With Our Dying courses.

As our board finalizes our 2007 budget, we enter a new stage of our work as an organization. Initially, we placed importance on building a solid foundation and looking to build relationships with wisdom teachers like Roshi Joan Halifax and Ven. Dhyani Ywahoo to advise & guide us. We plumbed the archives to learn about organizational structures and discovered some modern & some ancient models of governance to follow.

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Today, we need to move into the world and let our voice be heard. At the heart of our governance model, which is based on the old Iroquois Confederacy, is the “Central Fire:” the fire is that which we all agree on. In Gitche M’Qua that fire represents spirit or our spiritual life.

**What does it mean to live with spiritual awareness, whether we are working with the dying, sitting in a board meeting, or living with life’s challenges?** In Rōshi Joan’s tradition of Zen, it means to engage through action, both towards ourselves and others in the action of kindness. In the Cherokee view from Ven. Dhyani Ywahoo’s ancestors, it means living in relationship and awareness of all living beings, seen and unseen. In spiritual life we look to live and engage in the world in a way that benefits our selves & others. The Cherokee say: may our actions benefit everyone for seven generations.

So, what can we do today to help living beings, the earth and the future generation? At a meeting held in January, we planted seeds to develop new programs on the land. Together with Goldie Sherman, Katherine Marielle, Andrea Warnick, Shari Geller, and board member Steve Vaccaro, along with Angie and Andrew, we shared our visions for land near Owen Sound. Shari inaugurated the gathering with an miraculous instrument called the “the Hang” that created wondrous celestial sounds. Angie put forth a goal to build a screened structure on the Gitche land, so we would have a covered space for gathering and practice. Andrew saw the building like a summer long

house, constructed with wood from the land. Voiced by Katherine, Andrea & Angie was a strong call for the youth to join us to share their wisdom. Another important voice expressed by many was the significance of the extensive waterways on the land. Steve remarked how the headwaters, springs, and Big Head river on the land all flow into Georgian Bay and then ultimately to the ocean. When we make prayers into the water, he said, the message flows throughout the planet. Goldie dreamed that

one day Masaru Emoto would come to teach us more about the potency and power of the water expressed in his book, *Messages from Water*. A deep & wondrous gathering nourished the future dreams of the Centre.

[A follow-up meeting is planned in March to finalize dates for a gathering in late August to bring community to the land to clear trails, create sacred spaces for healing and prayer, bring sound & healing ceremonies to the land, and create joy.]

## Winter Spring Programs Listings



### BEING WITH OUR DYING COURSES

**Planning For the Inevitable:** This introductory day-long workshop explores our views of death by looking at how we imagine our death. Through planning & contemplating our death, we learn invaluable lessons about living with meaning and truth. While death has appeared as a locked door in our culture, there are profound lessons that emerge from touching the veil between the worlds. In particular we will investigate the Tibetan Buddhist view of death, and look towards tools to assist us in conscious dying. We will work with guided meditation, creative & writing exercises, Council process, and lively discussion to engage this essential part of our living.

**Saturday, Feb. 24, 10am-5pm \$90**

**Meditations For Caregivers:** As either professional or lay caregivers working with dying, meditation practice gives us useful tools for engaging our hearts, meeting the challenges of others, and transforming our own suffering. Through mindfulness, tranquility and tonglen (the practice of giving and receiving suffering), we create a door to understanding the truth of our interconnectedness. This important practice for caregivers allows us first to meditate on our own suffering, thus opening us to ways to transform suffering into joy.

**Sunday, March 11, 1:30-4:30pm \$45**

**Communicating with the Dying:** For most of us, death is the most difficult conversation we may ever have with our loved ones, our clients, or our patients. Many say the strangest things to the dying like, “just be positive, you’ll get better.” Through exploring mindful communication practices, dyads, council process, and intuitive hunches, you will improve your listening skills and deepen your ability to be present to the needs of others.

**Sunday March 25, 1:30-4:30pm \$45**

Register Online: [www.gitchemqua.org/bwod.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/bwod.htm)

**Program Instructor:** Andrew Blake, BA, MT, is director of the Being With Our Dying program and cofounder of Gitche M’Qua Centre. With advanced studies in meditation, transpersonal psychology, and healing energy systems, and years of practical experience in hospice, counselling, and meditation, he is a skillful guide for the inner journey.

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## SPIRITUAL LIVING PROGRAM

### TUESDAYS:

**Meditation Classes:** Open to all levels of practice. As a regular program at the centre, this class provides guided instruction rooted in Tibetan Buddhist practices of shamatha (calm abiding), vipashyana (insight) & visualization. Each class develops on a theme. This series bridges Buddhist and Western views of the psychology of the mind. Attend a single class or sign up for the course. w/Andrew Blake, psychotherapist & meditation instructor

**New 8- week Series begins Feb 6-Mar 27**

**\$160-series, \$20/class (suggested donation)**

### WEDNESDAYS:

**Qi Gong Classes:** Based on the work of Master Li, Sheng Zhen Qi Gong practices involves gentle movement while embracing the universal energy of love through our body. This ongoing class held on Wednesday mornings gives you instruction in Quan Yin Standing & Healing Qi Gong practices & ends with a short mediation. Qi Gong is healing arts practice suitable to any level of physical ability. w/Andrew Blake & Joan McClintock. **Join at any time.**

**10-week series \$180, intro class \$18, 10:50-12:15**

**SPIRITUAL LIVING EVENINGS** were designed in fall of 2006 as a forum to bring local teachers to the community to share practices & teachings to enrich our lives. Attend one Thursday or all!! Register online:

[www.gitchemqua.org/sle.htm](http://www.gitchemqua.org/sle.htm)

### **FEB. 22 Metta-morphosis: Towards the Embodiment of Loving-Kindness**

In this experiential evening we will investigate therapeutic tools and spiritual practices which can apply to our lives. Through a combination of guided imagery and 'focused felt-sense work', we will gently apply our compassionate attention to a few of the day-to-day problems we experience and see what shifts may take place in our relationship to these problems. This work bridges focussing and mindfulness practices as means for self-change.

**Brad Hunter, hypnotherapist, bereavement counsellor & meditation teacher**

### **MAR. 8 In the Beat of the Moment: Drumming & Meditation for Presence & Well Being.**

This will be an interactive and playful opportunity to experience the power of drumming, sounding and meditation as tools for presence, health and well-being. The evening will include guided meditation and instructional as well as expressive rhythm and drumming. We will gather in a circle, which is a powerful representation of the cycle of life, giving and receiving, as well as the interconnection between ourselves, our community and our spirituality. No previous experience in meditation or drumming is required.

**Dr. Shari Geller, psychologist, wellness facilitator & drummer**

### **MAR. 22 Transforming Suffering into the Path**

In this evening Philip will guide us through mindfulness and metta practices as we look deeply into the nature of suffering. By adjusting the lens of our "attachment" to our pain, a new view arises that teaches us about the impermanent nature of feelings, thoughts, etc. This is an excellent evening to meditate and to look deeply within the mirror of the self.

**Philip Starkman, psychotherapist, lifestyle counsellor, founding teacher Spring Rain Sangha**

### **APR. 5 Deepening your heart of Compassion: Practices from The Buddhist Brahma Viharas**

This evening will be an opportunity for reflection, contemplation and practice on the meaning of the Brahma Viharas, which are Metta (Loving-Kindness), Karuna (Compassion), Mudita (Sympathetic Joy) and Upekha (Equanimity). Through sacred discussion and practice, we will move deeper into living with these qualities in our lives, both in our relationship to ourselves and to our worlds. You will leave with specific ways to engage you more deeply in this practice.

**Dr. Ana Bodnar, psychologist, meditation & yoga teacher.**

**For info & to register: [www.gitchemqua.org](http://www.gitchemqua.org)  
Contact us: 416-651-1846**



*Blessings & Gratitude, Angie & Andrew*