

April 25, 2019

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SHAMBHALA

Dear Shambhala Community,

It is hard to believe that we are halfway through our 12-month term. Since our term began last October, we have endeavored to get out monthly updates, as well as other critical information as it was available. We feel strongly about operating transparently and finding ways to connect with you. This goal of open communication is reflected in our release of the Kalapa Council commissioned Wickwire Holm and An Olive Branch reports, which we delivered to the community as promised. At the same time, we are trying to balance the need for transparency without overloading the community with information. We are now transitioning into a time of building more stability and health for the Shambhala community. Going forward, we may shift to Board updates every two months, but send other important messages as they become available.

## Decisions

- The IB will put out a community-wide survey and is now working on topics and approach with help from the Process Team.
- Create a communication link with the Process Team. A subset of the Interim Board is meeting with members of the Process Team steering committee on a bi-weekly basis to share updates and coordinate efforts, particularly around the recommendations of An Olive Branch.
- Create an advisory group on Practice and Education matters. We have begun a monthly meeting between members of the Interim Board

(IB), and representatives from the greater mandala, including Charlie Goetzl, International Director of Practice and Education; a representative Acharya (recently John Rockwell); Janet Solyntjes, Chair of the Shastri Council; and David Brown, Executive Secretary to Shambhala.

- Move Shambhala Online, Kalapa Publications and the Shambhala IT group from Kalapa Media in the Sakyong Potrang to Shambhala Global Services.

### **Link to IB Webinar**

On March 30 the IB held a webinar with Shambhala leaders. About 120 people attended. Topics included the relationship between the Potrang and Shambhala, the ownership relationships between local centers/groups and Shambhala, an update on the Sakyong as well as other updates. [Please access the link to the 90-minute video here.](#)

### **Interim Board Meeting in Boulder**

The IB will be traveling to Boulder for our second face-to-face working meeting from May 16-19. In addition to extensive board meetings, we will also be meeting with various representatives of our community there. There is a public community event at the Boulder Shambhala Center on Thursday from 7-9:00 p.m., where we will hold a Q&A session followed by a reception with community members. If you are in the area during this time, please join us. We look forward to connecting with the Front Range community and leaders while we are there.

### **Marpa House**

We appreciate receiving the many thoughtful and heartfelt communications concerning the proposed sale of Marpa House. We remain committed to finding the best possible solution to address our financial challenges. As we described in our recent Financial Report, many centers and groups are examining their willingness and/or ability to make financial contributions to SGS, and the resulting loss of revenues requires us to

pursue the sale of an asset. Along these lines, IB members have met with a potential community-based buyer group for Marpa House in the last month.

Selling either the Boulder or Halifax court is not a viable option for Shambhala in that the Sakyong Potrang, not Shambhala, owns and controls these properties. As of this writing, the Potrang has put the Boulder Court on the market for sale. We will continue to update the community as we make our next steps on this important topic.

### **Care and Conduct**

After releasing An Olive Branch's (AOB) reports and recommendations, the IB is now working on how to best go forward with making Shambhala safer, more accountable, and more aware of inequity and wrong use of power. The term "harm" has been overused (by us, and by the community at large); and we need to begin the deep work required to look at the specificity of harmful behaviors--sexual misconduct, power abuse, racism, discrimination--to change our community. The Process Team has recently announced that they will examine AOB's recommendations for our community, and we ask that each local community familiarize themselves with both our existing Care and Conduct Policy, and the Code of Ethics developed by AOB. The IB is grateful that the Process Team will soon begin engaging local communities. As well, it is the fiduciary responsibility of the IB to ensure that the organization grows healthier, safer, and more equitable. The IB is comprised of 8 ordinary community members--it goes without saying that we need the entire community to join us in dismantling the structures that have enabled abuse and misconduct in Shambhala.

As we described in our cover letter to both the AOB and Wickwire Holm reports, both organizations were bound by their professional standards of confidentiality; therefore, the IB did not receive the names of individuals who were accused. We ask that any such report be submitted to the International Care and Conduct Panel. We are currently working to expand and improve our existing Care and Conduct Policy and Procedure, which at this time is limited to reporting harm by an office holder. We are also

exploring how to train MIs, guides, teachers, and office holders in creating safer communities. As previously reported, we are also examining our current policies around vetting and background checks to explore the processes by which people are granted leadership positions in the mandala.

We are actively discussing how to facilitate community dialogue around misconduct, abuse, and healing for our community. We are looking to work with the structures within Shambhala, our policies and what we can do to better educate and sensitize ourselves to preventing and working with harm. We want to respect all individuals who report harm and, in addition, those who do not want to report. We want to strengthen our community practices for adjudicating harm and find a way to instill trust in what we intend and what we actually do. We also encourage the Sakyong to also work on these important topics which are critical to the well-being of our community.

### **Building a Culture of Listening and Community Involvement**

The IB has been contemplating ways to gather wide-scale feedback across our community and membership base. We have some large decisions before us, and would love to know what the community feels about them. To that end, we will be initiating regular surveys to the sangha to listen and hear from the community on a broad basis in a structured way. These surveys will be short in nature, and directly address questions we are contemplating as a Board and leadership team. Your voice will be considered in our decision-making process. Once we have made a decision, we will report back to the community on the decisions we made as a result of it. You will start to receive those surveys in the next couple of weeks. We look forward to getting wide-scale feedback from the community on these surveys as a way for us to be connected to the voice of the whole community.

### **Staffing Changes**

As we described in our March update, Shambhala is no longer providing

any funding to the Sakyong Potrang with the exception of paying our share of the Kalapa Centre office space in Halifax. Because there were various staff roles that were shared between Shambhala and the Potrang, the IB has worked hard to more clearly delineate those who are working for the centers and groups. To better align staff positions within the organization and to meet budgetary issues, Potrang departments including Shambhala Publications, Shambhala Online, and IT will now move to Shambhala and report to the IB. In addition, David Brown will become the Executive Secretary to Shambhala and take on additional responsibilities relating to centers and groups. The individuals in these areas will join the existing staff in Practice and Education, Finance, Communications and Marketing, Kasung, Government, and Economy as part of Shambhala Global Services (SGS). We are very excited about their joining SGS and look forward to working more directly with all of the individuals in these areas and their continuing to offer their services and leadership to the community.

### **Shambhala Appointments and Retirements**

We would like to share with you the following retirements and appointments across the Mandala. To those people who have left, we thank you for your endless effort serving the community. Many of these individuals have publicly shared their reasons for stepping down; each person's account is nuanced and distinct so we wish not to gloss over their reasons --including a feeling that they were appointed by the Sakyong and can no longer serve as his representative--with a neutral term like "retirement." We wish to acknowledge the personal struggle faced by many leaders at this time. We would also like to welcome those individuals who are stepping up to accept leadership roles. [Please click here to read the full list](#) of retirements and appointments.

We continue to read all of your emails and appreciate that we are continuing to share and explore our connection and relationship to Shambhala. You may continue to email us at [board@shambhala.org](mailto:board@shambhala.org).

Sincerely,

## **The Interim Board**

Veronika Bauer

Mark Blumenfeld

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