

July 20, 2018

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Dear Members of the Shambhala Community,

We are writing this letter to introduce ourselves and announce that Shambhala's Kalapa Council has engaged the services of An Olive Branch to support the sangha's healing and reconciliation in the wake of complaints raised about ethical misconduct on the part of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and others within the community. We also want you to know about the ways you can be involved in our work if you so choose.

### **About An Olive Branch**

An Olive Branch was formed in 2011 as a project of the Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Growing out of the need for greater understanding and reduction of ethical misconduct on the part of religious leaders, we provide services to organizations in conflict after a beloved teacher has been accused of misconduct. We promote understanding and healing and work to strengthen organizations' boards and policies to reduce the likelihood of future misconduct. We have expertise, knowledge of best practices, and standards of excellence for our services. Our consultants have complementary skills related to training, facilitation, governance, and intervention.

Please see our website, [www.an-olive-branch.org](http://www.an-olive-branch.org), for our white paper on Clergy Sexual Misconduct and the Misuse of Power, a webinar series on Ethics in American Buddhist Groups, and other resources.

Questions about this project or about An Olive Branch may be directed to me, Katheryn Wiedman, Co-Director of An Olive Branch and Project Director for the Shambhala project: [katheryn@an-olive-branch.org](mailto:katheryn@an-olive-branch.org)

### **Timeline**

Earlier this year, a member of the Kalapa Council contacted An Olive Branch to inquire about our services and ask how we could help with publicly emerging

claims of sexual misconduct within the community.

In Boulder, CO on June 23, 2018 a Kalapa Council task group met with co-directors of An Olive Branch, Dr. Katheryn Wiedman and Leslie Hospodar. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold:

1. For the Council members to describe the organization's needs and to ask questions about our services and
2. For An Olive Branch to learn more about the situation within Shambhala and to determine the appropriate services to include in a proposal.

During the following week, An Olive Branch developed an agreement that was accepted by the outgoing Shambhala Kalapa Council on July 5, 2018. They believe, as we do, that our work with Shambhala will be important to the community's healing. Although the Council members are stepping down, we are beginning our work now while the leadership transition is underway. The agreement includes the following elements:

1. Drafting a new ethics policy and grievance procedure
2. Providing a "Listening Post" and "Advocacy Service"
3. Providing training on the abuse of power for the Shambhala Interim Board
4. Facilitating a planning session for the Shambhala Interim Board
5. Facilitating regional communication meetings
6. Working to promote reconciliation within the community.

As an individual member, two of the elements listed above are of importance to you at this time because they involve your participation. They are the subject of the remainder of this letter:

- New Ethics Policy and Grievance Procedure
- Listening Post and Advocate for Reporters of Harm.

### **New Ethics Policy and Grievance Procedure**

Over the past months, the Kalapa Council has received a range of comments from people in the community including that the existing "Shambhala Care and Conduct" policy and its procedures for filing a complaint are not conducive to filing reports of ethical misconduct. In response, the Kalapa Council empaneled a task force to develop a more specific sexual misconduct policy and established a timeline for drafting, seeking input, and adopting this policy.

In light of the urgency raised by recent allegations, An Olive Branch offered to

draft a new Shambhala ethics policy and grievance procedure for review by the task force. Our advice is based on best practices for organizational ethics policies that define acceptable/unacceptable behavior for teachers and members and specifies fair grievance procedures. We will be working with Shambhala representatives to review/revise the draft to ensure that it reflects both Shambhala's aspirations for a new culture of responsibility and today's ethical standards. When the new ethics policy and grievance procedure are adopted, all Office Holders will be required to comply with it and signify their understanding by signing an Oath of Understanding and Adherence.

Developing a new ethics policy and grievance procedure is the first order of business in our work with Shambhala because these documents will establish clear ethical expectations for everyone in the community and provide simple and well-defined steps to follow for people who have grievances. Work on these documents is now underway.

### **Listening Post and Advocacy Service**

Once the new ethics policy and grievance procedure are in place, An Olive Branch will offer a Listening Post for individuals who want to report sexual or physical misconduct. The Listening Post will provide a way for them to tell their story to a neutral third party and to be heard in a safe, compassionate, and confidential manner. The Listening Post will also be available to any current or past Shambhala members who have regrets about contributing to such misconduct directly or indirectly (e.g., severe stress or guilt from witnessing abuse but not stopping it or reporting it). Priority for the Listening Post will be given to Shambhala members who have experienced either of these types of harm.

The Listening Post has three objectives:

1. First and foremost, provide some measure of relief to people who are suffering because of sexual or physical misconduct by a Shambhala leader;
2. Help these reporters of harm formulate any requests they would like to make to the organization's leaders;
3. Expose the full extent of damage to the fabric of the sangha from sexual and physical misconduct.

To accomplish the third objective, a summary of the information collected via the Listening Post will be reported to the Shambhala Interim Board and later to the community. Reporters of harm have the right to remain anonymous; both An Olive Branch and the Shambhala Interim Board respect this right. Names and identifying details of the reporters of harm will be carefully omitted from all

reporting unless an individual reporter requests to be identified.

Any reporters of harm who wish to also report their experience to the independent investigators hired by Shambhala and/or to use the revised grievance procedure to resolve their claims will be directed to these processes respectively.

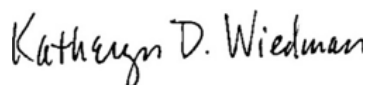
In addition, An Olive Branch will offer an Advocacy Service for reporters of harm who want help in following the new grievance procedure or participating in the investigation. The Advocate will support these individuals in using the grievance procedure but cannot provide legal representation.

### **What's Next**

An Olive Branch will communicate additional information and instructions on how to contact the Listening Post as soon as the new ethics policy and grievance procedure are in place. We expect that the Listening Post will begin in early September, once the new ethics policy and grievance procedure are approved.

Work on the other elements of the agreement will commence once the new Shambhala Interim Board is seated. Throughout the project, we will be in close communication with you as work on each element proceeds.

Underlying our work with the Shambhala community is the intent to create a new culture of physical safety and psychological health. We believe that through working together with open hearts and minds everyone can learn from this situation, strengthen Shambhala's collective spirit, and promote equanimity.



Katheryn D. Wiedman, Ph.D.  
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**Translation Note:**

- We apologize that this letter is currently only available in English. Translations will be provided as soon as possible in as many languages as possible.
- Toutes nos excuses pour cette lettre uniquement en anglais pour l'instant. Une traduction en français sera disponible très bientôt.
- Pedimos disculpas porque esta carta se encuentre sólo en inglés en este momento. Habrá una traducción disponible en breve.
- Ci scusiamo che questa lettera è per il momento solo in Inglese. La traduzione di questa lettera è imminente.
- No momento esta carta está só em inglês. Em breve a tradução estará disponível.
- Entschuldige bitte, dass dieses Brief diesmal nur auf Englisch erscheint. Eine Übersetzung dieses Briefes folgt in Kürze.
- "Przepraszamy, ta wiadomość jest obecnie dostępna jedynie w języku angielskim. Polskie tłumaczenie listu zostanie przesłane wkrótce."
- Omlouváme se, že tento dopis je zatím pouze anglicky. Překlad tohoto dopisu bude následovat.
- Перепрошуємо, що цей лист наразі тільки англійською мовою — попросіть знайомого допомогти вам з перекладом.

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