



# An Olive Branch Recommendations: Update to the Shambhala Community April 2022

This update to the community includes three parts: an overview, an explanation of how Shambhala has responded to *An Olive Branch* recommendations, and the full list of recommendations, with commentary, from the *An Olive Branch* final report.

## Part I: Overview

In July of 2018, in the wake of [Project Sunshine Reports](#) and other allegations of sexual misconduct in Shambhala, the Kalapa Council (the previous Shambhala Board appointed by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche) engaged the services of [An Olive Branch](#), a third party organization that focuses on conflict resolution and repairing community harm caused by misconduct. *An Olive Branch* performed a variety of services to help address complaints raised about ethical misconduct on the part of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and other leaders and community members within Shambhala.

The focus of this update to the community relates to the recommendations *An Olive Branch* made to Shambhala as a part of its Final Report, which was received by the Shambhala Interim Board on March 14, 2019 and shortly thereafter published to the Shambhala Community on the Shambhala website [here](#). This update includes all the recommendations made by *An Olive Branch* and explains how the recommendations have been followed up on and addressed by Shambhala leadership and members during the last two years.

# Part II: Shambhala's Response To An Olive Branch Recommendations

## Recommendation #1 and Shambhala's Response

*We urge Shambhala to respond in a transparent way and take responsibility for the culture that allowed misconduct to continue. Doing so should include the following:*

- *Acknowledging harm to victims, both those who have reported and those who have not*
- *Apologizing to reporters of harm for what they experienced*
- *Urging the Sakyong to accept responsibility for his behavior*
- *Outlining steps the organization will take to hold the Sakyong accountable going forward*
- *Publishing a set of action steps to: 1) prevent harms in the future and 2) address the organization's failure to respond appropriately to past harms.*

The Shambhala Board acknowledges the bravery of those who have stepped forward to share their experience. In addition to releasing a [Statement on Harm](#) in November 2021, the Board has also sent direct apologies to those individuals who experienced harm and who accessed the [therapy and counseling offering](#).

While acknowledging the importance of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's letters to the community ([March](#), [June](#) and [July](#) of 2018, and [February](#) of 2019), as well as his meetings with groups and individuals, the Shambhala Board has made ongoing requests to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to engage in further dialogue with the community and shared the many letters we received from centers and individuals asking for more dialogue around accountability. The Shambhala Board also made two attempts to engage the Sakyong with professional facilitators to explore steps that could be taken to create space for a healing community dialogue.

Other stakeholder groups in Shambhala have also asked Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to communicate further around the issue of harmful conduct and work towards healing the community and/or have expressed concern about harmful conduct, accountability, and a lack of communication with the wider community. Some of these communications include:

- In February 2019, the Acharyas (senior Shambhala teachers appointed by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche) [sent a letter to the community](#) expressing their wish for him to continue stepping back from teaching and urging Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to take greater accountability for harm for which he has been responsible.

- Also in February of 2019, the Interim Shambhala Board responded to the [Open Letter to the Shambhala Community from Long-Serving Kusung](#) with a [community letter of their own](#), disapproving of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's behavior described in the Kusungs' letter and committing to protect Shambhala culture and community for such harm.
- In March 2019, the Interim Board hosted the first in an ongoing series of webinars for Shambhala leaders. 120 leaders attended. Topics included the relationship between the Sakyong Potrang (the legal organization that manages the affairs of the Sakyong lineage) and Shambhala, the ownership relationships between local Centres / Groups and Shambhala, and an update on Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.
- In February 2020, [Pema Chödrön announced her resignation as an Acharya](#) (senior teacher) and expressed her disapproval of the decision to support Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche offering the Rigden Abisheka and its implications that it appeared to be "business as usual." The Shambhala Board met with Pema and clarified to the community that she has no intention of leaving Shambhala.
- In February 2020, members of the Council of the Makkyi Rabjam (CMR), the leadership body of the Dorje Kasung\*, resigned from their posts, after appointing nine members of the Dorje Kasung General Staff (DKGS). The primary reason for this transition was that CMR members felt that fulfilling their duties without more communication and direction from Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche was untenable.

*(\*The Dorje Kasung is an organization whose members are trained in protecting the space in which practitioners are able to hear and practice the teachings. The protection extends to the teacher who presents the teachings, the teachings themselves, and the community that practices the teachings.)*

- In June 2020, a group of 68 self-identified "Dharma Brats" (second generation Shambhalians) [posted an open letter to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche](#). The letter expressed a request for Sakyong Mipham to engage in a path of authentic accountability for his actions that harmed specific individuals and the community at large, many of which came to light in June 2018 and thrust Shambhala into a public controversy within the #MeToo movement.
- On July 5, 2020, a group of 13 Acharyas stepped down from their posts and released [a letter to the Shambhala sangha](#). "In the midst of the crisis around sexual misconduct and abuse of power, in an effort to support the community and encourage the Sakyong to engage in a process of accountability and healing, we acharyas asked him to step back from his teaching role."
- In April 2020, the Process Team Code of Conduct Support group met with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's representatives to present and discuss the underlying principles and

structures of the new [Code of Conduct](#). A draft of the Code of Conduct and supporting documents was shared with them, as well as the new [Child Protection Policy](#).

- In July 2020, Lady Diana Mukpo (the wife of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche), [posted a letter](#) that outlined her intention and plan to open up access to the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. *“[Shambhala] is in peril because of us. ...we failed in our duty to listen to and protect the vulnerable among us. This was a collective failure of leadership that stretched across eras, and we cannot brush it aside.”*

Going forward, steps have been outlined to hold Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and all leaders and members accountable for their conduct in the new suite of [Code of Conduct policies](#) adopted by Shambhala on Shambhala Day 2021. These policies clearly state that they are applicable to everyone at all levels of leadership, without exception - a significant change from Shambhala's previous Care and Conduct policies.

For a detailed explanation of the revision of the Code of Conduct policy and a comparison of *An Olive Branch's* code of ethics with Shambhala's Code of Conduct, click [here](#). For further information on the development of Shambhala's Code of Conduct, click on the [Code of Conduct Hub website](#).

The [Community Care webpage](#) of shambhala.org clearly sets out initiatives and steps that the Shambhala Board, through the Office of Community Care and Conduct, has taken to 1) prevent harms in the future and 2) address the organization's failure to respond appropriately to harms in the past. However, the success of any ongoing initiatives and future actions is dependent on community input and engagement. For this reason, the Shambhala Board has taken steps to prioritize broad community input into work that meets *An Olive Branch* recommendations. These include:

- In April 2019, the Interim Board announced that, with the support of the [Process Team](#), surveys would be sent to the community in an ongoing way to help foster a culture of listening and community involvement.
- In January 2020, the Process Team launched the [Sense of Shambhala Online Survey](#) for current and former Shambhala members and friends. The results of Parts 1-3 of the Sense of Shambhala Survey were released in July 2020.
- In March 2020, the Board continued to work with the Process Team to explore ways to move forward with the assessment of community feedback and discuss how to develop proposals based on their work.
- In August 2020, the Process Team formed the Community Engagement Task Force to organize community conversations.

- Also in August 2020, the Shambhala Board updated the community on its recent meetings with various Shambhala stakeholders, including: Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and the Sakyong Wangmo (the Sakyong's wife and lineage partner), Lady Diana, and Ashoka Mukpo (Lady Diana's son), representatives of the Sakyong, different groups of the Process Team, various groups of Acharyas, Centres and Groups, and individuals. In this update they stated that they are *"...committed to creating and maintaining:*
  - *A mandala centered on the teachings of both Sakyongs, the Shambhala terma and the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.*
  - *A view of the Shambhala sangha as a community of practitioners at various points on the path, from entry level meditation practitioner through the Vajrayana, joined by the Shambhala dharma and its lineage, united in a view of Basic Goodness and the principles and practice of warriorship and Enlightened Society.*
  - *Inclusive, supportive, and responsive local and regional communities which invest in ongoing initiatives and training, to promote and sustain community health and well being.*
  - *An uplifted society, interested in working with the arts, the environment, physical warrior practices, the household, the family, personal recovery, and health and wellbeing, as well as social engagement, governance, and leadership.*
  - *A well-run non-profit organization with excellence in compliance, legal and financial affairs with transparency and community input.*
  - *A supportive organization, caring for its members and staff, with well-conceived policies and codes with appropriate and responsive supportive structures.*
  - *A governance approach in which there is radiance and responsiveness back and forth between center and fringe.*
  - *Inviting and listening with an open mind to all the diverse views and insights throughout our mandala to learn from the past and carefully guide necessary organizational changes for a prosperous and harmonious future.*
  - *That it is the Board's responsibility to provide governance and an organizational container that supports these paths which requires us to take a long view into our future."*
  
- In October 2020, the Shambhala Board offered a webinar with global leaders to both provide an update on governance, community grants, leadership surveys, advanced programming and care and conduct issues, as well as to have breakout rooms to discuss current issues with Centres and Groups. During this webinar, the Board clarified its intention to work towards a Shambhala governance model with continued autonomy of the Shambhala Board and to work with other leadership groups in the community to lead the community forward.
  
- In 2021, the following occurred: A Therapy Offering with free subsidized therapy was offered to those who have been harmed by activities within Shambhala; online seminars about the Code of Conduct policies; engagement with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche on transforming Shambhala through a Joint Assessment Process and a Joint Mediation Process.

## Recommendation #2 and Shambhala's Response

*In the spirit of developing transparency and good faith with the Shambhala community, we recommend that the Interim Board release the Listening Post Report in its entirety to the community along with a list of specific lessons the Board has learned based on the Listening Post Report, the Wickwire Holm report, and other sources of evidence of misconduct it has, including the International Care and Conduct Panel's reports.*

The Interim Board released the [Wickwire Holm Report](#) in full to the community in February 2019. Soon after the Process Team sent out suggested guidelines to support the discussion of this report in local communities.

[All reports from An Olive Branch](#) were released to the community in their entirety in March 2019.

[The results of all surveys](#) conducted by the Shambhala Board and the Process Team have been released in their entirety to the community.

## Recommendation #3 and Shambhala's Response

*When the Interim Board is replaced by a new governing board, we strongly recommend that Shambhala's governance and management system continue being separate and independent from the organization's spiritual leadership system. A single spiritual leader should not control both the spiritual and secular side of the organization. The new board should not be appointed by the spiritual leader. The board must be objective and autonomous, fulfilling the fiduciary duty of loyalty to the organization and not loyalty to a founder or spiritual lineage.*

On February 19, 2022 the Shambhala Board reached an agreement with the Sakyong Potrang Board and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche to reform the governing structure of Shambhala as advised in Recommendation #3. The agreement resulted in an independent Board whose members are nominated through a Board Advisory Nominating Committee made up of community members. You can access the authorizing resolutions and the red-lined changes of the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws [here](#) that show the language changes to our governance documents.

The Board's approach to governance and support of the Shambhala community was communicated in the [Board's August 2020 Community Update](#). The update clarified to the community that the Board would work towards the management and organizational systems of Shambhala having autonomy from spiritual leadership, and that it endorsed this approach as the best way forward for everyone involved, including Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

## Recommendation #4 and Shambhala's Response

*We recommend that Shambhala's governing board include external representatives who themselves are not Shambhala members to ensure an element of independence within the board.*

The Shambhala Board does not currently include external representatives as Board members. The Board does have the power to make this kind of appointment, and is open to further discussion on it through the Board Advisory Nominating Committee, which will be formed initially by community members.

However, over the last two years, the Board's Care and Conduct Committee has invited input and collaboration from external representatives as an essential part of their work. For example, the Board has an ongoing partnership with the [Peoples' Counselling Clinic](#), led by Robert Wright and James Dube. This partnership has been vital in the creation of services and supports to address experiences of harm in the community, including the course [Sexual Harm, Trauma and the Healing Journey](#), the [Therapy and Counselling Offering](#), a training for leaders on trauma informed facilitation, and ongoing consultation on how best to meet community needs for accountability, healing, restorative justice and grieving.

Additionally, in 2021, the Board contracted [the Ahimsa Collective](#) to provide listening and restorative justice support to the organization, which contributed to the development of the Board's [Statement on Harm](#). The Ahimsa Collective was also tasked with assessing the feasibility and existing opportunities for the creation of an ongoing listening service for past and present community members. Through a discovery and interview process, Ahimsa found that very few if any survivors were willing to engage in an interview process, so they could not recommend implementation.

## Recommendation #5 and Shambhala's Response

*Enact the new Code of Ethics, strengthen compliance procedures, and hold teachers accountable for reported harms through a strong and fair grievance process.*

In May 2019, the Process Team formed a Code of Conduct Support Group to develop a new Code of Conduct Policy and Process based on the Shambhala principles that all beings are fundamentally good, and that difficult situations can be met with both bravery and compassion for the benefit of all. They subsequently proposed to the Board a draft Code of Conduct that would apply to everyone in Shambhala. The draft framework included specific policies relating to persons holding positions of authority, child protection, sexual misconduct, and discrimination, as well as a systematic, fair, transparent, and caring process for handling complaints.

In June 2019, based on clear feedback from the community and recommendations from *An Olive Branch*, The Interim Board began a project plan for Care & Conduct initiatives, including

the funding of a full time Community Care and Conduct staff position. A search for a Director of Community Care and Conduct was initiated in July 2019.

In July 2019, the Interim Board worked with all land centres to institute background checks for children's and youth programs. With the support and guidance of the Process Team, the Interim Board also sent a survey to the community that focused on understanding the Code of Conduct Policy. Survey questions included: how to find the policy; how to report harm or misconduct; and an opportunity to give feedback on the experience of going through the Care and Conduct process. The [results of the Shambhala-wide Care and Conduct survey](#) were published in August 2019, and many people took time to write about their experiences and insights. The participants' feedback is visibly actioned in the new policies and approaches. In August of 2019, the Code of Conduct Task Force, a group that comprised Process Team members and members of the Care and Conduct Panel, continued its work to develop a Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedure for the global Shambhala community. The work included an Anti-Discrimination Policy, a Child Protection Policy and a Policy to address Sexual Misconduct.

In November of 2019, the Board accepted the draft Code of Conduct received from the Process Team Code of Conduct Task Force as the working basis for moving forward towards a new code of conduct for Shambhala. The Board also appointed the Process Team Care and Conduct Task Force, a subcommittee of the Board for a period of a year, as a working group to implement the new Code of Conduct.

In December 2019, a new Director of Community Care and Conduct, Ms. Tara Templin was hired.

In March 2020, the Board approved a new [Child Protection Policy \(CPP\)](#) and released it to the community. Background checks for people responsible for activities with children began.

In August 2020, the Board of Directors ratified and introduced to the community the new Code of Conduct consisting of the following documents: [Shambhala Code of Conduct](#); [Child Protection Policy](#); [Policy for People Holding Positions of Authority](#); [Policy to Address Sexual Misconduct](#); [Policy on Diversity, Inclusivity and Anti-Discrimination](#). The Board announced that the new suite of Code of Conduct policies was effective on Shambhala Day, February 12, 2021 and only covers complaints based on occurrences on or after that effective date. They also announced that, "*In a significant departure from former codes, the Code 'applies to everyone present in any activity associated with Shambhala, in person or online, regardless of where the activity occurs.' It applies to the entire mandala.*"

Also in August 2020, a new [Code of Conduct hub website](#) was launched and community feedback was invited.

## Recommendation #6 and Shambhala's Response

*Empower the Care and Conduct Panel (or adjudicatory body) to revoke the teaching credentials of those teachers found to have violated the Code of Ethics. This revocation should be for a minimum of six months (or can be longer, depending on the seriousness of*



*the offense).*

The Shambhala Code of Conduct includes a process for implementing “protective and rebalancing measures” to be applied in the case of an individual having been found to have violated the Code of Conduct. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, protective and rebalancing measures could include suspending teaching authorizations, preventing or monitoring access to Center programs, mentorship, training, etc. The duration and type of measures taken is decided on by the Code of Conduct Council in accordance with the context of each circumstance. In 2020 and 2021, the Office of Community Care and Conduct published two reports that include the number and type of complaints and concerns received, along with how they were resolved. These reports were sent to the community and are available on the [Code of Conduct Hub website](#): 1) [2021 Report on Code of Conduct Complaints and Concerns](#) and 2) [2018 – 2020 Report on Care and Conduct Complaints](#).

## Recommendation #7 and Shambhala’s Response

*Conduct background checks on all staff who are employed at land centers, camps, training programs etc. as well as anyone being promoted to an official position within the organization.*

All Shambhala Board Members and Shambhala Global Services staff are now required to complete a background check prior to beginning their role. As per the [Child Protection Policy](#), every individual responsible for activities with children is required to complete a background check. In 2021, each volunteer and staff of Sun Camp completed a background check. Land Centre residents and staff at Karne Chöling are required to have a background check. The other Land Centres - Shambhala Mountain Center, Dorje Denma Ling, and Dechen Chöling, require background checks on a case by case basis. Background check compliance across the mandala continues to be a priority for the Office of Community Care and Conduct.

## Recommendation #8 and Shambhala’s Response

*Require all leaders to attend training on the new Code of Ethics. Periodically offer similar training throughout the community.*

The Shambhala Board, in partnership with the Office of Care and Conduct, has worked diligently to offer trainings to the community related to issues of harm and care and conduct, as well as training and information sessions related to the Care and Conduct Policies themselves. These include:

- In October 2019, the Shambhala Online course [Sexual Harm, Trauma and the Healing Journey](#) was made available for free to the worldwide community. Over 650 community members have now taken this course.

- From March through June 2020, the Office of Community Care and Conduct, in partnership with the Shambhala Process Team, offered 30 Code of Conduct [“Preparing the Ground” presentations](#) across the community. These presentations offered an overview of the policies and processes, explained how they differed from the previous Shambhala Care and Conduct policy, and provided next steps for the implementation of the new Code of Conduct framework. A [webinar on the Child Protection Policy](#) was also offered and a [Child Protection Working Group was formed](#).
- In June 2020 a [Right Use of Power Training](#) was offered to an estimated 350 Shambhala leaders, at no cost. The training supports individuals who are in positions of trust and power, and provides tools for relating to others with sensitivity, while being aware of the power dynamics that can occur when people are in positions of authority.
- In December 2020, the Child Protection Policy working group launched the resource: [“Implementing the Shambhala CPP with a View Toward Preventing Abuse.”](#)
- In February 2021, a *Gender Dynamics* course was launched and made available to all leaders and members, with over 150 people participating. At the same time, the *Right Use of Power* course was offered a second time to those who were not able to participate the first time.
- In March 2021, scholarships were offered to eight Shambhala leaders who had completed the *Right Use of Power* (RUP) training and who wanted to become teachers of the RUP course themselves.
- In May 2021, the Office of Community Care and Conduct, in coordination with the Process Team leadership, began offering ongoing community presentations of the Code of Conduct. These presentations and conversations offered an overview of the Code of Conduct policies and process. They also covered how to access information on the hub and provided a discussion component that addressed what to do if you have a concern or want to file a complaint. As of February 2022, 9 regional Code of Conduct presentations have occurred with representation from approximately 20 Centres and Groups. 10 additional presentations are planned for 2022.
- In September 2021, the Code of Conduct team and Process Team conversation facilitators offered a [Restorative Justice / Active Peace Circle Training](#).
- In December 2021, a *Trauma Informed Facilitator Training* was offered to teachers and leaders in Shambhala.

## Recommendation #9 and Shambhala’s Response

*As the new Code of Ethics is implemented, also increase the capacity of the International Care and Conduct panel in order to not only support the new process but to reset the image*

*of this important group. Consider expanding the panel to include several teams of diverse individuals with applicable training and credentials. Panel members should include Shambhala members as well as professionals from outside of Shambhala who are knowledgeable about dealing with misconduct and trauma.*

Recruitment for the Code of Conduct team who would be in charge of implementing the new Code of Conduct, including Council members (to replace the former panel) and facilitators, began in August 2020. Recruitment documents and position descriptions detailing the desired range of expertise and skills were developed and sent out to the community. (To access a description of the roles, click [here](#).) A significant change from the previous Care and Conduct panel, which consisted of 3-4 individuals, the new Code of Conduct team consists of 4 council members (from Spain, Netherlands, California and New York) and 4 facilitators, from across the United States. These facilitators have a wide range of skills and experience, including legal expertise, psychotherapy, women's rights and sexual abuse in not for profit contexts, as well as deep experience working with community protection. Increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the group is a priority for The Office of Care and Conduct.

The Code of Conduct team began its training in March 2021 and completed the training in December 2021. The team has received comprehensive training in the Code of Conduct policies, processes, right use of power, gender dynamics, restorative justice, working with difficult situations, mental health considerations, trauma informed facilitation, data management, and more. While there are not currently council members or facilitators from outside of the Shambhala community, the training has brought in expertise from external organizations, particularly to work with trauma, mental health, and misconduct. Recruitment for Code of Conduct team members will continue in 2022.

## Recommendation #10 and Shambhala's Response

*Institute a "critical incident reporting system" wherein all instances of sexual abuse are taken seriously and evaluated by the International Care and Conduct panel, a team of qualified and trained individuals. This team would consider all aspects of the behavior including group dynamics and whether race or alcohol played a role, prepare a report of findings of each case and make recommendations.*

The process to receive, document and adjudicate all instances of misconduct, including sexual abuse, is outlined in the new [Code of Conduct procedures](#). The Council analyzes the situation and context, including group dynamics, racial dynamics or alcohol use, of any report of misconduct.

Anyone who accesses the Code of Conduct Hub, will immediately see a highlighted button at the top of each page stating: *Do you have a concern? Do you have a question, concern or complaint about possible misconduct in Shambhala? Please send an email to [codeofconduct@shambhala.org](mailto:codeofconduct@shambhala.org). You may also want to read: "What to Do If you Have a*

*Concern*". The purpose of this button is to enable an individual to get immediate support and access to information in order to report abuse or any other type of misconduct.

## Recommendation #11 and Shambhala's Response

*Given the reported mistrust of the current Care and Conduct system, Shambhala should consider offering an on-going Listening Post (including support for those who want to file a grievance/report of harm with Care and Conduct). Such a program would enable additional reporters of harm to come forward. Hiring a neutral third party for this work seems essential to communicating a sense of safety and support to potential reporters of harm.*

While we no longer have an active listening post for Shambhala, the Shambhala Board felt it was vitally important to create a Therapy Offering for the community. In December 2020, the Shambhala Board announced a [Therapy and Counselling Offering](#) to support community members through the Peoples' Counseling Clinic based in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Through this initiative, all Shambhala community members and leaders who have been harmed by misconduct in Shambhala can have access to a free counseling session, as well as a therapy subsidy. This Therapy Offering, which also provides free leadership support services, is still operating and has helped numerous Shambhalian around the world. A new branch of this service launched in Germany in 2021 and was designed specifically for the European sangha. Between December 2020 and January 2022 over 40 people had accessed the therapy and counseling service.

In 2021 the Board contracted [the Ahimsa Collective](#) to provide a listening post service and restorative justice support to the organization. The Ahimsa Collective was tasked with assessing the feasibility and existing opportunities for the creation of an ongoing listening service for past and present community members. From May to September 2021, Ahimsa reached out in various forms to survivors in order to engage them in an interview process that would inform the creation of a listening service for the Shambhala community. However, despite their best efforts, Ahimsa found that very few if any survivors were willing or interested to engage, so ultimately they could not recommend implementation.

The Board continues to hold the possibility of an ongoing listening post service for Shambhala.

## Recommendation #12 and Shambhala's Response

*Leaders at all levels of responsibility in Shambhala should commit to ending the culture that has tolerated abuse of power. The Interim Board (or its successor) should institute tighter controls (such as requiring background checks) on the selection and promotion of all office holders and spiritual leaders. A database of teachers should include evidence of abuse of power.*

*Centers that wish to invite teachers to their center should have access to the database so they can check on the teacher's credentials and complaints that have been filed. Teachers that do not abide by the Code of Ethics should be dismissed from Shambhala.*

*Since the very earliest days of the organization, abuse of alcohol and other drugs has been a pervasive problem; it continues to be a problem today and likely has played a role in some of the cases of sexual misconduct, including those involving the Sakyong.*

In October 2021, a [Guest Presenter Guidelines document](#) was developed and offered as a resource to Centre leadership. The purpose of this document is to provide support to Centre/Group and P&E leaders with the process of identifying, inviting, contracting and hosting guest presenters - including the process of obtaining agreement to abide by [Shambhala's Code of Conduct policy](#) and [People in Positions of Authority Policy \(POA\)](#). In addition to guest presenters, leaders are encouraged to review these guidelines with current or former presenters authorized in Shambhala to ensure they are up to date with the new care and conduct policies and processes.

The Office of Care and Conduct manages a database of individuals who have violated the code of conduct and the protective or rebalancing measures that were taken in those situations. As part of the guidelines, Centre leaders are encouraged to contact the Director of Care and Conduct to inquire if the individual they are inviting to teach has been involved in a complaint process. Leaders are requested to complete additional due diligence steps, including: checking teaching authorizations, researching the presenter via Google, their website, video teachings; contacting those who know them, corroborating credentials, conducting a background check if the individual is responsible for activities with children, asking them if they have been involved in any kind of complaint or grievance process at any time, etc.

## Recommendation #13 and Shambhala's Response

*We recommend that Shambhala adopt, publicize, and enforce a policy that prohibits the use of alcohol and drugs at all of its events. We believe that teachings, ceremonies, and celebrations should merit the dignity of sobriety.*

*Research has identified characteristics of organizations in which abuse of power and sexual misconduct are more likely. Some of these characteristics include concentration of power at the top, lack of organizational and financial accountability, secrecy, and discouragement or punishment of members for questioning and dissenting. A few instances of abuse of power surfaced during the Listening Post even though this topic fell outside its scope of work.*

In September 2020, the Office of Community Care and Conduct created a Heart of Recovery Coordinator Group and launched a new [Heart of Recovery webpage](#). While the organization hasn't mandated an organization-wide alcohol prohibition policy, we are in conversations with

the Heart of Recovery Coordinator and some Centres around what is appropriate for our community going forward.

When a problem arises around alcohol use in a particular community, that Centre is encouraged and has the authority to create their own policy on alcohol use at the Centre. This policy could include language such as: no alcohol at feasts and celebrations; no alcohol on the premises or at a particular event; people who appear to be inebriated can't be at the Centre, if someone appears to have been drinking, they will be escorted off the premises, etc.

There are individuals in our community who have been harmed in the past by alcohol and we are sensitive to the fact that alcohol use at Shambhala Centres could impede their ability to practice and study. We want Shambhala Centres to be a safe place for everyone, and we can't support conduct that doesn't contribute to a healthy practice and study environment.

## Recommendation #14 and Shambhala's Response

*The Interim Board or the Process Team should research abuse-fostering characteristics within Shambhala to ensure that the organization does not encourage behaviors that lead to abuse of power and/or sexual misconduct.*

In November of 2019, the Shambhala Board endorsed a new project called "Societal Mirror". This Shambhala Board-sponsored initiative - led by a working group that comprises Shambhala Board Members, Process Team Members, and Shambhala Global Services Team Members - aims to uncover the key questions and indicators that will help both Shambhala leadership and the community understand our general state of health and well-being, what we are doing well, and where we need to improve.

The following is a statement from the Shambhala Board that sets out the need for this project:

*We need to develop greater societal self-awareness that is built on accurate data and not assumptions. In this way we can understand the health of the various aspects of the mandala as well as the whole. This includes Shambhala Global Services, all Shambhala Centres and Groups, their current members and the participants of programs within Shambhala. We will make a public dashboard available with all findings, which supports the decision making of leaders at all levels, raises awareness and promotes a sense of belonging within the community, and will also support the values of inclusion, transparency, and accountability within Shambhala.*

The scope of this project has been organized into five areas:

- *Paths, Teachings, Practices, Programs & Studies*
- *Governance, Leadership, Communications & Interconnections*
- *Economy, Resources & Assets*
- *Care and Conduct & Protection*
- *Culture & Community Well-being*

The following questions for each domain will be explored:

- *What do you care about in this particular area / domain?*
- *What information relevant to this area would have you say, “Yes, I really wanted to know that and it tells me so much!”*
- *How might we measure this?*

These insights will then help the working group formulate the metrics and indicators needed to answer these questions and create surveys for various community stakeholders. The intention is to monitor the key questions for each of these domains regularly (annually or bi-annually) and in this way understand how Shambhala as a community and organization is doing and where we need to do better in an ongoing way. This data will help us deepen our understanding of what and who we are as a community, as opposed to making assumptions about “how we are doing”, and will greatly aid in decision-making and planning for the future.

The findings will be shared regularly. This is in tune with the guiding principles of our Shambhala Code of Conduct: accountability, transparency, inclusivity, and care. As we all become familiar with our well-being status, we will have the basis for shifting our culture and structure so our situation is more closely aligned with our aspirations for manifesting a good human society.

## Recommendation #15 and Shambhala’s Response

*Hold community-wide reconciliation meeting(s) led by a neutral third party. These meetings would allow the Sakyong and other leaders to take responsibility for the harm they caused. Further, if there are former Kalapa Council members, Kusung, Acharyas, or others who knew of the abuse as it was happening but may not have taken effective action, reconciliation meetings would allow them to take responsibility and make amends.*

The Process Team Community Conversation group has laid the foundation for reconciliation in the community, having facilitated 35 conversations with over 450 people in Shambhala. Topics included are: Belonging in Shambhala, Governance, Taking Conduct To Heart, Sharing Shambhala, and Practice and Study Paths. Each conversation is recorded and harvested, with the summary then shared back to the community and to the Shambhala Board for consideration.

The Community Conversations Team have also facilitated conversations with the Board regarding the [Board’s Statement on Harm](#). In late November 2021 the Shambhala Board sent a statement to all Shambhala community members and all community leaders, acknowledging the harms that have occurred in Shambhala. The statement expresses regret for these harms, a commitment to seeing clearly their causes, conditions, and wide-ranging effects, the intention to engage in a path of reconciliation among all impacted by harm, and a resolve to prevent harm from recurring in Shambhala through specific actions, including trainings and adherence to the Shambhala Code of Conduct.

In the latest set of conversations, community members had an opportunity to discuss with Board members their response to the statement, how it could be useful to them, and how the issues of accountability and responsibility for harms in Shambhala are understood in their community. The themes extracted from these conversations will be used to inform future reparative processes for our community.

Another step that Shambhala has taken to prepare the ground for reconciliation meetings was to offer training in restorative justice and active peace circle processes to Process Team Community Conversation Facilitators. This training provided an understanding of the Active Peace Circle process, which is rooted in restorative justice but with important distinctions. The training also prepared facilitators with the ability to discern when such a process may be appropriate for uncovering the full extent of the harm, repairing the harm, and strengthening the community.

## Part III: Appendix:

# Recommendations From An Olive Branch Report

### ***From the Final Report of An Olive Branch:***

*In offering these recommendations, we draw on our experience in working with a number of Buddhist/religious organizations that have encountered allegations of sexual misconduct by their cherished leaders. While these organizations differ in many ways (Zen, Tibetan, Korean, Rinzai), observing them closely has afforded us the opportunity to see patterns that transcend individual organizations. The patterns also parallel dynamics in other religious sects where misconduct has occurred and inform our recommendations here. For example, we have witnessed the organizational culture dynamics that inevitably occur when organizations concentrate spiritual and operational/secular and fiscal power in one person with no checks and balances. Too often cultures of silence arise that enable the misconduct to continue unchallenged and doubly traumatize those who have been harmed if they try to speak up. These cultures often employ subtle shaming tactics that reinforce members' desires for inclusion at the expense of honesty. But these dynamics gradually lead to a culture of deep mistrust.*

*When confronted with ethical misconduct and abuse of power on the part of a spiritual leader(s), organizations have a choice. Do they circle the wagons, do everything they can to protect the organization, and make the complaints go away? Or do they respond quickly, appropriately, and compassionately to those who are harmed while, at the same time, dispensing justice to perpetrators of harm?*

*The first option is costly -- both in terms of intensifying the harm to the individual and in terms of eating away at the fabric of the organization (loss of reputation, members, donations, increasing legal costs, etc.). The second option requires a commitment to transparency and courage to stand up for victims and stand up to the authority of entitled officials.*



*Our recommendations are offered to help Shambhala address the crisis and build a healthy organization. We are aware, however, that our knowledge of Shambhala is limited. We cannot know the organizational constraints -- financial, legal, and structural — that may dictate the extent to which these recommendations can be implemented. We offer the following in a spirit of goodwill and genuine concern.*

*The recommendations are directed to eight topics where organizational change is needed:*

- 1. Public Response*
- 2. Governance Structure*
- 3. New Code of Ethics and Compliance*
- 4. Training*
- 5. Track Incidents of Harm*
- 6. Listening Post and Advocacy Service*
- 7. Cultural Change*
- 8. Reconciliation.*

## Topic: Public Response

*The Wickwire Holm investigative report determined that the Sakyong's behavior involved sexual misconduct. Reports to the Listening Post supported this conclusion.*

*Now that the abuse has become public, the Interim Board may find itself torn between loyalty to the organization's spiritual lineage and leadership and actions to repair harm and restore trust within the community at large. This challenge presents a difficult path to walk—one that requires balancing sensitivity with taking a stand against harm, and courage with humility.*

***Recommendation #1:*** *We urge Shambhala to respond in a transparent way and take responsibility for the culture that allowed misconduct to continue. Doing so should include the following:*

- Acknowledging harm to victims, both those who have reported and those who have not*
- Apologizing to reporters of harm for what they experienced*
- Urging the Sakyong to accept responsibility for his behavior*
- Outlining steps the organization will take to hold the Sakyong accountable going forward*
- Publishing a set of action steps to: 1) prevent harms in the future and 2) address the organization's failure to respond appropriately to past harms.*

***Recommendation #2:*** *In the spirit of developing transparency and good faith with the Shambhala community, we recommend that the Interim Board release the Listening Post Report in its entirety to the community along with a list of specific lessons the*

*Board has learned based on the Listening Post Report, the Wickwire Holm report, and other sources of evidence of misconduct it has, including the International Care and Conduct Panel's reports.*

## Topic: Governance Structure

*In An Olive Branch's work with other Buddhist organizations in the United States, we have seen the suffering that stems from concentration of power in one person — the founder, head priest, Rinpoche, or other title. When one individual, no matter how enlightened they are, is in control of both the spiritual and secular aspects of the organization, accountability is absent.*

*In the United States, nonprofit boards of directors hold fiduciary responsibility for the organization. The risk of serious trouble arises when boards are powerless and not independent, and when the leader appoints board members who will serve without question and there are no term limits.*

**Recommendation #3:** *When the Interim Board is replaced by a new governing board, we strongly recommend that Shambhala's governance and management system continue being separate and independent from the organization's spiritual leadership system. A single spiritual leader should not control both the spiritual and secular side of the organization. The new board should not be appointed by the spiritual leader. The board must be objective and autonomous, fulfilling the fiduciary duty of loyalty to the organization and not loyalty to a founder or spiritual lineage.*

**Recommendation #4:** *We recommend that Shambhala's governing board include external representatives who themselves are not Shambhala members to ensure an element of independence within the board.*

## Topic: New Code of Ethics and Compliance

*One of the biggest disappointments expressed by reporters of harm was that Shambhala did not hold those accused of harm to account. This lapse has seriously eroded perceptions of safety and trust within the community. Several recommendations are offered in the spirit of rebuilding such trust with the recognition that this will take grit, courage, accountability, and persistence on the organization's part.*

**Recommendation #5:** *Enact the new Code of Ethics, strengthen compliance procedures, and hold teachers accountable for reported harms through a strong and fair grievance process.*

**Recommendation #6:** *Empower the Care and Conduct Panel (or adjudicatory body) to revoke the teaching credentials of those teachers found to have violated*

*the Code of Ethics. This revocation should be for a minimum of six months (or can be longer, depending on the seriousness of the offense).*

**Recommendation #7:** *Conduct background checks on all staff who are employed at land centers, camps, training programs etc. as well as anyone being promoted to an official position within the organization.*

## Topic: Training

*The adoption of a Code of Ethics is not, in and of itself, an adequate strategy for turning the ship. A training program that is sustained over time will help to make clear that Shambhala is committed to cultural change and ethical behavior.*

**Recommendation #8:** *Require all leaders to attend training on the new Code of Ethics. Periodically offer similar training throughout the community.*

## Topic: Track Incidents of Harm

*The current Care and Conduct structure is inadequate for an organization of 14,000 members; the International Care and Conduct panel of three members is too small and the procedures are neither well known nor trusted. Further, there is no systematic way for Shambhala to record and collect information on abuse; there is no paper-trail for many incidents.*

**Recommendation #9:** *As the new Code of Ethics is implemented, also increase the capacity of the International Care and Conduct panel in order to not only support the new process but to reset the image of this important group. Consider expanding the panel to include several teams of diverse individuals with applicable training and credentials. Panel members should include Shambhala members as well as professionals from outside of Shambhala who are knowledgeable about dealing with misconduct and trauma.*

**Recommendation #10:** *Institute a “critical incident reporting system” wherein all instances of sexual abuse are taken seriously and evaluated by the International Care and Conduct panel, a team of qualified and trained individuals. This team would consider all aspects of the behavior including group dynamics and whether race or alcohol played a role, prepare a report of findings of each case and make recommendations.*

## Topic: Listening Post and Advocacy Service

*The Listening Post generated information about harm within the Shambhala community that either was not covered in detail in the Wickwire Holm Investigative Report or was absent altogether. The Listening Post Report described both the nature of the harm incurred as well as the reporters’ experiences with Shambhala leaders’ responses to initial reports of harm. In many*

cases, the reporters judged the responses to be inadequate and even re-traumatizing. Based on our experience of conducting the Listening Post and analyzing the information it generated, we offer the following recommendation:

**Recommendation #11:** *Given the reported mistrust of the current Care and Conduct system, Shambhala should consider offering an on-going Listening Post (including support for those who want to file a grievance/report of harm with Care and Conduct). Such a program would enable additional reporters of harm to come forward. Hiring a neutral third party for this work seems essential to communicating a sense of safety and support to potential reporters of harm.*

## Topic: Cultural Change

*Changing societal norms regarding sexual abuse, racism, able-ism, and bullying pose enormous challenges for Shambhala. Heightened awareness now puts previously overlooked unethical behavior in the spotlight. For example, the #MeToo movement is giving women courage to say they were victims of assault at the hands of men whose misconduct had gone unchallenged. Other movements such as BlackLivesMatter are also enabling people of color to speak up against long-standing discrimination and bias.*

*Twined together in Shambhala's DNA are the brilliance of Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings and the damaging lifestyle that has led to today's crisis, declining membership, and financial predicaments. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, society has become more enlightened with regard to ethical misconduct but it is apparent that some Shambhala leaders have not kept pace. For example, the Listening Post provided evidence that:*

- *Many types of abuse were practiced within Shambhala: sexual abuse, emotional and physical abuse, racism, bullying and ostracism.*
- *Within Shambhala, abuse of power is more widespread than sexual misconduct on the part of the Sakyong. Perpetrators of abuse operated throughout the organization from the top down — abuse of students by the Sakyong, teachers, meditation instructors, and office holders; and abuse of students by one another.*
- *A culture of silence and intense loyalty to the Sakyong encouraged leaders (who, themselves, did not abuse others) to tolerate the abuse, turn a blind eye to it, and cajole others into doing the same. Their behavior suggests complicity with the abuse of power.*
- *Many complaints of abuse were covered up or dismissed.*
- *Abuse of power will continue without a strong, systematic approach.*

**Recommendation #12:** *Leaders at all levels of responsibility in Shambhala should commit to ending the culture that has tolerated abuse of power. The Interim Board (or its successor) should institute tighter controls (such as requiring background checks) on the selection and promotion of all office holders and spiritual leaders. A database of teachers should include evidence of abuse of power.*

*Centers that wish to invite teachers to their center should have access to the database so they can check on the teacher's credentials and complaints that have been filed. Teachers that do not abide by the Code of Ethics should be dismissed from Shambhala.*

*Since the very earliest days of the organization, abuse of alcohol and other drugs has been a pervasive problem; it continues to be a problem today and likely has played a role in some of the cases of sexual misconduct, including those involving the Sakyong.*

***Recommendation #13:*** *We recommend that Shambhala adopt, publicize, and enforce a policy that prohibits the use of alcohol and drugs at all of its events. We believe that teachings, ceremonies, and celebrations should merit the dignity of sobriety.*

*Research has identified characteristics of organizations in which abuse of power and sexual misconduct are more likely. Some of these characteristics include concentration of power at the top, lack of organizational and financial accountability, secrecy, and discouragement or punishment of members for questioning and dissenting. A few instances of abuse of power surfaced during the Listening Post even though this topic fell outside its scope of work.*

***Recommendation #14:*** *The Interim Board or the Process Team should research abuse-fostering characteristics within Shambhala to ensure that the organization does not encourage behaviors that lead to abuse of power and/or sexual misconduct.*

## **Topic: Reconciliation**

*Our experience indicates that reconciliation meetings are an important step in restoring harmony and trust within a community. Reconciliation requires:*

- *Mutual agreement regarding acceptable behavior*
- *Acknowledgement that wrongdoing occurred*
- *Exploration of root causes*
- *Past perpetrators of harm take responsibility for their actions: admit that they have hurt the other person and that it was wrong to do so; express remorse and that he/she will stop behaving that way.*

***Recommendation #15:*** *Hold community-wide reconciliation meeting(s) led by a neutral third party. These meetings would allow the Sakyong and other leaders to take responsibility for the harm they caused. Further, if there are former Kalapa Council members, Kusung, Acharyas, or others who knew of the abuse as it was happening but may not have taken effective action, reconciliation meetings would allow them to take responsibility and make amends.*