Welcome to Sea to Sky Retreat Centre's First Newsletter!

Offering Service and Building Confidence.

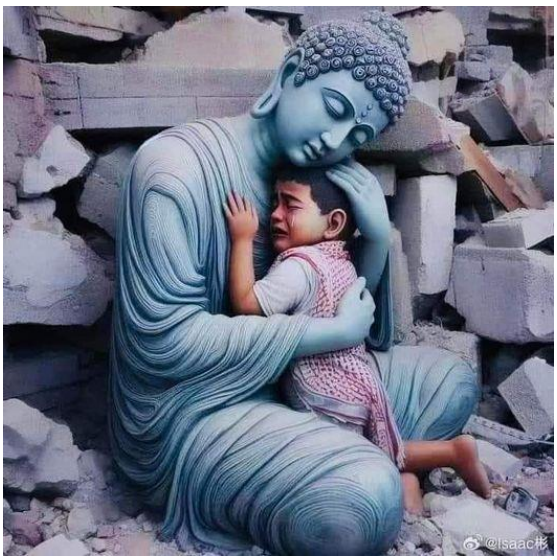
With great appreciation we thank all those who have offered their time, energy, resources and practice to SSRC this year. May the fruits of these offerings bring benefit to all. Special thanks to the teachers, instructors, organisers, cooks, housekeepers, shoppers, facilities men and women and all those who worked behind the scenes to make all our activities possible. And, of course, to Rinpoche and the Khyentse lineage, no words can express your compassion and wisdom. Forgive our failings, strengthen our resolve to cross the water for the sake of all beings, keep with us constantly the mother of glorious discipline and inspire us to practice without reserve from the great reservoir of patience.



Work-As-Practice Oct 2023

It's been a jam-packed year here at SSRC. Michiko was inundated with requests from people wanting to visit. Sorry we couldn't fit everybody in. We did the best we can.

Three long years of Covid sent the province jerking back and forth between lockdowns and gathering restrictions – it took a toll on everyone, not just in Canada, but around the world. Many lost their lives, many suffered. But I suppose it was just a drop in the ocean of suffering that plagues our world. Yet, at the same time, something strange happened. Did anyone else feel some kind of bond? Did we somehow observe and feel that others were suffering just as we were? Did some sort of comradery emerge from this pandemic? Kindship? Brotherhood? Dare I say Sangha?



Before our year of retreat programs even began, we had a fully booked calendar. At SSRC we are limited by our infrastructure. We believe that small is beautiful, and we try our best to live in balance with what the land provides. We are totally off the grid here. If you are interested in what off the grid living looks like, please read our Sustainability Plan online. During the wetter months our micro-hydro provides ample power to support the retreat centre. It certainly feels like the summers in our region have become increasingly dry. Last year we experienced an unseasonably long summer and a strangely dry fall. This year as well. Last year the volume of water that supporting our micro-hydro system struggled to supply us with the power we needed to maintain group programmes.

Last season's drought put a real strain on our ability to remain open and we were forced to regularly run our diesel generator. Since the development of our Marble Creek intake and

pipeline in 2006 we have barely had to use this generator at all! We thought we had enough water to provide us with all the renewable power we needed – last years' experience had us questioning the reliability of being solely dependent on water as our only source of power.

Along came Peter Talbot! Anything is possible with wires, he says! Over numerous meetings with Peter, he explained to us the complexities in marrying micro-hydro with solar but was confident it could be done with our current set up. "Build it tough. Make it bomb proof," Peter advises. With some out of the box thinking, some rather confusing electrical language and a zip-line (!) we managed to install 12 solar panels down at the lake.





Crikey! What a difference they made. Instantly we more than doubled our energy generating capacity! Surprisingly, even when cloudy these panels produce a rather generous number of amps. We didn't have much time in the spring, and other tasks needed to be done, so we haven't completely finished our foundation work down at the lake. As soon as it's warm enough next spring we will pour concrete and give our new panels the proper foundation they deserve.



After charging our batteries and sprits with energy from the cosmos, we were blessed with welcoming Drubgyud Tenzin Rinpoche. We hosted three retreat programs with him and a Gesar Puja. Suffice to say he's touched us all here. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you DT Rinpoche for taking time away from your family, monastery and other duties. No doubt you will be busy in the coming years; may you be safe, joyful and healthy. We hope to see you again soon. Check out Drubgyud Tenzin Rinpoche here.

Now that we had solar power, we had to give some much-needed TLC to our hydro power. Our coanda box, built by the late Randy, had deteriorated to a point where we it resembled some sort of Frankenstein. Check out Ron on YouTube explaining what a coanda box does! Ha, Ron on YouTube. Makes me laugh. How lucky we are to have him. We love you, Ron. After 16 years of service up at Marble Creek, Randy's cedar coanda box desperately needed replacing. Along came Gary McLean! Gary's new and improved box was perfect, but we couldn't get up there till the snow melted. And that doesn't happen till June…thank goodness we got those solar panels hooked up. Not to mention, we still had to figure out how to transport a 150lb box 2km up a rather twisty dense forest trail! We toyed with the idea of using a helicopter – pricey, yikes! Electric wheelbarrow – hmmm, if it was a smooth road, sure, but nope. A donkey…. In the end, good old famous human mules got it up there. Thank you, you wonderful human mules! Alas, we got it going.



Rain or shine we have power at SSRC!



This summer we initiated our first Family Camp! The weather was perfect and the kids had a blast. SSRC is a raw, rugged somewhat wrathful land. We were a little nervous welcoming children here. There are so many hazards. Cliffs, water, rocks... Ron often says during our orientations that the most common way one hurts themselves here is by tripping over their own two feet. Thankfully all that happened was a few wasp stings! It was such a delight to hear the sounds of children running and screaming with sheer bliss. A contrast to the silence often cultivated here. Bruce almighty was our camp leader that weekend. Accompanied by Madison leading outdoor education and arts and crafts, Kung Fu with Matthias, and movement and games with Tenzin. What a brilliant weekend. May this programme be the beginning of a beautiful summer tradition.





The pandemic forced us to close for two and a half years. After three years of expenses exceeding offerings, the question of selling the place came up regularly. It was a little scary for a minute. This year, however, we offered more retreat practice than any previous year. It's clear there are so many who wish to connect.

SSRC is currently working on a Virtual Instruction Project. We were fortunate enough to be one of the recipients from the Canadian government's Community Service Covid Recovery Fund, administered by the United Way to help with this project. Let me give you some context:

> Last fall we were conducting a retreat and the day before the instructors were meant to arrive, whilst all the participants were already here, we received news that all the programme instructors had contracted Covid-19. What to do? People had travelled to be here; we couldn't possibly cancel the retreat. Our internet and digital infrastructure was bare-bones and we did not have the resources to provide any instruction. With no notice we had to reconstruct the program to be a self-guided practice. Don Stein got an early morning flight from Edmonton and was soon here to help out and give the retreatants some guidance. Thank you, Don. Not ideal, but it worked. In fact, Don, it was overhearing your conversation with Michiko about grant applications that planted the seed for us to apply. So extra thanks Don! We want to try and mitigate the risk of such situations happening in the future.

The goal of this project is to allow our small local community to tap into the gift of international Dharma teachers worldwide. By minimising the need for instructors to travel we can better fulfil our mission and serve our community.



Some have asked, will we be offering online retreats for those who are unable to make it to SSRC? Sorry, perhaps in the future, but not at this stage. We want to begin by bringing in instructors. This project is an experiment for us. For a long time, we've been discussing the role of the internet and IT in the Retreat Centre. On one hand, we exist to provide a break for retreatants from today's ultra-plugged-in world. But on the other hand, when utilised appropriately it can bring immense benefit for students and practitioners. But we feel it is no replacement for those who want to connect with the land and the blessings that emanate from the Khyentse lineage here.





Radio Island!





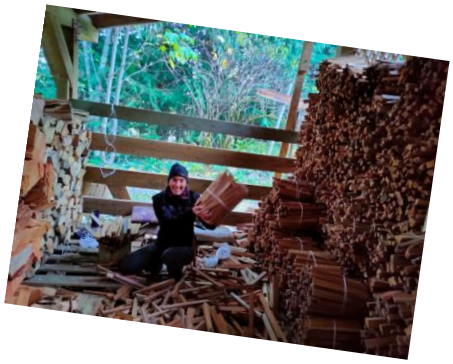


Our last program of the year was our Winter Preparation Work-As-Practice. This event was pure magic. To OG's and new friends –you're the best. Check our more photos on our website.











Between all our facilities improvements and our internal retreat programs, we also hosted our Sufi Friends, Swami Muktibodhananda Saraswati, Immortal Dragons Kung Fu, BC Insight Mediation Society, Triratna Buddhist Community and more. We hope to see you all again.

Who knows, maybe we'll try get another newsletter out sometime in the spring or summer. Well, that's it from us. SSRC will be shifting gears into winter mode. We wish you all a safe, happy and restful winter. If anyone is ever interested in helping out, we are already planning next year's program calendar. Want to connect and spend some time volunteering during some of our retreat programs? Please email us at ssrc@siddharthasintent.org (we always need help in the kitchen).



Take care,

Lots of Love,

From Evan at Sea to Sky Retreat Centre.