An Olive Branch
Shambhala Final Project Report

This document contains a cover letter followed by
An Olive Branch's Final Project Report to the Shambhala Interim Board.

To access other files and information related to An Olive Branch's work,
please visit: http://communitycare.shambhala.org

SHAMBHALA

March 19, 2019

Dear Shambhala Community:

In July of 2018, the Kalapa Council engaged the services of An Olive Branch, an independent third-party organization, to perform a variety of services in the wake of complaints raised about ethical misconduct on the part of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and other leaders and community members. Their assignment has now concluded.

Through our work with An Olive Branch, Shambhala intended to provide direct support to individuals who had been harmed within Shambhala and to begin the process of understanding and changing the structural and institutional processes that allowed misconduct and abuse to occur. The Interim Board wishes to acknowledge what has occurred, the impact it has had on individual lives, and express our deepest apology to those who have experienced harm in any Shambhala program or environment.

We are releasing all of the materials that An Olive Branch has delivered to the Interim Board. These include:

- The Listening Post Report, derived from the listening post service open from September 2018-December 2018 that was available to current or past members of the Shambhala community to receive support around various types of harm they experienced in the sangha. The report is a compilation of data, themes and quotations from these phone, video or written contacts with An Olive Branch. We received the final version on March 12, 2019.

- The Final Report which was written for the Interim Board, however, we would like to share it with the entire community as it contains An Olive Branch's recommendations for Shambhala. We received the final report on March 14, 2019.

- The Code of Ethics, a new set of suggested policies and grievance procedures for community care and conduct. We sent this to the Process Team Steering Committee when they were seated, and have asked the Steering Committee to work with us on soliciting feedback from the community on the view, scope and feasibility of this proposed policy.

Scope and Purpose of The Listening Post

An Olive Branch was contracted to provide support, not to investigate claims. In this way, their scope and purpose is very different from a legal investigation. Reporters were not "investigated;" witnesses were not contacted; stories were not interrogated for veracity; reporters were not deemed "credible" or not (as is done in a legal investigation), and names were not disclosed to the accused for the purpose of getting both sides of the story. In fact, we recognize that to do so would be to put those who have experienced harm through yet another difficult process. Many who called into the Listening Post had already told their story to someone in Shambhala and were not believed or taken seriously. Therefore, it was critical to this process that individuals be taken at their word and not assessed for credibility.

Decision Process to Share the Listening Post

We would like to share openly with the community our process around deciding to share the Listening Post report in full. We received letters from sangha members, imploring us that flooding the community with graphic narratives of sexual violence that has occurred over the last 40 years would only continue to traumatize the community. Some people pointed out that we could not confirm the veracity of reports, thereby requesting that we not publish what they saw as unverified reports. Others wrote us insisting that withholding the Listening Post report would be seen as a cover-up, or concealment by the Interim Board. The Interim Board was not unanimous in its decision to distribute the Listening Post report with verbatim interview transcripts included. The majority decided, however, that withholding or summarizing portions of the Report would be seen as concealing data that the community had a right to read—or not read—without editing.

Issues of Confidentiality

We have also struggled with the issue of confidentiality of the reporters of harm. Even though An Olive Branch did not include names or locations in their report, many stories may be easily identifiable. There are also second- and third-hand reports, giving us no way of knowing if those involved consented to their stories being told by others who were there.

After receiving the report, we requested that An Olive Branch contact each person whose story is told in the form of a direct quote to solicit their explicit consent for their stories to be included in a report that would be sent to the Shambhala community. An Olive Branch informed us that many reporters wanted their stories to be public; however, we worried that not everyone who called The Listening Post understood or consented to a public release of their stories in the form of direct quotes. While this process delayed the release of the report because it took time for An Olive Branch staff to get back in communication with everyone whose story was included in their report, we felt it would be irresponsible, if not unethical, to publicize direct quotes of those who did not explicitly consent to it.

A significant number of reporters, upon being contacted, did not consent to having their story made public. Some reporters asked to revise their quotes. And some consented to their quotes being shared as-is. On March 12, we received a revised Listening Post report from An Olive

Branch, this time only including direct quotes for people who consented to a public release of their stories.

As with the Wickwire Holm process, the Interim Board has not been given names of the reporters or the accused. When the accused was a current teacher or office holder, An Olive Branch encouraged reporters to contact the Care and Conduct Panel so that cases could be investigated. In some instances, reports were made to Care and Conduct, and they are under investigation. Some reporters expressed distrust that the current leadership would handle cases appropriately. A significant number of people indicated that they had already tried to report, formally or informally, within Shambhala and that they were ignored or did not receive a fair process. Because we do not have names, we again urge anyone who has experienced harm to contact both the proper authorities and careandconduct@shambhala.org so that these cases can be addressed.

We are hopeful that the Process Team will facilitate community dialogue around existing structures of reporting and care so that we may improve them.

Reflections on Viewing the Listening Post Report

We encourage each person to reflect on whether they would like to view the enclosed Listening Post report. Rather than taking a paternalistic stance, which might lead the community to believe we are covering up misconduct, we felt that each person could make their own decision as to whether viewing the reports at this time was in their best interest.

****Please know in advance that there are graphic narratives of sexual violence contained in the Listening Post report****

There are instances of child abuse included in the Listening Post report. An Olive Branch staff are considered mandated reporters and they have notified the appropriate authorities according to state legislation where the abuse occurred (see Appendix 5 within Listening Post report for more detail on mandated reporting). The Interim Board requests that all instances of child abuse, sexual assault, or any other illegal activity be reported appropriately to the police; Shambhala should not attempt to adjudicate crimes internally. However, it is also important for Care and Conduct to be included in such reporting so that appropriate steps may be taken internally.

An Olive Branch Recommendations

As consultants to Shambhala, An Olive Branch submitted a final report detailing their work and making a set of recommendations to the Interim Board. Although this report was intended for the board, we wish to share it with the community. In this report, there are a wide range of recommendations about changes Shambhala could make at the organizational level to create a safer community. We would like the community to review these recommendations as we believe they can help frame needful discussions. It will take time for the Interim Board to dialogue with the the sangha and Shambhala Process Teams to determine how to best relate to them.

Next Steps

At this time, there is a working group tasked with improving processes for vetting teachers and office holders in Shambhala. This group is comprised of Interim Board members, the Care and Conduct Panel, and representatives from Practice and Education. Alongside this vetting process, we are considering a variety of child protection policies and looking at additional safeguards for any person in Shambhala who will be around children. We recommend that the community continue to look at training for teachers, MIs, and leaders around power and harm.

The Shambhala community can no longer deny or ignore sexual violence, harassment, and other forms of structural violence. At this critical time, we ask the entire sangha to reflect on what needs to change, and what we wish to preserve. In this regard, we are eager for the Process Team to begin their work, and we intend to do whatever we can to support their efforts.

These reports are shining light on longstanding systems of harm and abuse within Shambhala. We have an opportunity to demonstrate how a community can see itself clearly, learn from its mistakes and act decisively to better itself. The Interim Board is committed to doing this work and we invite all members to join us on this journey.

Wishing gentleness and kindness to all,

The Interim Board
Veronika Bauer
Mark Blumenfeld
Martina Bouey
John Cobb
Jen Crow
Sara Lewis
Susan Ryan
Paulina Varas

An Olive Branch
A project of the
Zen Center of Pittsburgh

Shambhala Final Project Report

March 14, 2019

Prepared by An Olive Branch

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Background

An Olive Branch's client for this project was Shambhala International. Founded in the early 1970s by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the organization is now headed by his son, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. In the spring of 2018, Adam Lobel, member of Shambhala's Kalapa Council, contacted An Olive Branch to inquire about our services and to begin a conversation about how we could help with a situation precipitated by allegations of sexual misconduct on the part of the Sakyong. The Council became aware of the allegations late in 2017 but the allegations surfaced publicly in mid-February, 2018 in a report disseminated on the Internet titled "Project Sunshine: Final Report" [1] by Andrea Winn.

Four members of the Kalapa Council, Adam Lobel, Jane Arthur, Wendy Friedman, and Joshua Silberstein, formed a small group to respond to the allegations being made and the questions being raised as a result of Andrea Winn's report. This group met with representatives of An Olive Branch via video conference on March 13 and May 1, 2018. A face-to-face meeting was held in Boulder, Colorado on June 23, 2018. An Olive Branch was represented at that meeting by Leslie Hospodar and Dr. Katheryn Wiedman.

At the Boulder meeting, the Council Members explained the turmoil resulting from the release of the Project Sunshine Report and expressed their needs and interest in An Olive Branch's services. A scope of work was developed, and An Olive Branch submitted a proposed agreement on July 23, 2018. Joshua Silberstein signed the agreement on July 5, 2018 on behalf of the Kalapa Council.

This report summarizes the work that was done under the above-mentioned agreement. It includes a description of changes to the scope of work that occurred after the agreement was signed, reports on the project elements that were completed, and offers recommendations to the Interim Board based on what we have learned about the organization, the community, and the allegations of sexual and other types of ethical misconduct on the part of leaders.

The Project's Scope of Work

In the July 2018 proposal to the Kalapa Council, An Olive Branch presented the agreed upon scope of work for the project in the form of the following elements:

1. Ethics Policy and Grievance Procedure (Code of Ethics)
2. Listening Post and Advocacy Service for Reporters of Harm
3. Board Training on Abuse of Power

[1] Although the title of the first report was Project Sunshine Report: Final, it was followed by two more reports, one in June (Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 2 Final Report) and one in August (Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 3 Final Report).

4. Board Planning Process
5. Regional Update Meetings (communication support)
6. Reconciliation Support and Facilitation
7. Project Management.

Within days after the agreement was signed in early July, the Kalapa Council announced that it was stepping down. While the Olive Branch team understood the rationale for that action, we nevertheless suddenly felt distanced from our client. The Kalapa Council and An Olive Branch had already agreed that two of the project elements addressed the organization's most urgent needs: a) developing a new ethics policy and grievance procedure and b) offering a way for reporters of harm to come forward in a safe way (Listening Post). With the engagement of Jane Arthur as our primary liaison, An Olive Branch moved forward on those two project elements which are described in this report.

The leadership transition within Shambhala lasted from mid-July to October 17, 2018 when the Interim Board was seated. During that interval, project team meetings and communication with the Kalapa Council became less frequent and not all Kalapa Council members were able to participate.

As is true of virtually all organizations that experience ethical misconduct on the part of their leaders, the financial impact on Shambhala of the sexual misconduct allegations has been crippling. In order to stabilize Shambhala's financial situation, the Interim Board introduced cost reduction measures. These measures included capping the budget for An Olive Branch's work. The budget overrun on the Code of Conduct work contributed to the need to cap the budget. Four of the project elements were deemed to be either unaffordable or no longer needed: Board Training on Abuse of Power, Board Planning Process, Regional Update Meetings, and Reconciliation Support and Facilitation. It should be noted that the agreement provided for either party to terminate the engagement with five days written notice; the Interim Board, however, honored the original financial commitment and allowed the three elements described in this report to conclude in an orderly way.

The next section of this report provides accounts of An Olive Branch's work on the first two project elements. In the interest of providing a complete historical record, the work intended to be done under the other four project elements is also describe briefly in this report. The final section of this report offers recommendations that An Olive Branch concludes would be advantageous to Shambhala going forward.

Project Element 1: Code of Ethics[2]

Shambhala's Care and Conduct policy had been in place since 2002 and, although it had many strengths, we learned that some people with complaints of harm found it confusing, hard to follow, and sometimes ineffective, resulting in re-victimization. Also, some members felt unheard and/or felt they were treated as though they were the problem when trying to bring complaints forward. Additionally, many of those harmed reported their complaints to more proximate Shambhala leaders instead of to the International Care and Conduct Panel (ICCP). These complaints were never then forwarded to the ICCP but instead attempts were made to handle them locally or refer them to various acharyas or others in positions of power closer to the site where the harm occurred. In many cases, the ICCP never received these complaints nor had the opportunity to adjudicate them.

It is not clear whether the policy and its attendant grievance procedures had ever really been understood or embraced by the broader Shambhala community despite the fact that the 2002 policy was revised substantially in 2015. At that time, a provision was added that required all teachers and office holders (notably with the exception of the Sakyong) to sign an oath stating they understood the policy and would not engage in sexual relationships with their students.[3]

The Project Sunshine Report precipitated a crisis in which allegations of misconduct were revealed – allegations reaching far beyond the Sakyong. In general, the report said that, over the years, the Shambhala community had co-created a culture that passively condoned abuses of power, opening the door for many types of harm. In the Listening Post, members complained of misconduct on the part of some acharyas and other teachers, meditation instructors, center directors, and other office holders including the Kusung.[4] Misconduct included not only sexual harm but also physical, emotional, racial, and other forms of harm. Trust in Shambhala's Care and Conduct procedures had eroded.

An Olive Branch was charged with drafting a new ethics policy and grievance procedure -- building upon the existing Care and Conduct Policy and draft Sexual Misconduct Policy. While An Olive Branch has knowledge of best practices and experience helping other organizations with their ethics policy and grievance procedure, it was essential to have Shambhala-specific knowledge in order to write viable

[2] The project element originally named "Ethics Policy and Grievance Procedure" came to be called the Code of Ethics; it included the grievance procedure.

[3] In part, the oath states, "As an office holder in Shambhala, I have read and understand the Care and Conduct Policy. I am familiar with the definition of harmful behaviour as described in sections 7 and 8, and will refrain from these actions.
I understand that the Care and Conduct Policy pertains to my current role(s) as an office holder in Shambhala, as well as to any future roles I may hold.
I understand that this policy is binding to all Shambhala officer holders whether they sign the Oath of Understanding and Adherence or not. I will adhere to this policy and support fellow office holders to also adhere to this policy…."

[4] See Shambhala Listening Post Report prepared by An Olive Branch and submitted to the Interim Board on January 31, 2019.

policies. Three Shambhalians stepped up to help: Dan Peterson, Desung Care and Conduct Officer; Jane Arthur, Kalapa Councilor; and Ravenna Michalson, a member of the Sexual Harm Policy Task Force. Each person brought a dedication to the work along with specific knowledge and extensive experience. These individuals, along with consultants from An Olive Branch, comprised an informal working group to draft the new policy and grievance procedure.

The working group's goal was to base the new ethics policy and grievance procedure on best practices; make it clearer and easier to follow; and make it applicable to everyone in the organization -- including the Sakyong, the Sakyong Wangmo, all individuals in teaching or leadership roles, members, and visitors to Shambhala facilities and events.

From July 30 - September 19, 2018 this working group met 11 times and produced a proposed Shambhala Code of Ethics which was presented to the Kalapa Council at its final meeting on September 19, 2018. At that meeting, the Council approved the Code of Ethics and forwarded it to the incoming Interim Board for ratification. The working group recommended that the Interim Board provisionally approve the Code and put it into effect for one year. During this time, the Interim Board could solicit input and reactions from community members. At the end of the year, the Code could be revised to incorporate the feedback that the community had generated, and then it could be formally approved.

After the September 19 meeting the working group met two more times to discuss implementation concerns and to prepare for presenting the Code of Ethics to the Interim Board on October 30, 2018.

The Code of Ethics differs from the Care and Conduct policy in the following ways:

- It applies to everyone in Shambhala: all participants in Shambhala activities; the sangha, persons referred to as acharya, shastri, teacher, meditation instructor, guide, leader, center director, office holders within the Four Pillars, members of the Kalapa Court, Kalapa Envoys, and the Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo.
- It is more organized, clearer, and easier to understand.
- Implementation is more straightforward and specific.
- It reflects best practices.
- It has a process flow chart to guide those who want to bring forward a complaint as well as those tasked with handling complaints.
- Terminology was changed. For example, the term "reporter" is used for the person wishing to file a complaint or wishing to discuss their own or another's behavior as it relates to the Ethical Principles of Shambhala. The term "respondent" applies to the person who is the subject of the reporter's complaint.
- It recommends that Shambhala actively seek input on ways to strengthen the Code. Depending on when the Code goes into effect, a formal review is recommended one year from its inception.

To ensure that the new Code of Ethics addressed concerns from a wide variety of perspectives within Shambhala, the Code of Ethics working group invited many individuals to review it, including:

- The other members of the International Care and Conduct Panel
- Seven Acharyas
- A Gender Equality and Sexual Harm group in Europe
- The Gender Harm work group that created a draft Sexual Harm Policy
- The Sexual Harm Policy Task Force
- Two representatives from South America
- The Council of the Makkyi Rabjam
- Kalapa Court personnel
- Representatives of the Pillar of Government including the Office of Societal Health and Well-Being
- The Shambhala Office of Social Engagement [SOSE] which includes members of the People of Color Council, the White Awareness Council, and the SOSE Operations Board
- Six representatives from Europe
- Seven people with professional or personal experience with harm
- The Shambhala attorney
- The Sakyong and Sakyong Wangmo.

Although the Code of Ethics was sent to the individuals and groups listed above, not all provided feedback.

Project Element 2: Listening Post and Advocacy Service

In authorizing the Listening Post, the Kalapa Council recognized that an essential component of restoring organizational health to Shambhala would be the organization's stance regarding past allegations of sexual and other kinds of ethical misconduct by its leaders and teachers. They understood that trust in Shambhala's leaders had eroded within the sangha and many sangha members were concerned about whether they could bring complaints forward and receive a fair hearing the midst of the current allegations and turmoil.

As a consequence, an important component of the work the Kalapa Council requested from An Olive Branch was to provide past and present Shambhala members a safe and welcoming place to report harm resulting from sexual misconduct by the Sakyong, Shambhala office holders, and staff; they could also report other types of physical and emotional harm they might have experienced. Shambhala members who wished to report such harm were invited to contact listeningpost@an-olive-branch.org to arrange an interview or to submit a written report of harm or both. The Listening Post had a dual

purpose: 1) to provide a safe avenue for people to be heard and supported, and 2) to collect experiences of harm to be reported anonymously to the governing board.

The Listening Post was officially opened on September 4, 2018. However, unofficially and with Kalapa Council approval, An Olive Branch had already responded to some reports sent to support@an-olive-branch.org during July and August. We responded promptly because these reports appeared to be serious complaints from reporters who were suffering.

All incidents of harm were initiated voluntarily by persons previously or currently affiliated with Shambhala or surrogates speaking on behalf of Shambhala members or former members. An *incident* of harm refers to a discrete event or a relationship that continued on an ongoing basis for a finite duration of time. The information collected was not the result of a broad, systematic, or stratified sampling approach to survey Shambhala members.

The information gathered was analyzed using standard methods for analysis of qualitative data. Of the 62 people who contacted the Listening Post, 55 generated reports of harm. Twenty-eight of these submitted written reports of harm, 16 participated in an interview only, and 11 did both. Of the 55 total reports, 39 were self-reports and 16 were reported by bystanders--people who witnessed the incident or its aftermath or were directly told about it by the person who was harmed. About 60 percent of the reporters of harm were current Shambhala members with the remaining 40 percent having left the organization. The Information concerning a total of 67 incidents of harm was classified into seven categories: sexual, physical, emotional, child abuse, racial, abuse of power and bullying/scandal.

The reported incidents of harm spanned four decades and many pre-dated the enactment in 2002 of Shambhala's Care and Conduct Policy. Consequently, it proved difficult to obtain and report useful data about which incidents of harm were presented to Care and Conduct and the dispositions of those cases. Only a handful of reporters indicated with certainty that their case went to Care and Conduct, and most were unclear about either the process, the outcome, or both.

A detailed summary of the incidents of harm was submitted to Shambhala's Interim Board on January 31, 2019. The report included direct quotes from reporters of harm organized under a total of eight cross-cutting themes. These themes identified a number of different issues that reporters of harm believed were important to raise in their accounts of the incidents of harm. Some themes addressed the reporters' responses to the incident; others captured the reporters' perceptions of Shambhala's responses to the incident. Still other themes addressed aspects of Shambhala's culture and practices and recommendations that reporters offered to Shambhala's leadership for preventing harm in the future.

In addition to reports of harm, An Olive Branch received 124 email messages sent to support@an-olive-branch.org or directly to the Project Director. The content of these messages is discussed under the Project Management Element of this report. In the end, perceptions about the organization's lack of trustworthiness as well as the timing and content of the third Project Sunshine Report may have discouraged some reporters of harm from contacting the Listening Post. However, many of those who

did, said they were grateful for the opportunity to report their experience and hoped that their doing so would contribute to reforms within the community.

Although the Listening Post officially closed at midnight on December 31, 2018, follow-up communication with a few last minute reporters of harm spilled over into January of 2019. Reports of harm that were received after the deadline were not included in the Listening Post Report.

Project Element 7: Project Management

Description of the Project Management Element
The Project Management element consisted of overall organization of the project: monitoring and coordinating the work, communicating with the Shambhala project liaison and with the community, preparing three project updates for the Kalapa Council and the Interim Board, facilitating and documenting meetings, maintaining financial records, making recommendations based on experience and best practices, helping establish priorities, developing timelines, and answering questions.

Out-going Communication with the Community
Our out-going communication with the community consisted of four letters. Two of the letters introduced An Olive Branch; two introduced and explained the Listening Post.

To introduce An Olive Branch, we wrote a letter dated July 19, 2018. Shambhala's Communication Director, Ashley Dinges, sent it to the community mailing list on our behalf. This letter was re-sent on August 23 to reassure community members that An Olive Branch was working behind the scenes.

To introduce the Listening Post, we wrote to the community with letters dated September 3 and September 7, 2018.

In-coming Communication from the Community to An Olive Branch
We provided three email addresses in the communications described above. Community members could write directly to the Project Director, Dr. Katheryn Wiedman; directly to the Listening Post, Dr. Barbara Gray; or to a general email address, support@an-olive-branch.org.

By the end of December, 2018, 124 individuals had sent emails to the Project Director or the "support" address. Nine of these wrote more than one time -- with nine being the highest number of messages from one person. Some of the messages were lengthy (in excess of 1500 words). Topics included questions and/or opinions about: the ethics policy, leaders' accountability, abuse of power, culture of misconduct, mis-handling of finances, and the need for training on ethics, as well as several from members in immediate need of the Listening Post. Because there was such a wide variety of questions

and concerns, a one-size-fits-all reply was not adequate. We replied individually to all messages with the exception of two that did not warrant a reply.

Even after the Listening Post closed at the end of December, we continued to receive a few inquiries. Among the messages received in 2019 were a few individuals asking if they could still report their concerns to the Listening Post, eight individuals asked when the Listening Post Report would be made available, and one wrote to express appreciation.

Meetings

One day-long, face-to-face meeting in June 2018 between Kalapa Council and An Olive Branch representatives was held in Boulder, Colorado for the purpose of scoping the project. Over the course of the project, 14 video-conference meetings were held – three with the Kalapa Council representatives, eight with the Code of Ethics working group, and three with the Interim Board. Nearly all meetings ran 1.5 hours; many were longer. Project Management tasks related to most of the meetings included developing agendas, issuing the video-conference invitations, and facilitating and documenting the discussion.

Overall, project management was an essential component of this project not only to conduct the necessary communications between and after meetings, but also to respond to community inquiries, enable smooth functioning of meetings, and ensure that project deliverables were produced on time.

Project Elements Removed from the Scope of Work

Four of the seven project elements originally contracted for were not implemented because of the Interim Board's cost-reduction measures. These elements were: Board Training on Abuse of Power, Board Planning Process, Regional Update Meetings, and Reconciliation Support and Facilitation. Each is described briefly, below.

Board Training on Abuse of Power

The Kalapa Council had identified gaps in its knowledge regarding several social issues, one of which was abuse of power, especially sexual abuse, and its effects. An Olive Branch proposed conducting a video conference or face-to-face training session on the topic and also proposed facilitating related discussions.

Board Planning Process

Since early in 2018, the Kalapa Council and the Sexual Misconduct Policy Task Force had been thrust into a high pressure situation precipitated by the release of first Project Sunshine Report, social media postings, and revelations of long-standing sexual misconduct in the community. The Council had not been able to develop a coordinated plan of action and expressed a desire for a facilitated board planning

process. An Olive Branch proposed to facilitate a one-day, face-to-face planning retreat for the Kalapa Council.

Regional Update Meetings

In May 2018 An Olive Branch was contacted by Shambhala of Northern California requesting that we facilitate an educational session to address spiritual by-passing and abuse of power (financial, sexual, and racial). When we shared this request with the Kalapa Council, they recognized the need for face-to-face communication with community members and discussed having An Olive Branch collaborate on the design and facilitation of one-day, face-to-face regional meetings that would enable members to:

- Hear about the spiritual basis for the new ethics policy (connect the new policy to spiritual teachings)
- Learn and ask questions about the intent and conduct of the ethics policy including the grievance procedure
- Learn about Shambhala's history of misconduct
- Receive training on the misuse of power
- Learn about steps the Kalapa Council had taken to prevent further misconduct
- Process any events of regional concern such as complaints that led to the removal of an Office Holder or community member for ethical misconduct (e.g., raise additional concerns, share residual feelings, etc.)
- Explore options for reconciliation.

Reconciliation Support and Facilitation

An Olive Branch anticipated that reconciliation meetings would be an important step in restoring harmony and trust within the Shambhala community. As a neutral third party, we proposed to facilitate such reconciliation meetings as the need arose. The Kalapa Council agreed that reconciliation meetings between the Sakyong and individual reporters of harm and/or between the Sakyong and the community would be beneficial. Further, if former Kalapa Council members, acharyas, or others who knew of the abuse as it was happening but did not take effective action, reconciliation meetings would allow leaders to take responsibility and make amends. In fact, one such reconciliation meeting did occur over the telephone. Because it originated out of a report of harm, initial efforts by An Olive Branch to facilitate it were billed under the Listening Post budget.

Budget

An Olive Branch consultants began billable work on this project in early July, 2018. Below is a summary of the hours incurred as of January 31, 2019 compared to the hours estimated in the agreement.

Budget Analysis		
Element/Activity	**Estimated Hours**	**Actual Hours**
1 Ethics Policy & Grievance Procedure	28	92
2 Listening Post & Advocacy Service	152	171
3 Board Training: Abuse of Power	12	0
4 Board Planning Process	12	0
5 Regional Meetings	32	0
6 Reconciliation Support & Facilitation	16	0
7 Project Management - ~40 hrs./month	80	67
Total	332	330
	Total Fee	$57,750.00

Recommendations

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 21st 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. Additionally, a number of individuals who contacted the

> **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.

Closing

We at An Olive Branch are grateful to have had the opportunity to serve Shambhala International. Although we may be seen as the bearers of bad news, we recognize that of the ~14,000 Shambhala members worldwide, most have benefitted from the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and the Sakyong and have not, themselves, perpetrated abuse on their colleagues.

It is tragic that the damaging behaviors of Shambhala leaders permeated the entire organization. Due to their devotion and loyalty, many people seeking their spiritual path were drawn into leadership roles in a deeply flawed hierarchical system, which then then turned a blind eye to the significant harm being done to women and men in the organization.

We strongly urge the Interim Board to call out abuse of power in all its forms throughout Shambhala and root out the deeply embedded patriarchal norms that have facilitated harm. In its place, institute a culture of zero tolerance for abuse and re-commit to deep respect for each person's humanity. We sincerely hope that Shambhala will weather this crisis and survive in a new form to continue to bring the Dharma to people around the globe.