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

Rejoicing with gratitude.

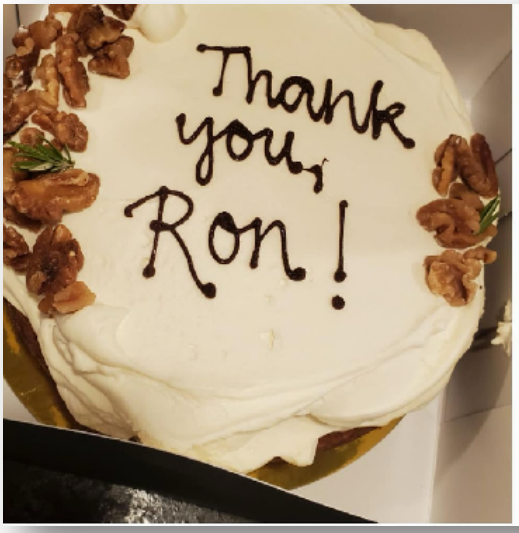
With our heads bowed and our hands folded, we wish to express our deep gratitude to all those who offered their time, energy, resources and practice to support the local home of the Khyentse Lineage - Sea to Sky Retreat Centre.



Family Camp 2024.

It's hard to give proper thanks to you but we'll try it here. We could have all the resources in the world at our fingertips, but it wouldn't mean a thing if we didn't have the love, friendship and dedication of those that lend a hand. The centre is supported entirely by you and your offerings, by which there is no shortage! May the merit generated through your body, speech and mind fill the world with the same compassion that you emanate.

This year was another busy one for us. Michiko was busy filling up the retreat calendar before 2024 even began! We got the ball rolling this year with the SI Canada Winter Board Retreat/Retirement Party for Ron Stewart.





After 31 years of service to Siddhartha's Intent Society Board of Directors, Ron stepped down and the torch was passed to Zach Ansley who has taken responsibility for Ron's portfolio of legal and immigration work and other inter-organizational affairs.

Zach has also been working hard this year leading the SSRC Facilities Working Group (FWG). Thank you, Zach, for stepping up to offer your leadership. The shoes of Ron are large to fill indeed but we confidently believe that SSRC is once again in skilful hands.

Once the snow had melted in April, SSRC hosted our Springtime FWG gathering and Jamyang Tenzin concluded the weekend with a Riwo Sangcho mountain smoke offering.



The FWG is a group of loyal and experienced past volunteers whose role is set the priorities and create a plan for how to improve and maintain the retreat centre with long term stability in mind. It's a difficult task living totally off-the-grid in forest. Ultimately, it means there is a lot of work! When things breakdown – we fix them ourselves. When we run into obstacles – creative thinking takes the lead. We all know SSRC is a bit rustic, we've got that a bumpy road, a healthy supply stock of duct tape and a sacred cupboard of spare parts. If you're looking for a 5-star luxury experience it is best to look elsewhere. We have no interest in creating that. We offer hard work, a practice of selflessness and a way of life that aspires to rest in balance with the environment and that supports the contemplative practice of our human brothers and sisters.

We accomplished a lot this year.

Thanks to our resident volunteers Mauro and Ben, as well as the investment in new heavy-duty grounds keeping equipment, we were able to get a head start on firewood preparations. The boys and the hard-working volunteers at our annual Work-as-Practice weekends produced more firewood this year than any previous year, according to Ron!



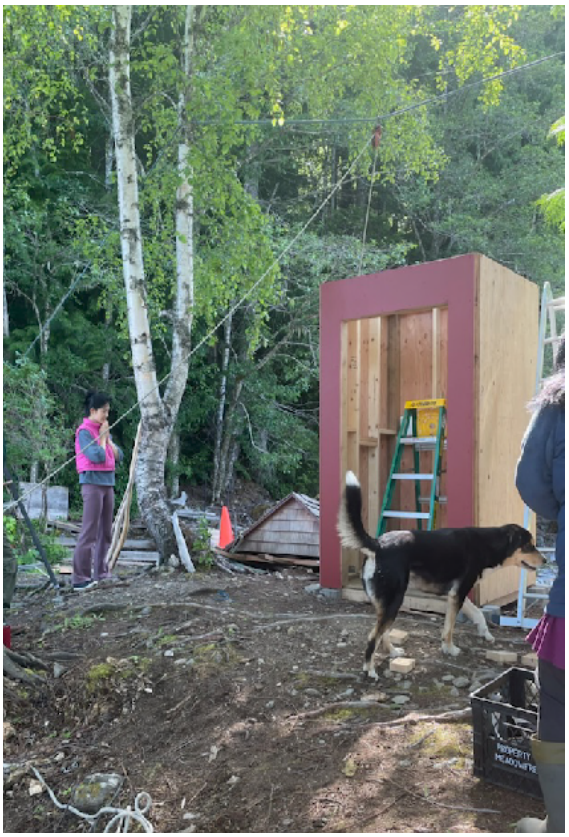


How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

I think we may have to start looking for a place to build an additional woodshed next year if we remain blessed with our current friends! Thank you, dear wood chucks!

Mauro, Ben and Ellen were also busy during the spring constructing a boat shed down at the lake.









The boat shed was constructed to house life preserves, an outboard motor and boating equipment to expedite marine evacuation in the event of wildfire. Our dear friend, Rosie, also made an offering of her bright red canon to help set up alternative evacuation methods.

SSRC is surrounded by a dense forest of mostly conifers. By nature, these trees are extremely flammable. The resident volunteer team believes it's more likely SSRC will be consumed by wildfire than fail to meet our charitable objectives. The Whistler Fire Chief has consistently reiterated that it's a "matter of when, not if" a wildfire sweeps through Whistler and the Sea to Sky Corridor. Under the instruction of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, with guidance from forestry professionals, we have been busy the past few years working on a forest thinning project. It's a big project! Maybe we're 30% done.. maybe less, hard to tell. The approach to this project can best be summed up in our Forest Management Plan. We love the trees, they are part of the wealth of SSRC, we don't want to cut down any of the large trees. Mostly we are removing the small cedar saplings and limbing the conifers as high as we can. Wish us luck.

This May Ben and Evan began participating in fortnightly firefighting training with our neighbours across the lake at the Garibaldi Volunteer Fire Department. GVFD has nicknamed SSRC Hall Two! Next year we plan to invite the fire department to host one of their weekend training sessions here at SSRC. May a strong friendship flourish.



We have lots of work ahead of us to fire smart SSRC!





To supplement our forest thinning project, the Facilities Working Group is also exploring a roof top sprinkler system. If you are interested, I encourage you to explore the story of Tassajara Zen Centre and their first-hand experience in combating wildfire and learn how rooftop sprinklers saved the centre.

We weren't just working in the forest this year; Michiko also knitted together a busy calendar of retreat programs.

During the first part of 2024 we supported several dark retreats of extended durations. Then group retreat season opened, and we welcomed back our dear Sufi friends, Cheryl Kapitza and her yoga students, the BC Insight Meditation Society, Matthias and his Kung Fu Students, Taoist Alchemy Teacher Nathan Brine and his students, the elegant Swami Muktibodhananda Saraswati and her students, as well as a Work-as-Practice weekend with our Facilities Working Group and friends.

The Facilities Working Group gathered to sweat it out while pouring concrete in 30 degrees+ heat down at the lake this July putting together a skookum foundation to house our Solar Panels. In 2023 we managed to wire up 12 Solar Panels down at the edge of Daisy Lake and connect them into our electrical room. We ran out of time last year to get them on solid footings, so it was important for us that we do it this year. Daisy Lake is part of a BC Hydro Dam where Squamish and North Vancouver source a lot of their power from. The lake level fluctuates, sometimes quiet dramatically to meet changing power demands and weather conditions. The panels were originally placed above Daisy Lake's high-water mark, but only just. We wanted to make sure they were elevated well above the high point on solid footings. Check out the "working girls" video on Facebook.







After reconnecting our solar panels together. We began setting up to host our second Family Camp weekend.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche has instructed us to make efforts to bring young people into the Dharma. Who better to show children the Dharma than the biggest child of all - **Bruce Almighty** – we love you, Bruce! Bruce, Madison, and Matthias created a beautiful weekend for kids and their parents, reinvigorating the centre with screams of joy.



We hope in 2025 we can offer two Family Camp weekends!



There was one more final push to get some facilities work done at the end of fall. We managed to install a volunteer bathroom in our staff annex and completed some remedial foundation repairs on of our buildings up on the hill.

The Facilities Working Group accomplished almost all the projects that were identified at the start of the year. The cherry on top came unexpectedly when out of the blue we encountered a septic engineer. He was able to perform all the necessary soil tests, design a new septic system, as well as file all the paperwork and supply us with a stamp of approval from Vancouver Costal Health so that we can begin work on an improved septic system. The retreat centres current septic system was not designed to accommodate the high numbers of visitors that currently pass through SSRC. In 2025 we plan to begin work on upgrading our septic system so that it can support the retreat centre for another generation!



After catching our breath from Family Camp, we hosted a Guided Ngondro Practice Intensive with Cydney Kawamura; welcomed back the BC insight meditation society, then hosted a Vancouver vipassana meditation group who returns year after year; then the TriRatna Buddhist Community arrived for a retreat program that they have conducted at SSRC annually for nearly 20 years; Bonnie Ross, a senior student of Namgyal Rinpoche, returned from the Wangapeka Retreat Centre in New Zealand to lead a retreat at SSRC for the local sangha; Nathan Brine brought his students back for a second time this year. The Autumn Work-as-Practice weekend was well attended and high energy! Bruce Ashton led an Introduction to Meditation weekend as the final program of the year.



The 2024 group retreat season was closed with a Gesar Puja conducted by DT Rinpoche.

In the lead-up to winter closure, the SSRC team hosted a number of individual retreats of extended durations for sadhana practitioners of various Tibetan Buddhist traditions

Of all the offerings that were made to the retreat centre this year, above all we wish to recognise and thank our cooks. You are all the heart of SSRC!



In addition to the cooks pictured above, Wuke, Fionn, and Jeeda, many wonderful cooks offered service this year to SSRC volunteers and retreatants. *Click here to see an album of those doing Kitchen Karma Yoga practice at SSRC.*

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