



MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2021
SPRING
QUARTERLY
REPORT

ABOUT US



Description of CEDAR

CEDAR (Community for the Experience and Development of Awakening and Responsibility) is an international network of communities working together to create a more trustworthy culture through monastic training and leadership development. At CEDAR, we are creating monastic academies—twenty-first-century educational institutions for the spiritual leaders needed for this time of crisis. MAPLE in Vermont was the first established community, and we have now expanded to include OAK in California and WILLOW in Canada.

History of MAPLE

MAPLE (Monastic Academy for the Preservation of Life on Earth) is a full-time residential mindfulness and leadership training program to develop awakened leaders. Founded in 2011 in Burlington, VT, MAPLE now runs a world-class meditation center on 125 acres in Lowell, VT. Our goal is to build an adjacent village where monastic practitioners and lay people will work together to live a lifestyle of integrity, compassion, and harmony with nature.

History of OAK

OAK (Organization for Awakening and Kindness) is a monastic academy located in the California Bay Area, founded in 2018. OAK works to address problems of existential risk, especially the threats posed by Artificial General Intelligence. OAK integrates spirituality, community, and AI safety research—both by making monastic training a place for AI Safety researchers to do their work and by offering spiritual practice to the existential risk community.

History of WILLOW

WILLOW is the newest monastic academy located near Toronto—the first international branch of CEDAR. It was founded in 2020 by Seishin Jasna Todorovic to bring modern monastic training to the many beautiful communities in Canada, particularly those in Toronto and Montreal.

Center for Mindful Learning (CML)

Center for Mindful Learning (CML) is the legal, non-profit name of our United States 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2011. CML has supported mindfulness projects such as Modern Mindfulness for Schools (ModMind), the Monastic Academy, and Mindful City Project.

JOIN US

If you are interested in our events please don't hesitate to reserve a spot. Due to uncertain times we will be issuing refunds if an event is cancelled.

You are always welcome to visit for a day, a week, a month, or longer.

Our address is: 751 Page Rd, Lowell, VT 05847

Email info@monasticacademy.org or call 802-540-0820.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Visit our website: monasticacademy.com

Facebook: facebook.com/monasticacademy

YouTube: youtube.com/c/CenterforMindfulLearning

Twitter: [@MonasticAcademy](https://twitter.com/MonasticAcademy)

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

When this report is published, I will be sitting in a ten-week, solitary cabin retreat. As new spring life emerges, I will be taking advantage of this opportunity to strive ever deeper into my awakening path. At the same time, the other two cabins will be occupied by Seishin, the teacher at WILLOW, and Zev Benjamin, a leader from OAK. A record six of us will have been in solitary long-term retreat in MAPLE's cabins from January to June in 2021.

This spring, all of the OAK and WILLOW residents will be training and residing at MAPLE. Under one roof, we will collaborate for the future of our enterprise. Only four years ago, we took the momentous step to purchase the MAPLE property in Lowell, VT. Now three branches of CEDAR are taking another big step together.

This February, we celebrated Soryu Forall's emergence from his two-month solitary retreat at MAPLE. His return is a tremendous boost to our urgency for becoming the awakened leaders the world needs.

This quarter also marked a few significant transitions for our residents. At MAPLE, we had five new residents join us this quarter (Bhaddha, Elliott, Joe, Sky, and Anna) and four residents who finished their training periods: Aaron, Tashin (Michael), Ninshin (Herschel) and Saddhasila (Ashley). There were many celebratory ceremonies to commemorate these occasions as we wished our departing residents well on the next leg of their journey.

The Circling Europe SAS Facilitator training was hosted by MAPLE for the first time. Nine of the participants were CEDAR residents and apprentices. This six-month program is a great investment in their relational and leadership skills and enables them to qualify to become certified Circling facilitators.

Here at CEDAR, we hold that systematic, global shifts are necessary. Seeing the shifts set in motion by climate change, adverse technological advances, and nuclear risk, we realize that the human mind is the root of most of the threats to life, not because of malice but because of ignorance. Awakened leaders, those who have resolved the question of life and death and who have broken through to truth and compassion, can help find the way to focus and sustain our lives through these shifts. These leaders will play a vital role in the transformation of societies, cultures, values, and economies.

For this sake, we struggle, we strive, and we dedicate ourselves to the flourishing of our lives, our communities, and for all life and all beings.

In friendship,

Peter Xūramitra Park
Executive Director



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OAK (CALIFORNIA)

OAK is in a time of transition. We have moved twice this quarter: first from our location in Berkeley to Healdsburg, in a short-term rental, then back to our original South San Francisco location. Thanks to the generosity of one of our donors, we have continued free access to this original location, for which we are very grateful. We will be locating OAK there for the time being while we reassess our vision and our core team.

OAK welcomed two teachers from MAPLE this quarter, Ryū Daniel Thorson and Tasshin Michael Fogleman. Ryū shared a number of teachings with OAK to help deepen its contemplative practice, as well as other dimensions of monastic life such as ethics and life in community. Tasshin initiated a daily practice period with standing meditation or zhan zhuang, which helps cultivate relaxation and energy in meditation and in life. The group found standing practice extremely beneficial and enjoyable.

In early January, OAK held a goodbye ceremony for resident PAN Peter Williams. PAN has been with CEDAR for nearly six years and has been a vital leader at OAK since 2019. We were sad to see PAN go but are excited to follow his journey as he continues living a life dedicated to spiritual practice and service.

OAK received several significant donations recently. One came in at the end of 2020, bringing the total to \$100,000. Another donor has pledged \$200,000 to be given in eight installments over two years. These gifts allow OAK to regroup, reform, and transform itself without fear of a shortage this year. They express a belief in OAK's purpose and a dedication to realizing its vision: uniting spiritual practice with existential threat research for the benefit of all beings.

For the months of March and April, OAK will be training at MAPLE in Vermont to do further work under Soryu and with the larger community. WILLOW will be at MAPLE in the same time period, creating a first-time meeting of all of CEDAR together in the same place. We expect that our vision and team will develop in new and important ways this year and are excited to see what unfolds.



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WILLOW (CANADA)



This has been an exciting time of growth and experimentation at WILLOW.

We started the year with a beautiful experimental retreat over New Years which combined Gendlin Focusing, values exploration, and yearly review plus intention-setting. The combination of these practices had a profound effect on all the participants and significantly shifted the relational dynamics of the group, giving us tools to look inward with more clarity as well as connect with each other with more compassion. Gendlin Focusing, in particular, has remained a regular part of the WILLOW curriculum since the retreat and has been a stimulating complement to our existing ecology of practices.

In light of COVID-19 lockdowns, we have not been able to take any short-term guests and as a result have focused on putting our offerings online. Seishin ran several online workshops this quarter and received wonderful feedback and support from the growing community.

In March, two residents completed their residency commitments and returned home, and Colin and Seishin headed down to MAPLE to do several months of intensive training under Soryu's guidance. Seishin is doing a ten-week solitary cabin retreat which began in mid-March, while Colin continues spearheading the WILLOW online community.

This upcoming summer, Ryūshin will be joining us at WILLOW to help run an exciting experimental three-month program. This program will integrate the many learnings the Monastic Academy has developed over the past nine years with some new practices and frameworks in order to create a wisdom education appropriate for the modern world. If successful, this program will become the basis of the Phoenix curriculum at MAPLE. The prospect of seeing it unfold sends a thrill through each one of us.

Our hope is to find five excellent participants for this summer program—Canadians who are enthusiastic about the development of modern monastic institutions and who may be inspired to stay as residents for a year or more to help build WILLOW into a twenty-first-century wisdom institution that can serve the planet in valuable and lasting ways.



FINANCIALS

This quarter MAPLE had an income of \$118,801 with expenses of \$62,146. OAK received \$50,329 with expenses of \$32,382. CEDAR had expenses of \$23,271. MAPLE continues to minimize costs by reducing our most significant expenses. These include the property interest payments (\$7,696) along with car payments and government COVID-19 relief loan payments (\$5,556) for a total of \$13,252 this quarter. We are taking advantage of low interest rates, with the two car loan rates at 0.9% and 1.9% and the government loan at 2.75%.

Vermont is looking to open for business as usual on July 4, and MAPLE is still projecting \$139,000 in guest income for 2021. We continue to work around current COVID-19 restrictions by expanding online programming, our coworking programs, and community calling.

Last December, a donor funded the umbrella organization of CEDAR with a gift of \$100,000 to pay employee salaries, to fund educational training, and to incubate projects for 2021. Soryu Forall as the Head Teacher and Xūramitra Peter Park as CEDAR Director will be receiving their salaries from CEDAR, reducing MAPLE's expenses.

Despite significant hardships, we are benefiting from making full use of government assistance. We successfully applied for the government's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Second Draw loan of \$14,333 which may be forgiven later in the year. This PPP will help pay our payroll, as well as our utilities.

In spring 2017, our Lowell property was purchased with \$1,135,000 in gifts and loans from family and friends at an annual 6% interest. We are here today only because that handful of friends believed in our mission and our potential to succeed. Today, that mortgage stands at \$683,079, after significant amounts of loan forgiveness and repayments over the past four years. Three lenders have generously fully forgiven their loans to us. Two remaining lenders have opted to change their interest rate to zero percent.

As CEDAR continues to grow, we are dedicated to finding new ways to raise capital and cut our expenses. Your support and participation play a vital role in our continuing to thrive.

CEDAR 1ST QUARTER 2021

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$26,725	\$128,832	\$0	\$169,064

*This includes more income than the three types listed

AUDITED CEDAR 2020 YEAR-END

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$113,583	\$777,315	\$94,200	\$1,097,733

*This includes more income than the three types listed

Figures listed here do not include WILLOW, our Canadian location, which is currently a separate legal entity from our American non-profit organization.



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FUNDRAISING



Every gift matters. In 2020, our guest income plummeted due to the COVID-19 situation. We were fortunate to receive government assistance, as well as unexpected donations from many community members. These gifts came from both new and previous donors.

Thanks to each one of these contributions, we are able to continue offering this precious teaching and community to the world. Nevertheless, as we go into 2021, we cannot assume that these individuals will give the same amounts again. In this pandemic, every gift matters.

As the Buddha said, friendship is the entirety of the path. Each gift is a connection to our community, to the residents, and to the mission towards ending human greed. For the past year, we've reached out to our donors, global community members, and former students to offer pastoral care and personal connection. In these potentially isolating times, the value of simple connection is priceless. We've continued this endeavor into 2021, reaching out to over 173 contacts via phone calls, emails, text messages, and other means. Many of these contacts haven't physically been at MAPLE in some years but were delighted to receive a call and share their lives with us. We look forward to finding even more ways to reach out and be a friend.

We are also very grateful for our community friends such as Will Peery, Andrew Sepic, and Rodney van Zyl. These wonderful human beings have given significant amounts of their time and expertise over the past years. Will has been involved in creating our outdoor laundry line, repairing our tractor, re-grading our gravel road, and offering his technical advice. Andrew has been involved in repairing our cabins and upgrading our interview room. Rodney, with the help of his father, did extensive work on our lands.

We are also greatly appreciative to the Open Dharma Foundation. They have extended scholarships to several of our residents, enabling them to train with us. This unique foundation is a blessing for practitioners of limited wealth. Thanks to the Open Dharma Foundation, many young people called to monastic training have been able to leave behind lives of acquisition and accumulation to dedicate themselves to growth and service.

This past March, we had the great good fortune of receiving a substantial crypto donation from Sandy Wu, a former retreat guest and Stripe engineer (2014-2020).



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MAPLE AT HOME (MAPLE ANYWHERE)

Since our inception, we have aspired to stay connected with our community members and alumni beyond their residential stays at MAPLE. This year, we have built the skills, demand, and vision to provide remote offerings to people living anywhere in the world. We are also creating new low-cost and free programs for our burgeoning online community:

MAPLE Anywhere Courses & Community

We opened our MAPLE Fundamentals course—a five-week, cohort-based program to train a small group in the core principles and practices of MAPLE, including traditional meditation, Bio-Emotive Framework emotional processing, interpersonal meditation (Circling), and more. We have iterated through two rounds thus far. We are aiming to expand this offering.

We are also developing an ever-present online community where our extended network can connect from anywhere in the world. We're creating a hub of passionate and caring individuals who share a joy for practice and serving the world. Through this network, we can facilitate connection and provide ongoing support and training.

Weekly Free Bite-Sized Stories and Talks

Due to COVID-19, we paused our weekly Sunday Sit. These two-hour community events have been a part of our DNA for years. Many of you have continued listening in remotely via the uploaded Sunday Sit talks and guided meditations on YouTube and SoundCloud. Since the pause, we have been curating talks from the archives of our past retreats to continue posting weekly talks and meditations. Recently, our resident Kyōshin has been uploading more selective, standalone clips that are more accessible and stimulating. Recent ones include:

- What Pie Can Teach Us About Spirituality
- We Live the Stories We Tell
- Three Stories From the Buddha's Path

We hope you gain great benefit from our online presence. Please feel free to reach out to us if there are particular topics, practices, or workshops that interest you.



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MAPLE VILLAGE & LAND



Ten years ago we envisioned creating a residential training center where dedicated practitioners could train to become trustworthy leaders. Today our center in Lowell is thriving with seventeen full-time residents, six short-term apprentices, and monthly public programming.

A vibrant monastic village is the next evolutionary step. We envision the Village at MAPLE as the epicenter of a cultural shift. The Village will be a place where families can raise their children, as they freely roam the land and zendos, all while living under the care of the monastics and other villagers. They will be encouraged to be deeply curious about and joyful of life. This is what changes the world.

In addition, the Village will also be a place where elders can live out the final years of their lives surrounded by the beauty of nature and a loving community. Elders will be honored and respected as they guide people with their hard-earned wisdom. Four of our dearest friends have told us that of all the places in the world, this is where they want to die. It's hard to imagine a greater compliment.

Working with Rich and Renee Dee, we are creating the MAPLE Village. This summer, we will be laying out the infrastructure—such as roads, septic, and more. We also need a second leach field to support additional houses and residents.

We are excited about the continuing work of befriending and caring for our land. Last year, we began installing \$30,000 worth of solar panels using a private donation and a \$25,000 grant from the Solar Moonshot Program. We aspire to install an additional \$100,000 worth of solar panels and batteries to make us fully off-grid resilient. We began our MAPLE garden and started harvesting firewood from our woods. We also received a \$5,000 grant from a generous donor to support MAPLE's sustainability projects.

We are committed to changing the way our society functions, and to changing the history of the world, a transformation that most effectively occurs through community, cooperation, and connection. This has been MAPLE's focus since its inception. Through living together—working, eating, cleaning, training—we are exploring how we can best make that change. It is both gratifying and inspiring to see our expanding CEDAR network and our developing Village invigorate that exploration.

LEADERSHIP EMERGES: PROFILE ON COLIN BESTED



INTERVIEW WITH COLIN:

Why did you join the CEDAR Mindfulness and Leadership training residency?

The world is burning with misery and catastrophic risks. For the last three years I've made life choices with Effective Altruism in mind. I felt increasingly drained, not able to grow, and disconnected from others despite my friendships, family, and role as a community builder. I decided to work on myself: training to become a more trustworthy friend and leader and growing my ability to hold complexity with care.

How have you benefited from your time here?

Coming to WILLOW and MAPLE helped me make sense of my life. After a few weeks at WILLOW, I felt less alone, more able to love myself, more energized, and more able to see gaps between my aspirations and behavior. Recurringly, I have the sense that my training here is hard, beautiful, and the best option for long-term impact.

What has been your biggest challenge?

When I held the role of Head Monk, I had the sense that I was constantly failing to catch important details, making mistake after mistake in a short period of time. The feedback I got showed me how much I wasn't seeing. That was painful and intense. In holding high standards and facing failure, I risk losing motivation to practice fully.

What are your goals? What are you looking forward to as you continue to train here?

I'm committing to becoming a teacher, a friend who is not a hypocrite, one who can show up for others in a way that enables them to find clarity, freedom, and choice woven in with a deeply rooted love for all life. I have an immense amount of training to do. I aim to maintain a sense of play and joyous energy in facing this path. I will not stop as long as there is misery in the world.

Colin grew up in the suburbs of Toronto, born to two loving parents. As a teenager, he was drawn to Nirvana, the band and grunge lifestyle. A Google search for 'Nirvana' one day led him to zenguide.com and to Buddhist stories, concepts, and practices.

In university, he sat in on more than two extra degrees worth of lectures. He attended and led campus groups which enabled him to become friends with people who held different worldviews. After university and a year of feeling lost, he found Effective Altruism and was grant-funded to build the Effective Altruism Toronto community for three years.

In February 2020, he attended a Think Better retreat with CEDAR community members Seishin and Brooks. He learned about plans for WILLOW while finding space to question who he was. He listened to a talk by Soryu Forall on trustworthy leaders and organizations, Rinzai Zen temples, and not-for-profit organizations. He came to WILLOW months before it opened publicly and made a commitment to become WILLOW's first resident.



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MOVING FORWARD



As spring arrives, we look forward to the flourishing of many enterprises. Our cabin retreatants Xūramitra Peter Park, Seishin Jasna Todorovic, and Zev Benjamin will be coming out in May.

As COVID-19 abates with mass vaccination, we will be piloting a coworking Residential Membership program for those interested in living with authentic, kind, and supportive practitioners while taking their meditation practice to the next level. Residential Members live at MAPLE and engage in monastic training while supporting our mission financially. This is ideal for those who work remotely, are between jobs, or have financial resources that do not require them to work.

Every year, Darren Silver, our Vision Quest guide, has come to lead a Vision Quest in our beautiful Vermont woods. This year, he will be leading two Vision Quests at MAPLE in August and September and is planning to create space for more participants and extend the length of the journey. The Vision Quest is a beautiful and sacred tradition to reconnect with nature and spirits.

Famed writer Ernest Becker wrote in his 1974 Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Denial of Death*, “We called one’s lifestyle a vital lie, and now we can understand better why we said it was vital: it is a necessary and basic dishonesty about oneself and one’s whole situation.... We don’t want to admit that we are fundamentally dishonest about reality, that we do not really control our own lives.”

At CEDAR, we do the classic spiritual work of realizing freedom from our ignorance, our suffering, our vital lies. We recognize, as Becker did, that evil in the world stems from this human drive to deny the truth of reality in order to seemingly function in the human world. As monastics, we choose to decouple our addiction to the world to confront our vital lies. We miraculously discover that truth and compassion are real, not mere cultural or mental constructs. With this awakened compassion based on truth, we are transforming ourselves, transforming our communities, and shifting the world.

For the sake of all future generations, we pledge ourselves to do whatever is most essential each day, to the maximum extent of our efforts.

SPRING SCHEDULE

April 16 - 23 2021

Awakening Silent Meditation Retreat with Soryu Forall

May 14 - 24 2021

Ten-Day Awakening Silent Meditation Retreat with Soryu Forall

June 25 - July 2 2021

Awakening Silent Meditation Retreat

July 23 - 28 2021

Circling and Emotions Retreat

August 21 - 29 2021

Vision Quest with Darren Silver: August

September 10 - 19 2021

Vision Quest with Darren Silver: September

All events subject to change or cancellation based on developing news.

YouTube: youtube.com/c/CenterforMindfulLearning

Facebook: facebook.com/monasticacademy

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