



# MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

## CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE  
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2021  
**WINTER**  
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 monastic training center on 125 acres in Lowell, VT. We are also building an adjacent village to scale trustworthy culture and values to impact the globe.

## History of Oak

Oak is a monastic academy founded in 2018 that provides monastic training, trustworthy friendship, and spiritual guidance to those addressing society's greatest challenges in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## History of Willow

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

## Center for Mindful Learning

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

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802-540-0820

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[www.monasticacademy.org](http://www.monasticacademy.org)  
[www.facebook.com/monasticacademy](https://www.facebook.com/monasticacademy)  
[www.youtube.com/c/CenterforMindfulLearning](https://www.youtube.com/c/CenterforMindfulLearning)  
[www.twitter.com/MonasticAcademy](https://www.twitter.com/MonasticAcademy)

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Every time a community member applies for the apprenticeship program, I feel deeply touched. Something about MAPLE draws them to give up everything to spend time training here. Over time, each one has come to know and understand MAPLE's special experiment to not only purify the human mind of greed, hatred, and ignorance but also to thereby craft powerful systems of the world towards peace and love.

As far as I can tell, what we are doing here is very special. There is no guarantee of success. We take on the world's challenges as opportunities and risks to do what has never been done. We utilize existential risk as a driver for our Awakening and we channel our Awakening in service towards preventing destruction of life on Earth.

This training is not for everyone. It is likely not suited in fact for most people. This is a tricky line. In fact, some of the most humble and self-doubtful are likely the best suited to be here. The most self-assured are often not. This inquiry can be an arduous yet necessary one for each person.

In this past quarter, we have made many, many strides. We welcomed our newest residents Ellen and Bonisiwe. We now have equal numbers of female residents and male residents. Ryūshin Daniel Thorson, Seishin Jasna Todorovic, and Virabhadra successfully ran a new experimental three month intensive around harmonization (see Willow section for more). Three cabin retreatants, Hōshin, Khema, and Ryūshin entered solitary cabin retreat to do this deep practice, to free their minds of its defilements. To learn how to squarely face death itself. And by accepting death, to accept life.

We performed an off-grid weekend experiment led by our residents, Alf and Khema. We talked about our relationship to collapse and existential risks. I reflected that regardless of societal collapse, even the optimistic futures of techno-utopia seem to only lead to more insidious forms of suffering. As we continue to get lost in these imaginary and even fantasy lands, we become increasingly disconnected from each other, our own bodies, our land, and our own lives. We seem to be running towards a future of the Matrix, of algorithms, caring for us so that we may remain fragile, perpetual children. The struggle for freedom we undertake is to become free of our own thoughts and feelings, our own comfort and preferences, to realize what is trustworthy.

The community at MAPLE is attracted to facing these realities and doing what must be done in service to all beings. It is hard. It is messy. We practice to gracefully walk in harmony with what is good and what is true. And an even more incredible task to scale that grace to the world.

In friendship,

Peter Xūramitra Park  
Executive Director



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2021  
WINTER  
QUARTERLY  
REPORT

## WILLOW (CANADA)



On November 11th, Willow completed its three-month intensive program, intended to test a new way of teaching CEDAR's practices using the harmonization model developed by Ryushin. In this training, participants learned to harmonize—and see the relationships between—five core aspects of experience: the energetic system, the psyche, relationships, ethics, and insight into emptiness.

The participants completed the program with immense gratitude and joy, and we are continuing a “bridge” program of weekly calls to help with reintegration. The results of this intensive serve as an exciting stepping stone for further development of CEDAR's Phoenix (“rest and heal”) curriculum.

Following the end of the intensive, Seishin went to Winnipeg to spend a month working with Dr. Doug Tataryn on his Bio-Emotive Framework and is delighted to continue exploring the relationship between emotional healing and spiritual growth at Willow going forward.

In December, Willow was approved for its first grant, given by the Viriditas Foundation to continue the development of bridge programs for people leaving intensive training.





## FINANCIALS



In challenging economic times, MAPLE continues to be resilient. The generosity of individual donors has helped minimize cash flow pressures of investing in large infrastructure projects, but is not our preferred strategy to meet operational budget needs. Guest offerings and fundraising strategies will be needed to supplement our funding going forward.

MAPLE's total income for the year was \$553,335 with operating expenses of \$287,651.

Besides operating expenses, MAPLE also had additional significant asset purchases (capital expenditures) of \$234,003 for the year. These investments were driven largely by construction costs for our second zendo (\$126,959) and Village infrastructure (\$62,199). These outflows are not included in our annual expenses due to accounting depreciation methods. MAPLE's 2021 operating expenses and capital expenses together totaled \$521,654.

Regarding liabilities, MAPLE paid down our principal balance on our Lowell mortgage from \$683,079 to \$280,000 (at 6% annual interest). \$5,000 was graciously forgiven. Additionally, we have \$489,221 in debt (at 2.75% annual interest) via our SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) with monthly payments of \$3,500.

Regarding our other branches and organizations, in 2021 OAK had total income of \$73,025 and expenses of \$29,692.57. Our multi-center governing body of CEDAR had total contributions of \$329,188 (led by donations from two long-time supporters) and expenses of \$92,714. A large portion of these funds (\$250,000) are earmarked for operational expenses and special impact projects for the next year.

As we continue to invest in the future, we do face short term operational pressures. Continued support from our community will be critical in managing this tension to give rise to the flourishing of our programs and centers.

### CML 4TH QUARTER 2021

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$37,028	\$434,066	\$5,000	\$477,229

\*This includes more income than the three types listed.

### CML 2021 YEAR-TO-DATE

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$179,288	\$723,310	\$5,000	\$957,477

\*This includes more income than the three types listed.

*Figures listed do not include Willow, our Canadian location, which is a separate legal entity. Note: The above financial tables reflect the combined financials of CEDAR, MAPLE, and Oak.*



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FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2021

WINTER

QUARTERLY  
REPORT



## MAPLE UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

We're looking forward to the range of programming that we'll be offering in 2022.

In January, Soryu will lead a weeklong Awakening Retreat, before he goes into his annual retreat for the months of February and March. During that time, our week-long retreats will be focusing on complementary practices. In February, Darren Silver, who also leads the Vision Quest here, will be running an embodiment intensive with his partner Dayna Seraye. In March, we'll be having our second ever Circling and Emotions retreat. Then, following Soryu's return, we will be having our annual 14-day silent meditation retreat.

We have come a long way since Mitra initiated the practice of Circling at MAPLE in 2015. We'll be collaborating with Circling Europe for the second year and CircleAnywhere for the first time to host each of their circling leadership training intensives. Circling Europe's SAS Facilitator Training program and CircleAnywhere's Level Up Immersion programs are excellent opportunities for those interested in deepening their relational capacities and leadership skills.

For those who can't make it to Vermont, in January we'll also be running our fifth cohort of MAPLE Fundamentals online, which will train participants in our ecology of practices, including meditation, emotional healing, and peer coaching.

If you're interested in attending any of these events, or want to keep abreast of additional offerings, you can visit the upcoming events section of our website, which will also include details on upcoming online events, such as workshops on our ecology of practices and Dharma discussions.

And as always, guest stays and residential memberships are a great way to join us for our Responsibility Weeks, where we practice bringing the wisdom and love we've cultivated through our awakening training into our relationships and into the world.



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FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2021

WINTER

QUARTERLY  
REPORT

## MAPLE VILLAGE AND LAND

Through sunshine, rain, and autumn frost, we concluded a remarkably efficient construction season.

As part of the Village, we conducted ceremonies around prescribed fire burns for all the trees we cleared. Three burn ceremonies were held, each blaze more dramatic than the last. From there arose the first Village road, the Dees' home was erected, and underground electric and septic lines were installed.

The driveway and foundation for Keshin and Konshin Dee's home are complete. The initial home structure is now up and complete with only the interior and septic to be completed. It is an honor to work with Unity Homes in their unique homes offering minimizing environmental impact and net zero energy.

For many reasons, the construction industry has been stretched thin this year. After weeks of trying unsuccessfully to schedule, in a mysterious turn of events the water well for the Village was drilled with 48 hours notice. It yields a shockingly abundant 60 gallons per minute!

One of the highlights of the season was the sense of trust, collaborative effort, and willingness to go the extra mile put forth by our team of local contractors. They included representatives from Grimes Excavation, Vermont Electric Co-Op, Manosh Wells, Horizons Engineering, Daniel Prior (the Dees' builder), our longtime community members Will Peery and Tony Basiliere, and many others.

We learned to build gravel foundations with a skid steer and compactor. Upon two new foundations, we have placed two primitive solo retreatant cabins. We will complete one more and a garden shed come spring. Our second Zendo is nearly complete, offering a dedicated mediation space for our growing community.

As the physical Village blossoms with the wind at our backs, gusting our sails, we have also been drafting the Village lease from scratch for collaboration with our legal team. Soryu has said that legal documents are like cast spells. They are precise words from which precise events and ways of being unfold. The intention to create a new paradigm for living built on trust, awakened collective consciousness, and accountability to personal development for the benefit of all beings is woven into the written word as a catalyst for the shifts to come.



## LEADERSHIP EMERGES: PROFILE ON ELLEN MCSWEENEY



### INTERVIEW WITH ELLEN:

#### *Why did you join the MAPLE Mindfulness and Leadership training residency?*

I joined because of my deep sense that what is happening here is beautiful, powerful, and unlike anything else I could participate in. I have been practicing the Dharma for nine years, and after working with Soryu for just two months, my practice and life was transformed. I have also found that the experience of living in spiritual community has catalyzed huge personal growth and development for me. Finally, I joined because I want to support MAPLE's flourishing as a beacon of clarity and a model of a better way of living. Our practice and our example can provide critical support to those struggling with the suffering, confusion, and meaninglessness that pervade our culture.

#### *How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?*

Thanks to the clarity of Soryu's teaching, I am starting to more fully understand the relationship between profound meditative states and ethical ways of living. This connection changes everything about how I approach practice. Also, I feel greater contentment because I am contributing to something that I believe in. When I close my eyes and imagine dozens of wisdom institutions like ours, flourishing across the country and the world, I am inspired to press on. Working towards creating a positive legacy, and becoming Good Ancestors, is a humbling and joyful process.

#### *What has been your biggest challenge?*

Through the deepening of my practice here, I have finally confronted the underlying sense of loneliness or incompleteness that I have felt throughout my life. It has been painful to see and acknowledge the way I sometimes use interpersonal relationships to avoid this fundamental pain. This process has tested many of my fundamental assumptions about myself, others, and the nature of love. However, I can see that this path is leading me toward greater freedom. As always, the greatest challenges are the ones that contain the most potential for liberation.

#### *What are your goals? What are you looking forward to as you continue as a Villager?*

I'm looking forward to venturing into new meditative territory under Soryu's guidance, and to keep discovering how this practice fundamentally changes the way I see and act. I'm also excited to keep developing as a leader and teacher. I want to let go of everything that holds me back from fully offering my gifts to this community and the world.

Ellen came to the Monastic Academy in hopes of radically transforming her mind, heart, and ability to lead. After years spent confronting the climate and ecological crisis, she felt called to offer herself to a community whose aspirations match the urgency of this moment. Ellen also has a lifelong connection to the land of the Northeast Kingdom, as her parents built an off-grid cabin here by hand in 1987.

Ellen was brought to meditation practice by her mother's illness and death in 2012. She has been studying and practicing the Dharma, primarily in the Insight tradition, ever since. She was a professional musician for ten years, and is also a licensed psychotherapist (LICSW) with a specialty in trauma and grief. As she trains at the Monastic Academy, she is in perpetual gratitude to her wife Susan, who supports her journey from their shared home in Washington, D.C.



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QUARTERLY  
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## MOVING FORWARD



As we begin 2022, the Monastic Academy is at a special point. Our apprenticeship cohorts are strong. We number 18 residents and five apprentices at MAPLE. We've begun offering Online programs last year with more planned. Our MAPLE Village is real with a home on site and more planned soon. Our zendo is consistently full.

As we venture into 2022, uncertainty and confusion continue to grow. COVID-19 has reached record high cases without any signs of going away. Record high temperatures due to global warming continue without adequate responses by world governments. At MAPLE, we look to become leaders that can respond to these risks with wisdom and compassion. We are at a critical point in our growing pains. The question shifts to how do we better train leaders? Teachers? How do we change systems on the global scale to bend the world towards wisdom and compassion rather than ignorance and hatred? What got us here will not be good enough to take us where we need to go.

Soryu is going into his own retreat in February and March. We are grateful to Soryu for his relentless service and honored to support him while he is away to demonstrate the essence of deep practice. Likewise, it is a wonderful growing opportunity for our young leaders to step into roles of teaching and power. During this winter period, we will be focusing internal coherence and establishing the documentation and systems to make our central MAPLE node strong.

Here at the Monastic Academy, we are attempting to make the modern context the ground of practice. Rather than trying to recreate cultural and historic foreign conditions, we undertake these spiritual and mystical practices within the context we are actually in. Existential risk. Religion of secular humanism. Global warming. Artificial intelligence. Mass species extinction. In facing these horrors, we are willing to do the real journey ourselves first. A very difficult exploration and training that only makes sense in the context of a true aspiration for awakening and a real perception of the suffering and risks in the world. We aim to be a model to our communities and the world that this is the way to live and die with compassion, courage, and wisdom.

Finally, after five years of quarterly reports, we are shifting gears. In the future, we plan to include more photos, personal stories, and more. Please feel free to email us at [info@monasticacademy.org](mailto:info@monasticacademy.org) with whether you find these reports beneficial, what you like about them, and what more you would like to see?

# FUTURE EVENTS

**January 14 - 21 2022**

Awakening Week with Soryu Forall

**February 17 - 20 2022**

Embody Your Medicine with Darren Silver and Dayna Seraye

**March 11 - 18 2022**

Circling & Emotions Retreat

**April 13 - 27 2022**

Awakening Two-Weeks with Soryu Forall

**February - October 2022**

8-Month LevelUp Immersion with CircleAnywhere

**March - September 2022**

6-Month SAS Intensive with Circling Europe

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

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## JOIN US

If you are interested in our events please don't hesitate to reserve a spot.

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

Email [info@monasticacademy.org](mailto:info@monasticacademy.org) or call 802-540-0820.

**Our address is:**

**751 Page Rd**

**Lowell, VT 05847**

Together we are building a trustworthy culture.

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