

## **Summing up**

The President's summary of  
the Planning Meeting and Sakyong's Council meeting  
13-18 November 2008

### **Binding the Mandala**

For the past five years or more, there has been a process of endeavouring to bind the mandala together and make it more cohesive. This process has involved many aspects such as emphasizing community building through Mahayana practice and clarifying the unique and rich path our mandala offers from open house programs through to the Vajrayana practices that lead to the Scorpion Seal retreat.

This process of binding the mandala together has also included the holding of the Shambhala Congresses, the introduction of a new governing structure (with the Sakyong's Council and Mandala Council arranged around the Kalapa Court at the centre of the mandala) and the work done by the governing bodies on community issues (including accessibility, diversity, children and families, care and conduct and so on).

The binding process is still very much a work-in-progress. Efforts are continuing to create a mandala where individuals and groups feel that they belong and are a valued part of a globally interconnected mandala.

### **Coherent Planning**

As part of developing a greater sense of functioning as a cohesive mandala, a number of efforts have been made to get a comprehensive sense of all the major projects and capital investments that are planned or already underway throughout the mandala. These efforts began at the Second Shambhala Congress and continued with discussions in the Mandala Council (on which every Shambhala Centre has a seat). The Mandala Council referred to this effort as the "Build Shambhala Campaign".

In December 2006, the Sakyong convened a leadership gathering in Boulder at which he stressed the need for cohesiveness and coherence in projects throughout the mandala. Greater cohesive would balance the mandala's powerful expanding energy with a strong centre capable of sustaining and supporting such growth. Greater coherence would create a clearer path of practice and a collaborative approach to planning mandala-wide. He asked the Sakyong's Council to take the lead in developing a unified and organized approach to developing and implementing projects in Shambhala. As a result, a three-day Planning Meeting was convened in November 2007 in Halifax. Information was provided (either in advance of the meeting or by participants at the meeting itself) on some 32 projects, plans and programs throughout the mandala envisaged for the next five years. Whereas the total aspirations collected in 2006 had totalled some \$30 million, the projections presented at the November meeting nearly doubled that figure.

### **Three Perceptions**

During the Planning Meeting, there was a spontaneous discussion about who we are as Shambhala. This decisive discussion explored three different ways of understanding who and what we are. It explored the theme of: “Three Models, Three Visions, Three Structures, Three Energetics”.

This arose from an idea initially discussed in the meeting, then taken forward that evening by the Warrior General Marty Janowitz and Ms. Gina Stick to a Council of Warriors meeting, then brought back to the Planning Meeting.

Seen from one dimension, Shambhala can be understood as an association seeking to harmonize lateral relations among all its individual, but connected entities. Viewed from a second dimension, Shambhala can be understood as a mandala, an interactive community of interdependent relationships infused with the simultaneously manifesting energy of the lineage. From the point of view of a third dimension, Shambhala can be understood as a kingdom, displaying the energy of a multi-dimensional enlightened society or culture in which the sacred and the secular are co-emergent. These views are consistent with each other, build on each other and are consonant with the path of practice given to us by our lineage.

After contemplating these three perceptions, there was a shift of energy in the meeting which laid the ground for a meeting of minds with the lineage holder, the Sakyong, who arrived to address the gathering.

What was already noticeable was that, despite the scale of the mandala’s aspirations, there was a spirit of rising to the occasion, of contemplating how all this could be achieved through mandala-wide collaboration and in a spirit of more enhanced and visible manifesting of Shambhala on earth. This spirit was one of the most notable qualities of the meeting: there had been concerns that our history of fragmented development, internal competition for resources and a history of organizational mistrust might seriously inhibit the ability to work together on mandala-wide development requiring very significant financing.

The Planning Meeting devoted time to discussing a draft set of Principles for Sustainable Development. These principles would apply to the centre of the mandala, to the practice centres and to local Shambhala Centres. The most detailed discussions focused on the principles that would govern the centre of the mandala. This would result in a prudent financial model for supporting the Sakyong and his family, the core services, international programs and events, and the development of the Kalapas: Kalapa Valley, Kalapa Court, the Kalapa Centre (Halifax) and the Kalapa Centre (Europe). The principles covered revenue planning, the required balance between revenue and expenditure, the importance of not entering into long-term operating debt, the appropriate

use of credit line and other forms of short-term borrowing, appropriate financing of major programs so as not to incur losses, and the importance of developing contingency cash reserves as well as longer-term reserves to provide operational stability.

The meeting was also presented with a set of financial principles for the future sustainability of the Practice Centres. These have already been under discussion with the Treasurer of Shambhala and the leadership of the major practice centres and are now being implemented. These include the need for Practice Centres to: establish a target for their key operating ratio of net operating revenue to operating expense; include in annual budgets the maintenance expenses sufficient to maintain the physical facility in good condition; use lines of credit and other forms of short-term debt only to manage cash flow, and not become “permanent” operating debt; ensure that payments on long-term debt do not exceed what centres can service with their defined key operating ratio, and with a minimum revenue plan. It was understood that centres may need several years to get to full compliance with the principles, but that their plans would be developed with a goal to reach full compliance as soon as practicable.

### **Meeting the Lineage**

The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, spoke of the timeliness of this gathering and the importance of taking Shambhala to the next level of its manifestation. This was going to be the way in which the power of the Rigden and the Shambhala lineage benefited beings and had an even more tangible impact in the world. He said that what was necessary for this to happen was for Shambhala as a whole to be clear about “who we are and what we offer” – transcendent training that is simultaneously personal, social and cultural as well as political in the sense that the ultimate goal is a world free from aggression.

As part of this next stage of the manifestation of Shambhala, the Sakyong spoke about the need to strengthen the centre of the mandala (The Kalapa Court as the seat of the Rigden and the lineages of Sakyongs) and to stabilize it. He talked of the importance of securing his succession to provide a sustainable base for the continuity of the Sakyongs and also of accomplishing a number of energetically significant projects in the years ahead, including the establishment of the Kalapa Centre in Halifax.

### **The Sakyong’s Council**

The Planning Meeting had not been planned as a decision-making meeting, nor necessarily to reach any conclusions. It was agreed at the end of the meeting that all the information collected (plus additional information still to be gathered) would be considered by the Sakyong’s Council and that, after a period of reflection, a conference call would be held for all those who had participated.

The Sakyong’s Council met for three days immediately following the Planning Meeting. It set up a small group to continue the work of collecting the necessary information on plans and to lay out a process for synthesizing everything. That group

would make a proposal to the Sakyong's Council and a conference call for the Planning Meeting participants would be held after that. What was clear was that the proposals from all parts of the mandala were in line with the energetic vision and direction of the lineage, that "no one would be left out" and that the meeting with the Sakyong had given a tremendous impetus to the planning process.

The Sakyong addressed the Sakyong's Council itself. This "meeting of minds" gave rise to an in-depth discussion in the council about how, through individual and collective commitment to practice, it could deepen its connection with the vision of the lineage. This would involve both intensive practice of the Werma Sadhana and systematic study of the lineage teachings on Shambhala Vision, with a particular emphasis on the vision of the Kingdom of Shambhala. Once a plan for this was developed, it would be provided in a way that would enable many others in the leadership of the mandala to be engaged in this level of practice and study. There was also discussion about how a more cohesive presentation of all these elements could be shared throughout the mandala. How could the Sakyong's Council clearly convey the inherent connections between the Ridgen principle (and its related presentation on our shrines), the lineage of Sakyongs, the mandala as a whole and the unified path of practice being developed by the Sakyon?. A presentation of these principles would express to the whole community the inspiration of enlightened kingdom that was palpable at this meeting.

While each participant in these meetings will have had their own experience and assessment of what took place, there seemed to be a shared sense that greater cohesiveness in our mandala is shifting from being an aspiration to a shared experience, at least on the part of those leading these diverse and ambitious projects, and that the collective plans presented were aligned with the Sakyong's vision for the growth of the mandala and its potential impact in the world.