



## Summer 2014

I read a touching story recently about the Himba tribe of northern Namibia. When a couple decides to have a child the woman goes off by herself, sits under a tree, and waits to hear the song of the child that wants to be born. She then teaches the song to the child's father, and when they make love to conceive the child, they sing the song of the child as an invitation. When the mother becomes pregnant she teaches the song of the child to the midwives and the old women of the village and when the child is born, she or he is welcomed by singing. Even when a person commits a crime in the village, he or she is called to a gathering and the song is sung as a remembrance of the person's true identity. At the end of life, the person dies in the embrace of the community singing his or her soul song.



**Janie Brown**  
Executive Director

It had taken me years to get to that point. All my cancer friends had done it, but I guess I've always been a bit of a late bloomer. Seven years after my stage III breast cancer diagnosis and nearly six years into my remission, I was finally going on my first weeklong Callanish retreat. But as Danielle and Janie said to me, "You'll know when the time is right for a retreat," and sure enough, they were absolutely spot-on about that prediction.



**Brandy Lien-Worrail with her Dad Walter**

This story took me to revisit the 1987 book, 'The Songlines' by Bruce Chatwin which describes the author's journey into the Australian outback to learn about the 'tjuringa', sacred objects of the Central Australian indigenous peoples. At coming-of-age each person is given a 'tjuringa,' an oval plaque made of stone or wood on to which a musical score is encribed. Each plaque is said to communicate the songlines of the person's ancestors and to represent their unique soul.

These two stories touched me and made me wonder if we each have a unique song, recognizable to us and by others, and if we stray too far from ourselves can we be called back to our true nature by people who care about us? Mark Nepo, author, teacher and cancer survivor writes that 'each person is born with an encumbered spot of grace free of expectation and regret, free of ambition and embarrassment, free of fear and worry' which gets tarnished by life's experiences. He believes that 'the goal of all therapy and education is to restore that spot of grace and to live there once it is restored.'\*\*

When people walk through the doors of the weeklong retreat I see how many have lost their way through the trials and tribulations of life and the ordeals of cancer and its treatments, and I witness over and over again how a loving community can help people find their way back to themselves. One woman on retreat described having 'a hole in her soul' which she attributed to all the difficult experiences she had endured in her life. She hoped the retreat would reconnect her to parts of herself that had gone missing.

The retreat is an opportunity to lay down sorrows and fears, traumatic medical stories and family heartaches, at the feet of people who understand. Through the simple yet profound process of being heard and accepted by others, a person begins to re-emerge from under the layers of life's difficulties. The heart lightens over the days of retreat and we catch glimpses of what might be called the soul, or the incorruptible spot of grace: a moment of vulnerability, a burst of joy, a wise insight, a long-held secret revealed, a simple touch offered to another person, a surprising piece of art, a poem written, or a song. When I notice the soul

I first became acquainted with Callanish after having attended a three-day retreat for young adults organized by Young Adult Cancer Canada in 2009. The retreat was suggested by my oncologist, who was aware of my difficulty with accepting my new normal. At the YACC retreat I learned a big word that described this difficulty: "disintrajectorization," or being derailed from the path I'd been on before my cancer diagnosis. The Callanish team were at the retreat to help the participants work through such issues as learning how to reintrajectorize ourselves and to be kind to ourselves throughout the process, no matter how long that should take. It was then that I realized how lucky I was to get to know these caring women who would be there for me whenever I needed from that point on.

It was only this year that I've allowed myself to address residual trauma and grief from my cancer experience. I began attending restorative yoga regularly and sought counselling at Callanish. The time seemed right for a weeklong retreat at Brew Creek, though I've been a cancer veteran for a few years. I was given the golden opportunity to attend the retreat, which changed my perspective on life for the better. I was finally in a sacred space to face the challenges I've had since my diagnosis, and I acquired the tools to make me stronger in the face of the challenges yet to come.

Ten days after the retreat, I was on a plane back to my hometown in rural Pennsylvania. My father, a Vietnam War veteran who'd been heavily exposed to Agent Orange, was being diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer. It had spread to his bones, liver, and lymph nodes. He and my mother took care of me when I was diagnosed with cancer, and now it was my turn to take care of him. The one thing that helped keep me calm, focused, and compassionate was the fact that I'd just been on the Callanish retreat. As I spoke with my father's doctors at the Veteran's Medical Centre, I balanced the overwhelming information, uncertainty, and panic with the sense of serenity, openness, and loving kindness that I learned to cultivate at the retreat, and I would share with my father the wonderful experiences I'd had just ten days prior to his diagnosis.

Dad was given six months to live. His doctor told him that if he were strong enough to do chemotherapy, he could add another four to six months onto his life expectancy. Because I'd heard so many stories of people living beyond the estimated time they'd been given by their doctors, it was (and still is) a complete shock when my father passed away 17 days after his diagnosis. It was almost paralyzing. Almost.

## Call and Response

Since the last retreat I have thought a lot about the idea of 'call and response.' I first encountered this dynamic through singing. There are numerous chants, hymns, and folk songs from around the world that use this style of music. One person sings a line and then the group echoes the song back. I like this way of making music because it emphasizes connection and collaboration. Similarly, I feel the call to come together for a week on retreat and particularly the call to the creative process. I am so moved by genuine creative expression, so delighted to step away from preconceived ideas about making art, to see what arises when we are simply present with ourselves.



Gretchen Ladd

In my travels around the world, I have always noticed how trees are viewed as sacred in many cultures. In Thailand, trees are sometimes officially ordained and wrapped in monk's robes to protect them from logging. One of our retreat participants Maureen described how in her First Nations tradition, there are weeklong ceremonies to honour trees that are to be logged. Trees in Nepal often hold Buddhist prayer flags, offerings and other sacred symbols.

Over this last year, I was 'called' by a particular tree at The Brew Creek Centre, the home of our weeklong retreats. Each time I meandered along the path by the creek, I was drawn toward a very tall and dignified red cedar. This tree was unusual as it had a niche, an open space in its trunk that sparked my imagination. I saw this space as an invitation for a poem or painting, perhaps a little sculpture or story. The team agreed the tree would be a wonderful place for the community to start our week together. First, we wrapped the tree in a green silk cloth and then we filled the niche with bright green moss. We then invited the retreat participants to reflect on their hopes and intentions for their week. We took these reflections to the art studio where we had piles of ribbon, fabric, beads and feathers for people to create a piece that would then be pinned onto the tree for the duration of the retreat. All week this tree held a steady presence for these intentions.

I could see the tree from the window of the group room, its long arching boughs moving in the breeze, its rough outer layer of bark and these wonderful creations hanging from its silken sash. As the days went by more and more people offered something to the tree: a decorated heart dedicated to family and friends, the words FAITH, VITALITY and SURRENDER, a small vase of daffodils, a bracelet of prayer beads, a tiny pouch of tobacco, and two little hugging dolls. Closer to the end of the week the little niche became the home of a clay figure, a mythical woman whose torso turned into a tree trunk and roots. For me, I felt this tree woman honoured our connection to the land and nature which are such an important support throughout the retreat process.



I now have my piece from our 'blessing tree' hanging in a cherry tree in the back yard at home. It is a wonderful reminder of our week together. I continue to sit with the echoes of songs, stories, poems, dances and art pieces that are very much alive and at work in my mind and heart. I feel called to respond to what I have witnessed and learned from this week through my own creative practice and engagement with life. Callanish continues to teach me a lot about paying attention and responding to the call within myself, our community and from our larger world.

## In the Heart of the Callanish Kitchen

You might not guess that spending hours of your day washing dishes- elbows deep in sudsy water, colourful apron peppered with left-over food bits- would be a practice that expands your heart. But it does.



Andrea Freeman

For the second time this last May, I volunteered as a dishwasher on a Callanish retreat. Being the volunteer dishwasher basically means you're in the kitchen 3 times a day, helping prep for every meal and then, of course, washing up afterwards. It's not all work though. As a volunteer, there's lots of time to connect with the participants and facilitation team, and to soak in the beautiful environment of Brew Creek.

Woven throughout the work and the play, I witness how each member of the team shows up with their full heart, accepting and encouraging you to be exactly as you are. It's like they're seeing you with unprejudiced eyes, taking in who you are and reflecting back to you what they see. I remember someone coming up behind me in the kitchen, hugging me, and saying: "Andrea, we're so glad you're here. You bring so much light and joy to whatever you do." My eyes immediately prickled with tears – it feels so good to be seen and appreciated! I heard those kinds of sentiments passed between the team a hundred times a day.

This loving way of being with each other has a ripple effect on everyone. I see how, by the end of the week, each person on retreat is living and acting from such a loving place. And this act of appreciating and connecting with each other gives new meaning to what I'm doing in the kitchen. Washing dishes transforms from a mechanical task to a service done in the spirit of supporting this loving community.

After spending a full week surrounded by and serving this loving community, even when I'm back in Vancouver, I find myself looking at people I pass and wondering what their stories are. I smile more at strangers. I make small talk with my grocery store clerk. I have more space to let people in. In other words – I see people with fresh, appreciating, wondering eyes.

This practice of expanding your heart is – for me – a daily practice I want to carry throughout my entire life. How truly amazing that volunteering as a dishwasher is one of those practices to get there. It's why I'll always jump to say "yes" whenever I'm invited back into the heart of the Callanish kitchen. ☺

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## Tip a Wee Dram

**Team Hope** led by Al Jones was created in **19** to honour the life of his wife Linda Bolding-Jones. Each year for the past 6 years Team Hope has held a sold-out fundraiser "**Tip a Wee Dram**" for cancer charities. This past year Team Hope presented Callanish with a cheque for an amazing \$15,000 from the proceeds of their whisky-tasting event! Next year the event will be held on Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup> at the Scottish Cultural Centre and tickets will be available soon. We are excited to partner with Team Hope again and be more involved in volunteering with the event next year. If anyone is interested in helping out please contact us at Callanish. It will be a wonderful evening! Hope to see you there.



Team Hope

## Exquisite Flutter

by Laura Paul  
(retreat participant)

Entering the centre of the cave  
she built a fire strong  
upon the bones of the elders  
and waited. With time, shadows opened  
as flames cast light  
across red walls.  
The work was done,  
her story told,  
etched in pictographs on stone.  
As the soul of flame came to an ember  
she eased into grace  
with an ancient remembering.  
In a sudden exquisite flutter,  
a cascade of white wings  
descended as butterflies in flight  
to caress her cheeks,  
a final touch, a final kiss,  
to ease her parting.

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## Thanks to the Gran Fondo Riders/Donors

### Young Adult Documentary Film Project

We are very excited to announce the upcoming documentary film-making project thanks to the generous donations raised by **Team Callanish Gran Fondo** last year. We will be filming a group of our inspirational young adults who are living with recurrent cancer, and who have discovered how to live life to the full, by facing into all the challenges that cancer brings. This group will include Rima Andre and Philip Ho Fai Lee who rode with Team Callanish last September on the epic bike ride to Whistler. We will be taking the group of 6-8 young adults on a retreat to The Brew Creek Centre in September, along with filmmaker Jenn Lee, and editor Asim Nuraney, as well as Alex Van one of our young adults who recently made a fabulous film on sexuality. We will explore the stories and themes of living with metastatic cancer as a young person in the hopes that this film will inspire people to know they too can live well in the midst of cancer.



Philip Ho Fai Lee and Rima Andre

Janie Brown cont. from page 1

emerging my heart opens, and I feel connected, something familiar, a deep knowing that the person is expressing their true nature.

When a person reconnects with what lies beneath the pain of life, through the process of retreat, they often feel reassured and hopeful about life again. This reconnection often endures until the end of life, like finding an old friend who will always be by your side. I even wonder if the hard work of retreat might connect a person to their songline, to their ancestral story, to the reassurance that they belong to an ongoing story.

\*\* from The Book of Awakening by Mark Neap

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Brandy Lien Worrall cont. from page 1

Without having gone to the Callanish retreat just one month prior, I'm not sure I'd have the strength to make it through this loss. I attribute my attending the retreat to a divine intervention by the Universe—I needed it for myself for what I'd been through in the last seven years, and I would need it in the time to come in the wake of my father's death from cancer.

The day my father was diagnosed, he said he wanted to make it to his upcoming 66<sup>th</sup> birthday. And he wanted to celebrate this birthday with all his friends and family, even though he was never one for big parties. So we started planning his party, and he insisted that instead of presents, he wanted people to give donations to Callanish because the organization has been such a huge part of my healing, for which he had been grateful. Sadly, he did not make it to his birthday, and we instead held a celebration of life. I was touched and inspired that friends and family, most of whom live in my poor, rural hometown, gave to Callanish to honour my father. Personally, the townsfolk's acts of kindness brought me some comfort.

Callanish has given me something priceless—a community of people who would be otherwise isolated in enduring the hardships of cancer. And in interacting with that community, I gained the tools to take care of my father with more compassion and understanding in his final days. My healing journey continues, and I'm grateful that I have Callanish to help me find my way.

**Grains of Wisdom:** The Callanish Cookbook was inspired by our nutritionist and cook Kathy Fell and is full of great ideas for healthy and delicious meals. It also features photographs and quotes from many of our retreats. Proceeds from the sale of the cookbook will help support Callanish retreats and programs. Please contact our office if you would like to purchase a copy.

## Hummus

<i>1 cup cooked garbanzo beans</i>	<i>A generous handful of fresh herb such as parsley or cilantro</i>
<i>4 Tbsp sesame tahini</i>	<i>1-2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice</i>
<i>2 Tbsp olive oil</i>	<i>taste</i>
<i>1 large clove of garlic</i>	<i>2 Tbsp water</i>
<i>sea salt to taste</i>	

*In a food processor, blend the olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, lemon zest and cold water. Add the beans and blend thoroughly. Add tahini, fresh herbs and salt to taste. Blend thoroughly again. For a creamier texture add more water.*

*Serve with sesame seed Ryvita crackers, wedges of baked corn tortillas, or an all natural corn chip made with expeller pressed oil.*

*We have experimented with white beans instead of garbanzos, accenting with lime instead of lemon.*



## Honouring a Volunteer

June Goldsmith, founder of “Music in the Morning (a world-renowned music series in Vancouver) and regular presenter on CBC radio, says that music ‘her lifelong friend.’ We were so lucky to have June Goldsmith present her new series “**Music with June at Callanish,**” this past Spring. June took us through an evening and two riveting afternoons of classical music inspiration. June and Lorna McGhee, principal flute of the Pittsburg Symphony, inspired us with a fascinating conversation about the life of **The Performer** and June made a rare appearance at the piano herself during **The Composer** and **The Listener** sessions. Most of all it is June’s passion for music that inspires us. At eighty, and after three bouts of cancer, June teaches by example. She uplifts us all with her infectious joie de vivre and her love of life and learning. June thank you for your years of friendship to Callanish and your generous gift of this wonderful series.



June Goldsmith



## Special Thanks to:

**All of our anonymous and monthly donors** who give with such generous and ongoing commitment

The family and friends of ..... for their generous memorial donations

**The Brew Creek Centre** for their ongoing generosity and support

**Michael Luco of Earthrise** for his generosity in providing stunning flowers for retreats

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**Mike Cates and Marlene Mills** for making and dropping off their fabulous baking for city programs

**Louie Henley** for her food & flowers, concert tickets, and much more..

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**Karen & Barry Coates of Fraser Meadow Organic Dairy** for donating their fabulous yoghurt for retreat

**Andrea Freeman & Claire Talbot** for volunteering to wash dishes on retreat

**Neil Prinsen and Jacky Fraser** for driving participants to and from retreat

**Daphne Roubini and Ruby’s Ukes** for ongoing support and donating pink ukeles from Vancouver’s Cherry Blossom Festival

