



Winter 2011

Some people I meet through Callanish call themselves ‘cancer survivors’, and others don’t relate to the term. Those who adopt the identity of ‘survivor’ use it like a badge of honour. They live through the harrowing ordeal of cancer and its treatment, and come out the other side, victorious. Some people use the term ‘survivor’ whatever the stage of their disease, while others are confused whether the term relates to them when cancer has recurred, or death seems likely.



Janie Brown
Executive Director

‘Victim’ was the term commonly used a decade ago to describe those ‘afflicted’ by cancer. These are words we don’t hear so much any more. ‘Survivor’ definitely implies an active stance, while ‘victim’ intimates a more passive relationship to the disease.

For some, being a survivor conjures up strength and heroism, and endorses the role of advocacy to promote awareness. The NCCS (National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship) uses the term ‘survivor’ for people who have been diagnosed with cancer and applies it for the rest of their lives. The definition of survivorship was recently expanded by NCCS to include family and caregivers who are affected by the diagnosis of cancer. The NCI (National Cancer Institute) uses ‘survivor’ to describe people who had cancer but have no evidence of disease, as well as those who are living with progressive disease. They don’t use the term ‘survivor’ for those who are in the final phase of life.

The people I meet who don’t relate to the term ‘survivor’ say they don’t necessarily want to be seen as strong or heroic. They happen to get to live after cancer while others don’t. They don’t think of themselves as beyond cancer, rather that they will always live in relationship to it. They feel uncomfortable being a member of a group that might exclude people who are dying of cancer.

Researching the web I found that there are many people with cancer who are committed to finding new terms to describe themselves and the groups they belong to. There are groups of ‘thrivers’, and ‘alivers’. There are ‘metavivors’, a group of women living with metastatic breast cancer, and others who call themselves ‘diers’ who object to the overly optimistic language that denies them the right to be acknowledged as people who are dying. And a ‘previvor’ is an unaffected carrier, one who has not been diagnosed with cancer when they have a high genetic risk of doing so. The drive to belong to groups is clearly alive and well!

All of this leads me to wonder why we need and want to belong to specific groups at all. I know there are times, particularly after difficult or traumatic life events when belonging to a group with a specific identity has a purpose. People who share similar experiences often understand each other. There have certainly been times in my life when I have felt immensely supported by belonging to a group with its own unique

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League of Extraordinary Caregivers - Blog Entry, August 2, 2011
dickersbedpan.wordpress.com/
by Stephen Dickter

I spent last week on a retreat in Canada. The experience was quite empowering and profound.

The retreat was given by the Callanish Society: <http://www.callanish.org/>

It is run by a group of women who have no limits to their compassion and tenderness. Throughout the week, they involved the participants in a number of different techniques which helped us cope with our individual situations, including yoga, music, art, group therapy, food, relaxation, Qi Gong and so, so much more. The staff are all working professionals and highly respected in their fields, yet they take at least 4 weeks out of the year to run these retreats and basically donate their time.

Honestly, I don’t even have the words to describe how incredibly uplifting and powerful the Callanish experience was for me.

The team of caregivers were the warmest, most caring, loving and supportive group of individuals I have ever met in my life. They break down the barrier between doctors, therapists and patients. They embrace life – all the joy and all the pain – and they demonstrate through their own actions how anyone can lead a rich, rewarding life...even when facing some of the toughest challenges any human being has to endure.

Just to be touched in a caring way by another person is a jolt to the system to someone who is used to being poked, prodded and poisoned. To be listened to, instead of having a doctor come running in and out of the examination room. And also to listen, to fully understand that you are not alone in your experience. That we all share the same hopes, dreams, concerns and fears. To reflect on one’s life even while you are reflecting on your death. To be open and honest. Self-reflective yet open to others.

My experience at Callanish will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Also, I was honoured to be the first American to attend the retreat. Usually, they reserve the retreats for Canadians, and for good reason. If word gets out about Callanish, then the whole world will be beating a path to their door. They made an exception for me based on the timing of my situation (preparing me physically, mentally and spiritually for my stem cell transplant in October). Also, they were deeply touched by Jen’s emails and discussions. Once again, Jen has shown new depths to her level of caring.

Whether at the beginning of one’s cancer journey or at the end, in remission or without a cure, male or female – the coping techniques taught by Callanish provide strength and support for those who suffer with this terrible disease.

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Stephen Dickter

Massaging on Retreat

by Tessa Cherniavsky

Over the ages and around the world, the word “massage” has had many definitions and connotations. At Callanish, massage is about one human being touching another with love. I have had the honour for the past 10 years of being the massage therapist on the Callanish weeklong retreats.



Tessa Cherniavsky

Human beings are complex. The heart can be broken, the soul lost through the experience of cancer and life’s many experiences. Massage at Callanish speaks into the heart and the soul of every person.

When we are in pain, we often separate from others. When one part of our body is in pain we tend to put all of our attention on this area and forget about the rest of ourselves. Because of pain’s persistence, acuity, and interruption of function we find ourselves drawn into its presence. We begin to disconnect from our wholeness.

Massage offers us an opportunity to give us a break from focussing only on one area of concern in the body. Giving voice to the pain, and surrendering to the massage table relieves the burden of concern and perhaps for the first time in a very long time, the person is able to remember that the rest of the body has been working all the meanwhile, compensating and adjusting to the situation. The person often then notices how tired the whole body is, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

The intention of the massage is to invite and welcome wholeness, all the darkness, and all the light. The medicine is love. As the massage therapist, my whole being listens to the wisdom of the body under my hands. When both our minds rest, our hearts converse. Here, in this moment, is the place where our souls meet.

The beauty of being in community on retreat is that there are many opportunities for such moments to happen, not just in massage. With the dissolution of linear time, these moments are amplified. It might be the meeting of eyes across a room, the gesture of a hand on a shoulder, or the listening of stories long waiting to be told.

Many retreat participants have said, “If everyone in the world did a Callanish retreat the world would be a very different place.” I know that I am in a very different place in my life because of Callanish and the extended Callanish community. My heart continues to grow and heal; my soul continues to reveal itself in the companionship of the many souls with whom it shares this path of life. I am most grateful to be a part of this community.



Survivor

by Marlene Mills

Perhaps when you have metastatic cancer you view the label ‘survivor’ with just a little contempt.

I used to be a survivor until the diagnosis of metastatic cancer came along. But now I’m just a gal who lives the best she can in circumstances beyond her control. I will not survive this cancer – unless my heart gives out or I get hit by a different bus than I’ve already been hit by.
Cancer will end my life.

Written instructions are at the ready – what to do with what, how to divvy up the bucks, what words are not to be used in my obituary or my ‘Celebration of Life’.

I am not brave, I am not battling, I’m not courageous, I’m not fighting or losing and I’m certainly not feeling like this is a journey. If I was going on a journey I’d be headed to Italy or France or Scotland or Ireland.

I will not survive this cancer that has taken up residence in this body of mine – maybe for a while longer but not forever. There’s nothing brave about putting one foot in front of the other.
I will survive until I die – from cancer. That’s it.

When I turned onto Cranberry Drive today I thought ‘I wonder how Katherine is doing?’ Katherine died two years ago. Then I wondered how Sandy was and Zoe and Janelle and Karen and Scottish Katherine and Christiane and Raymondo and Jan and Nancy and Rita and Kirsten and my many other friends and allies over the past few years. And how were their families? And what do they do with their time now – do they write about where they are? They are my survivors – in my heart – in my mind – in my spirit. I water the hearts of lost friends with light and love and gratitude.

‘Awaken Your Senses’ was held on **Sunday September 25th** at The Brew Creek Centre, home of our weeklong retreats. John Bishop created an exquisite 4-course lunch for forty guests with wine donated by Joie Winery & Sumac Ridge. Lunch was followed by a beautiful concert in the newly-built Sacred Learning Space with fabulous musicians Ariel Barnes (cello), Heidi Krutzen (harp) and Maryliz Smith (keyboard & storytelling). A huge thank you to Martha Lou Henley, John Bishop, the Brew Creek Centre, Allison Prinsen, Tom Lee Music, and the team of dedicated volunteers for making this such a truly memorable event. John donated this ice sculpture made from Brew Creek water, which was returned to the creek after lunch as a powerful symbol of impermanence.



Maps

by Eva Matsuzaki

I have always loved maps. As soon as we thought of a new place to visit, off I'd go to the travel store and get a guidebook or two and some maps – big maps to see the whole journey and detailed maps to see the towns or cities. As I studied our travel options, I would imagine the side road past an inlet or some village and the streets that would reveal exciting features of each city. During the trip itself he would drive, and I would navigate. Guidebook and map in my lap, I was confident of where the next turn would take us. Even if an obstacle arose or we made a wrong turn, oops, a quick U-turn, and we were back on track.



Eva & Kiyoshi Matsuzaki

How we loved those journeys. It was like traveling them three times – before, during, and after – always with the map close by. But then came a new journey, the cancer journey. No preparation ahead of this trip, just go. Where is my map? A few months after treatment, I was still feeling lost, went to my first Callanish retreat looking for guidebooks and maps on how to navigate this time, this healing. Hmmm, the guidebooks had many blank sections – to be filled in by me. The maps were not simple accordion style, but had magical folds that would appear and disappear. Slowly, I have learned to travel a new way, letting the mystery unfold.

Just when I was getting my bearings, a new surprise arose. My life and travel partner was diagnosed with cancer, inoperable pancreatic cancer. Once again he will drive – no choice, and he asks me to navigate, to tell him what the next bend in the road might bring. Where is my map? It's already well-worn, edges tattered, and has few answers, but the magical folds are still there. We will travel once again with the Callanish guidebook and map in my lap, determined to enjoy the scenery along the way.



I Know It Now

by Jill McIntyre

I know it now, long before the time
that there will be enough time
that there will never be enough time

I know it now, long before the goodbyes
that we will say goodbye
that we will never say goodbye

I know it now, long before the pain
that the pain will be too much to bear
that I will bear the pain

I know it now, long before the darkness
that there will be darkness
that a light will shine through the darkness

I know it now, long before I go
that I will go
that I will never go

Janie Brown cont.

purpose and identity. Mostly now though, in my life, I want to gather with people who relate to one another with respect for, and regardless of, identity. Callanish of course has cancer as the entry requirement, though I have often thought it is the desire to heal on all levels, not the disease, that brings people to retreat.

On our weeklong retreats, I often think that while we acknowledge and value our differences in age, gender, culture, race, class, work, family role, sexual orientation, stage of disease etc., we actually connect more from a place of our shared experiences of being human. Rather than our differences separating us from each other, on retreat there is a common and shared experience that lives alongside identity. This is one of the most surprising and delightful things about retreat. After just twenty-four hours on retreat, we have stopped relating purely from our identities. We find we have a lot in common. While cancer is the obvious shared experience, other aspects of life arise on retreat that bonds us more deeply than a disease: we all need and want to grieve losses and face our fears and will do so when we feel safe; we all long to be understood and valued without judgement; we all have the desire to love and connect with other people; and we all have a natural arising of play, laughter, creativity and kindness.

On retreat there are many things we never learn about each other, and yet we deeply know one another. I believe this is because when we feel safe enough to step outside the boxes we have put ourselves and others in, we are freer to express ourselves. We often think that the labels, the separate identities, give us our strength, but they actually often disempower us and isolate us from other people. I vote to get rid of the label 'survivor' and instead work towards deepening our unity as members of the human race. I believe the world would be a much less lonely place for it. It certainly feels that way on retreat.

Stephen Dickter cont.

Lastly, I must make special mention of one component of Callanish – the food.

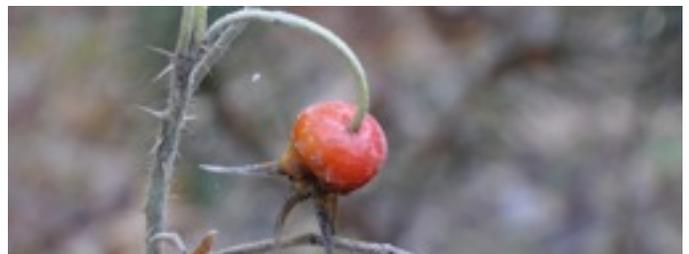
They provided 3 of the most delicious, nutritious and wonderful meals for us every day. The cooking staff was just as much a part of the experience as the doctor, yoga teacher and world-renowned musician. From the cooks whose day jobs is analyzing how nutritional choices affect the blood to the dishwasher, an architect with a deep love of poetry to the cook, who attended a Callanish retreat many years ago when dealing with her own cancer experience and she never left. Although there was no direct connection, the Callanish menu mirrors the advice of David Servan-Schreiber in his book *Anti-Cancer: A New Way of Life*. Jen and I have embraced this book in our attempt to live a healthier, cancer-fighting lifestyle and it was incredible to taste such delicious food, prepared with so much love, that I could feel making my body stronger and healthier. Eating at Callanish was a humbling experience as I really understood for the first time the power and influence of the food we eat.

Oh, and the location wasn't too bad either: <http://thebrewcreekcentre.com/>

The setting, the food, the people, the experience. This is what health care should be like. Callanish is more powerful than chemotherapy, radiation or any kind of medicine.

Even after 700 words trying to tell you about my week – I have no words.

Callanish – Thank you.



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.

Mulligatawny Soup

Chicken, curry, apples – what a wonderful combination! This soup is a meal in itself. If a vegetarian soup is needed, simply make it with adzuki beans or lentils (cooked a day ahead) and a vegetarian stock.

3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 large onion, diced
3 cloves garlic
2 carrots, chopped
2 celery sticks, chopped
1 apple, diced
1 cup cooked brown rice
1 cup diced cooked chicken
5 cups chicken broth
1 cup canned tomatoes, chopped
2 Tbsp spelt flour
1 tsp curry powder (or to taste)
salt and pepper

In a deep saucepan sauté onion, garlic, carrots, celery and apple in olive oil. Cook slowly until lightly browned. Stir in the 2 tablespoons of flour and curry powder and cook 2 minutes on low heat. Add the chicken stock, tomatoes, salt and pepper and simmer until the vegetables are tender.

Before adding the cooked chicken and the cooked rice, you can strain some of the vegetables out of the stock, purée them and add them back to the soup. This gives a nice creamy texture.

Add the chicken and rice, heat to simmer, season to taste and serve.



Honouring a Donor

The Lotte and John Hecht Memorial Foundation

The Hecht foundation has generously supported Callanish since soon after we started running retreats. They have provided scholarships for people who cannot afford to pay for the weeklong retreat. So many retreat participants have benefited from the incredible generosity of the Foundation through both the scholarship program, and the provision of matching funds each year. All of us at Callanish want to say an enormous “Thank You” to Angela Webster, Carol Middlemiss, and all the directors at the Hecht Foundation. We are eternally grateful.



We Remember with Love

LISA JOHNSON
JILL MCINTYRE
COLLEEN MAHONEY
WILSON PADMOS
SHIRLEY WITT

We send our love and thoughts to the family
and friends of these remarkable people.

Special Thanks to:

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

The family and friends of **Martin Holloway, Lisa Johnson, Jill McIntyre, Judith Radovan, Penny Scoble, Nicole Siemens, Shirley Witt** for their generous memorial donations

The Brear Family and Keep on Swimming for their continued generosity in honour of Ashley Brear

Louie Henley for her generous support of food & flowers for our young adult group, her sponsorship of our Brew Creek event, tickets to some of the best concerts in Vancouver, our Christmas wishlist, and more...

Michael Luco of Earthrise for his generosity in providing beautiful flowers for retreats and special events

Dan Helmer for his ongoing support in maintaining our website

Mike Cates for making and dropping off gourmet baking

Laurel Murphy, Margaret Bacon and Jana Eidse for the gift of healing sounds and touch for our twice monthly relaxation group

Miles Meadows and Caio Nery for the donation of a top-of-the-line wheelchair, *'The Canary Chair'*

Nicola Murray and her daughter **Hope** for baking cookies

Eva Matsuzaki for writing such beautiful thank you cards

Caroline Mewis for her donation of special pillows for yoga

Bill & Susan Sutherland and Helen Smith for taking such good care of our garden

Bill and Susan Sutherland for also helping us with set-up and take-down of each retreat

Neil Prinsen and Shabbir Dhalla for driving participants to retreat

Karen Barger for sharing her love of nature photography through beautiful cards

Suzanne Hong at Granville Island Florists for bringing beauty to our retreats through her gift of flowers

Allison Prinsen for volunteering at our YACN retreat as a facilitator

Judy Stanfield for all her delicious baking, retreat food and hours spent organizing our kitchen supplies

Chor Leoni for their generosity through the proceeds of their 'Healing Voices' CD

Aban Security for their generous support in monitoring our building alarm

Diane Loomer and EnChor for singing at our Holiday Open House

Carol-Anne and Pauline Bickerstaff for baking cookies and shortbread

Nigel Harvey and Marlene Mills for the Creative Arts writing collection

