



Summer 2011

Pioneer: one who ventures into unknown or unclaimed territory to prepare the way for others
Pioneer species: the very first species of plant to grow in ground affected by a traumatic event such as a fire, earthquake or flood.

The community of Callanish is filled to the brim with pioneers. Cancer is the traumatic event that propels people into unknown territory full of terrors and possibilities, losses and change. Each person has a unique story of losing and finding their way, over and over again. There is not one right way, but a multitude of different ways to adapt to this new land. No one adapts successfully though without the company of fellow travellers, who also know the trials and tribulations of living without a roadmap.



Janie Brown
Executive Director

There are so many losses to be grieved after a diagnosis of cancer. One of the most significant losses for younger women and men with cancer is the loss of fertility. Having children is considered a birthright for those who choose to bear children. When the choice gets taken away, the pain for many is unbearable.

In this newsletter, I want to honour two great pioneers in our Callanish community, Meghan Black and Allison Prinsen. These young women are breaking new ground and paving the way for others to become mothers after cancer, through surrogacy.

Allison and Meghan first met at a Callanish young adult cancer support group in early 2006 and then spent a week together at a retreat just a few months later. They became firm and fast friends. Little did they know just how intertwined their lives would become over the next five years. Allison and Meghan both thought they would have to forgo parenthood because of infertility caused by a bone marrow transplant for leukemia. Both healthy and well after cancer, they deeply grieved the loss of not being able to get pregnant and birth their own babies. So many women their age have children without a second thought. However, neither Meghan nor Allison was willing to give up her dream of motherhood.

Altruistic surrogacy is legal in Canada. This means that the surrogate and the egg donor cannot receive a fee over and above any out-of-pocket



Maureen, Allison and Meghan (left to right) & twins, Mia & Josh

expenses. Although the infertility is caused by the medical treatment for cancer, there is no financial support in Canada for couples to have children by surrogacy. This makes it impossible for many, and places a huge financial burden on couples, that do decide to take this route. Meghan and Allison had to find their own surrogates, a task that at first seemed extremely daunting. Through a series of serendipitous events, both surrogates showed up in answer to many prayers.

Each of the women who chose to become surrogates for Allison and Meghan had a calling from a young age. It was to help other women experience the joys of motherhood, like they had. Both are married with children of their own. Neither is genetically-related to the surrogate babies. Each woman has been gifted with the remarkable ability to nurture the growth of a baby in her womb, for someone else. As one said, "I have known from the beginning it is not my baby. I am just the guardian". These women know in their souls that they are physically, emotionally and spiritually built for it. Not every woman could do it. From my perspective, these women define altruism.

This choice is not without challenges for the mothers-to-be, nor I suspect for the surrogates. There is no roadmap for any of these pioneering women who are coming together to bring new life into the world, in the most unlikely of circumstances. It is a journey that requires a deep trust in the goodness of people, and an ease about letting go of control. It evokes a joy beyond all joys, and a sorrow beneath that remains. Cancer has prepared Allison and Meghan for this path, and we are all so grateful to be traveling along with them.

Meghan and her husband Chris now have three beautiful children: Levi 4, and Mia and Josh, twins almost a year old. Allison and her husband Dax are expecting their first baby in January 2012. We consider all four of these little ones, our "Callanish babies". Every community must have wee folk as well as old folk to be complete! We are truly blessed.



Meghan & Twins

Come and "**Awaken your Senses**" at the home of our weeklong retreats, **The Brew Creek Centre**, nestled in the mountains near Squamish, for our annual fundraiser.

Legendary **John Bishop** will make a delicious Sunday lunch for 40 people, accompanied by select B.C. wines, followed by an intimate concert for 100 with wonderful musicians:

Ariel Barnes (cello), Heidi Krutzen (harp) and Maryliz Smith (piano)

Sunday September 25th Lunch at 1 p.m. Concert at 3 p.m.

Lunch with wine and concert \$275 (tax receipt \$175)

Concert \$45

Call 604-732-0633 or e-mail info@callanish.org to reserve your space

Supported by: **Martha Lou Henley Foundation**

The Young Adult Cancer Network at the Callanish Society

held a fundraising screening of the documentary film

"**Wrong Way to Hope: A Story of Young Adults and Cancer**" created by young adult cancer survivor Mike Lang who took a small group of Canadian young adults touched by cancer on a 10-day river kayaking expedition on a remote river in Oregon.

The screening on March 20th was followed by a Panel Discussion with Young Adult Cancer Survivors:

MaryAnne Brown, Meghan Black, Rima Andre, Shannon Simpson, Vikram Bubber and Jen Luce

Funds raised went toward the YACN program at Callanish and the Wrong Way to Hope cross-Canada tour.

The purpose of the event and film was to bring more awareness and build support for young adults living with cancer.

MARYANNE BROWN – WRONG WAY TO HOPE FILM SCREENING / CALLANISH SOCIETY- INTRODUCTORY SPEECH



MaryAnne Brown

In September of 2008, my youngest sister, Megan was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 27. Six months later, in March of 2009, I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 35. The past two and a half years have been incredibly difficult for both of us. It has been a strange, and a sad, and at times, even a wonderful experience to go through cancer at the same time as my sister. Because she lives 16 hours away from me, we shared our experiences with each other by phone and email. We talked about how odd we felt when we went to breast cancer events and most of the survivors were over 50. We talked about how difficult it was to get a proper and timely diagnosis because doctors often still believe that young adults don't get cancer. We talked about how difficult mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiation were, partly because young adults are more likely to experience symptoms like nausea, yet doctors also tend to treat young adult cancer more aggressively because we are young and can "handle it". We talked about what it was like to have our university educations and jobs interrupted, and of the serious financial difficulty this caused each of us. We talked of how my sister longs to have another child but is not sure that she will ever regain her fertility after her chemotherapy treatments, and that even if she does, it may not be safe for her to have another child because her cancer was hormone positive.

Our cancer journeys have been pretty similar, but there was one key thing we didn't get to share. My sister admitted to me that she was deeply lonely and feeling isolated throughout her treatments because she didn't know any other young adults going through cancer. I encouraged her to look around her community for support. But the only supports she found were tailored for adults over 50, the most recognized population of cancer patients and survivors. I also felt lonely and isolated for similar reasons. But when I looked for support in my community I was much more fortunate than my sister. I found the Young Adult Cancer Network or YACN, run by the Callanish Society. YACN is an ever-evolving group of young adults who meet together once a month to share our difficulties and our successes, our sadness and our hope—to share our cancer journeys as young people who have different needs than the older cancer population. My sister did not have this kind of support and had to struggle through fatigue, pain and depression on her own. I have struggled with the same things, but I have been able to bring all of those struggles to the YACN community. And in the face of cancer and all its devastation, I have been able to feel like a part of something really special—a community strong enough to hold not just *my* heartaches, hopes and dreams, but the heartaches, hopes and dreams of a whole community of young adults. Thank you for coming today to support the YACN community. Your support allows us to expand this program in order to reach more young adults with cancer and let them know that they are not alone.

SHANNON SIMPSON – WRONG WAY TO HOPE FILM SCREENING/ CALLANISH SOCIETY SPEECH – ON THE THEME OF RELATIONSHIP



**Shannon & Marty Simpson
with Nolan & Abigail**

My name is Shannon Simpson. I was diagnosed in Aug 2009 with stage 2 triple negative breast cancer. I was 35 years old.

What stands out for me was how cancer shows you who is really there for you through thick and thin. People that I expected to help did not, and others that I never imagined would be by my side the entire journey.

Cancer is hard enough to deal with but there is so much more to cancer than cancer. It is dealing with all the questions it brings up as well. The past, the present and the future. For me cancer took me back to my dysfunctional past and made me look at how that contributed to my young diagnosis. Watching my parents go on a three-week cruise the day of my double mastectomy while my friends were booking unpaid days off work to look after me. And my mom complaining about all the phone calls she was getting. The "woe is me, my daughter has cancer" was hard to take. Then having to be strong enough to realize that that is their coping mechanism when all I wanted was for them to tell me that everything was going to be okay.

I think the hardest thing for me was watching my husband slowly come undone. I literally watched his hair go grey as the months went by. He was a full-time fire fighter, business owner, father of one-year old twins, with a wife with cancer and two broken hands himself. He was so independent for so long and having to ask people to help take care of you and your family was hard. Learning to ask for help is more difficult for men and this caused a lot of stress between us. As if we needed more stress. I was okay with asking for help but Marty felt like a failure when he had to ask for help. I knew that if we didn't get help that we were both going to be very sick.

Cancer is hard enough to deal with but there is so much more to cancer than cancer!!

RIMA ANDRE – WRONG WAY TO HOPE FILM SCREENING / CALLANISH SOCIETY SPEECH – ON THE THEME OF FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY



Rima Andre

My name is Rima Andre, and in September 2009 at age 35, as a young adult, I was diagnosed with aggressive stage four metastatic cancer of the liver and breast. If my cancer diagnosis went untreated I would have had six months for survival...BUT I made an adamant decision to proceed with treatment.

I knew I had to be COURAGEOUS AND RESILIENT. I made a decision to LIVE! I knew I had absolutely nothing to conceal, and I was by no means ashamed of having cancer as a young adult. During my chemo treatments my beautiful bald-head was my badge of honour. After 2 lumpectomy surgeries, 6 months of aggressive chemotherapy, 6 major infections & hospitalization, 2 bouts of pericarditis, Tamoxifen, Zoladex and Letrozole treatments AND... then I was faced with the largest FEAR of my life... my soul mate & partner Paul of 12 years passed away 5 months ago.

During my journey I knew I was allowed to be vulnerable at times ...and faced daily uncertainty and fears. I knew I would at times lose hope, but I KNEW I would always have a better day where I would rediscover my hope.

Some of my fears and uncertainty were: loss of my career and independence; never being able to experience motherhood; fear of losing my sexuality and my self-esteem; facing isolation; and never being able to fulfil my long-term goals. I feared losing purpose in my life, especially after Paul's death, and I also feared the paradox of putting my life on hold. I've learnt how to surround myself with positive people and lean on them for support; these awesome folks help me to rejuvenate my spirit and my passion for life and love.

It has been 16 years since we began Callanish, when a group of us were sitting around discussing how to proceed with this intriguing and much needed offering to our community. I remember those early days of us doing everything for the retreats ~ from ironing sheets, hauling chairs and dishes to developing relationships with people in the community whose various businesses provided the food and flowers. It truly has been a labour of love and devotion. In those early days we would rejoice with the first few donations that came to us, and look where we are now ~ a robust community of support and concern has been established that will carry this organization into the future. It has reinforced my belief in the goodness of the human spirit.



Gilly Heaps

Being a founding member of Callanish has given me a depth of experience and understanding, of respecting even more the cycle of life. It has been a privilege and an honour to have worked alongside my fellow facilitators and to have known just about every participant who has graced our retreats. The depth of learning and appreciation for the tenacity of the human spirit has been humbling.

It is my time now to step away from the daily workings of Callanish to pursue other areas of my life. It is not without some sadness and feelings of loss, but I also appreciate there is a wisdom in knowing when the time is right. Each and every one of you have left an indelible mark on my being, one that I shall never ever forget ~ an undeniable part of who I am and will always be. Thank you.

Waterfall

by Allison Prinsen

I look at my hands and see they are the
hands of my Grandma

I look at the strange curve of my big toe that does
not seem so strange next to my Mother's

When I look in the mirror I see the eyes and chin of my
great grandmother, I have never met her
but my Ami assured me I looked like her

As the sun dots my nose and cheeks with freckles,
I think of my Father's arms that are covered in freckles
and I know that they belong to him

I think of my Ami when I comb my hair, as we share the
exact same stubborn wave in just the same spot

I hear the sound of my Mother's voice
when I pick up the phone and say hello

So many different parts of me have trickled down
from family long before me
like a giant waterfall
surging forth to create me

I am grateful to be part of this tall magnificent waterfall
and it breaks my heart to look down
and see the water begin to pool at my feet.

Callanish Threads

by Liz Evans

It feels like a lifetime ago as I think back to the moment of my first Callanish retreat when I walked through the door at Brew Creek in November 2001. I had no idea my retreat week would change the direction of my life and how I would witness so many others have similarly powerful experiences, time and time again, over the course of the coming years.



Liz Evans

My first diagnosis was in 1982 at the age of 28 when no emotional support was available to me. I simply got the treatment out of the way and moved forward like nothing had ever happened. Something significant **had** happened but I had no way to process it, so I simply added this to the rest of my baggage and carried on.

Eighteen years later I was again diagnosed with breast cancer but this time I had two young children and was scared to death. My younger sister had just finished treatment for breast cancer two years earlier and I had lost my mother to melanoma when I was just graduating from high school. All the cancer experiences were piling up, with rarely a word spoken about it, and so on my first retreat, the flood gates opened into the safe Callanish container that many have grown to deeply trust; the release felt like a home-coming. I developed a deep longing for this new honest way of being in my life. I found myself asking how can I bring more of this into my life, what did I have to offer that could be of service? Little did I know what lay ahead!

On my second retreat in 2005, an Alumni one, I stepped in with my heart pounding, frightened, but deeply trusting the power of exploring the emotions which I had held so tightly, and which I knew were no longer serving me. I uncovered the belief that I would fall ill again if I dared to be happy. I never would have believed that by naming the emotions, and being witnessed by those who deeply understood, that this core belief would lose its stranglehold. But it did!

At the close of that second retreat, Janie and I started a dialogue about coming to work in the Vancouver Callanish space. I had no idea how this could be possible living on Bowen Island with school-aged children but knew without a doubt I had to try. So many elements in my job are creative endeavours that feed me while contributing to the greater good of this work I believe in so deeply. My work today includes connecting with past and future retreat participants, and our many friends of Callanish, producing this newsletter (which I took over from my sister when she became too ill), helping with groups, practicing Therapeutic Touch, keeping the office running in Vancouver, tending our beautiful space, and my all time favourite; cooking in the Callanish retreat kitchen! Nourishing others has always felt natural to me but I have discovered a great deal of reciprocity through this work. Often asked how we continue to form deep connections with people at the end of their lives only to lose them, I have discovered that they hold the most precious gifts of all. Surrounded and inspired by many mentors and great teachers, I have learned not only how to open my heart and realize the true healing that giving to others offers, but also how to receive and appreciate the many gifts that are present in my life.

Six years later, here I sit more grateful than ever to be a part of this amazing community and immensely important work.

Rima Andre page 2 cont.

My journey and recovery has made me stronger emotionally and spiritually and much more realistic. When I put cancer behind me & start smiling, laughing, loving and living again, the disease loses its grip on me. I live life and squeeze every drip of delicious juice from MY EXTRAORDINARY AND BLESSED LIFE. I've learned what it is to love myself!

My cancer experience has taught me GRATITUDE.

TODAY I stand here before you 18 months after my diagnosis, slowly overcoming these setbacks one day at a time LIVING LIFE AND PERSEVERING.

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.

Pesto

Everyone loves it when we serve Pesto. We typically dress brown rice pasta with this pesto and serve it warm with turkey meatloaf or cold with pasta salad at lunch. If there is extra when you make this, freeze it in small jars for another meal.

3 cups packed fresh basil leaves (remove stems)
2 cloves garlic, large
1/2 cup pine nuts, walnuts, almonds, sunflower seeds or a combination
3/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped (packed)
3/4 cup fresh parmesan, grated
1/2 cup olive oil
1/4 cup butter, melted
salt to taste

Combine everything in a blender on low then medium speed. (Arrange ingredients so the blender blade will turn efficiently) Thoroughly work everything into a smooth paste. Toss with hot, drained pasta or spoon onto hot gnocchi or any pasta of choice. Read pasta labels—there are wonderful alternative grain pastas to experiment with.



Honouring a Volunteer

As many do, Margaret found her way to Callanish by word of mouth. Years of working on farms and in gardens, Margaret has a way with touch. She takes time off her massage therapy practice every couple of weeks to offer soothing touch during our relaxation sessions. When everyone is tucked in on the mats and song is being woven around spoken words of encouragement, hope and acceptance, Margaret lays her hands on very willing feet and brows! Her loving, grounded touch brings such sweet comfort on days when life feels tenuous and hearts are tender. All of us at Callanish are so grateful to Margaret for her ongoing commitment to our community and for bringing the gift of her loving touch. Thank you so much.



Margaret Bacon

We Remember with Love

KIRSTEN ANDERSEN
THEA BEIL
JULIJA BRKIC
JOANNE GORMLEY
RACHEL NASH
CAIO NERY
DEBORAH PACKER
JEANNE RUSSELL
JUDITH RADOVAN
PENNY SCOBLE
SUSAN WHITTAKER

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

Special Thanks to:

Our ever-generous committed “**Friends of Callanish**” who donate on a monthly or annual basis. You sustain us!
Allison Prinsen for volunteering many hours with the young adult program and for her beautiful design work
Mike Cates for his delicious baking for our ongoing groups
Suzanne Hong from Granville Island Florist for her continued support of our retreats with her beautiful flowers
David Clarke and Fraser Norrie for their beautiful tea box
Lotte and John Hecht Memorial Foundation for so generously providing retreat scholarships and matching funding
Dan Helmer for donating time to keep our website maintained
Martha Lou Henley for her concert tickets, flowers, baking and more...

The family and friends of **Kirsten Andersen, Thea Beil, Ashley Brear, Joanne Gormley, Jacqui Page, Sherie Kaplan, Rachel Nash, Jeanne Russell, Penny Scoble, Marlene Siemens, Susan Whittaker and Judith Radovan** for their memorial donations

The family and friends of **Eric Posen** and **Louise Hager** for their honorary birthday donations

Michael Luco of Earthrise Garden Store for his never-ending devotion to beauty through his gift of flowers

All those who generously donated to our YACN film event
Judith Pike for baking delicious cookies
Eva Matsuzaki, Neil Prinsen and Jacky & Angus Fraser for driving participants to retreats
Laurel Murphy, Margaret Bacon, Jana Eidse and Sara Marreiros for their volunteer gift of healing sounds and soothing touch for our relaxation group
Shannon Murphy and her daughter **Emma** for making beautiful silver necklaces for the very lucky February retreat participants
Joni Denroche for raising over \$1200 for our **Young Adult Program** in memory of **Rita Wong**
Queensdale Market, West Pointe Organics, Market Meats and the Salmon Shop for their discounts on retreat food
Judy Stanfield for her 12th year of making the famous “Callanish cookies” and all her retreat prep
Bill Sutherland for tending our garden and helping us with his truck for driving to and from retreats
Mark Rozenberg for providing support to our young adults
Bob Ledingham and Frank Ranieri for donating custom made cushions for the chairs at Brew Creek
The Brew Creek Centre staff for all their loving care and support
James Dodds for helping with pre & post retreat set-up
June Goldsmith for her afternoon of music with Haydn

