



## Winter 2010

I have always been curious about the way that support groups for people living with cancer have been delineated. It seems to me that the construction of the emotional and spiritual support network has mirrored the medical model which diagnoses and treats the physical disease of cancer. If you have breast cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer or lymphoma, for example, there are designated support groups for people who have each of these specific types of cancer. If you have been diagnosed with breast cancer there are several disease-specific support groups to choose from, for colorectal cancer, perhaps one group. Each of the more prevalent cancers has support groups for people diagnosed with that particular cancer. Where the disease of cancer resides in your body determines what emotional support you have access to. It also determines the potential for fundraising dollars. Not only are the support groups delineated along disease lines but they are often named by the disease: the brain tumour support group or the colorectal cancer support group, rather than something like the support group for people **living** with brain cancer or colorectal cancer. Many counsellors are also delineated along disease lines. Counsellors are designated to see people with lung cancer, or sarcoma, lymphoma or brain cancer.



**Janie Brown**  
Executive Director

I meet many people who are diagnosed with rare types of cancer like renal cell carcinoma, leiomyosarcoma, thyroid or nasopharyngeal cancer, or cancer of the tongue. There are often no designated support groups for people with these types of cancers, and few, if any, disease-centred fundraising events. I have often heard people say that if they had breast cancer or leukemia they would have more options for emotional support. This is true.

We all know that cancer is a disease of the physical body and that some of the greatest challenges come through the pains and losses to the body through surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. These physical changes can have a short-lived or a permanent effect on every aspect of a person's life: body image, self-esteem, the ability to make a living or socialize. It changes relationships in families, sexuality and fertility. It challenges sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, friends and partners. Living with the physical disease of cancer requires adaptation as well as cure, it requires grieving as well as healing, strengthening of the spirit as well as follow-up appointments.

People diagnosed with any cancer, common or rare, do often have unique support issues related to their particular type of cancer. How do people cope with colostomies or mastectomies? How do they deal with the cognitive deficits after brain surgery? These same people may also have support needs that could be met by someone with a very different cancer. How do mothers and fathers say goodbye to their children too soon? How do young people consider surrogacy for infertility or find their God who has abandoned them?

I understand that talking with people with the same, or similar cancer can be of tremendous help, with specific information and understanding. I have noticed in groups people identify with one another if they have the same cancer. I see that this can be hopeful and helpful, or frightening and disheartening, depending on the stage and situation of each person.

Disease-centred support groups have their place but I also challenge us to look beyond the medical model to a more holistic one. Cancer may be in your prostate but you might need support to deal with the terror that is arising at the prospect of a recurrence. Cancer may have been found in your breast but you want to know how to talk to your children about why you are crying every evening when you put them to bed. Cancer may be found in your throat but you need to find a faith in something greater than yourself that you have never had. You may be dying and live with the urgency of resolving your life-long conflict with your father, or your painful story of abuse. Are we meeting the support needs of people with cancer by delineating the access to support by disease only? We may want to think more creatively.

In all the support circles at Callanish we invite anyone who has had a diagnosis of any kind of cancer, recently or a long time ago, to sit together. Some of the conversation revolves around the disease of cancer and the physical ramifications of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. Most of the conversation however, is about how to cope with change, how to adapt to a new identity, to a new relationship with oneself, one's priorities and family. The disease of cancer takes many people back into old unresolved territory that requires a certain kind of bravery to open up to. The conversation weaves around anger and fear, inside hope and inspiration. Being honest about the challenges, and real about the struggles, I witness people grow stronger in heart. I see that cancer is a physical disease that requires attention and information but I also see that cancer imposes an experience that demands a new bold and tender care of one's life. It creates an interconnectedness of one to another and offers the possibility for awakening. In these types of gatherings it becomes clearer and stronger which aspects of a human being can never be destroyed by the physical disease of cancer. It is in the recognition of those eternal qualities that I believe makes it possible to live an enriched and hopeful life no matter where cancer resides in the body.

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### The New Brew Creek Centre

Over the past 10 years we have been extremely fortunate to hold our week-long retreats at what used to be called Brew Creek Lodge, now renamed the Brew Creek Centre. This idyllic property is situated on 12 acres of beautiful forested land with a magnificent creek running through it. The owner of the property with the staff team have been enacting a vision over the past couple of years to transform Brew Creek into a world-class retreat centre. It has been exciting to participate in this change. There have been new buildings built, thousands of bulbs planted, the return of wildlife, and most recently an unbelievably beautiful new "sacred space" building. Entering that space is like stepping into the centre of silence itself.

## Milagros

People have used milagros for centuries throughout Latin America. Their use has been traced to the Aztec and Zapotec Indians. Today, milagros are much in evidence in the southwestern United States, Mexico, Brazil and Greece. The milagro represents the universality of humans acknowledging the presence of spirit in everyday life.

*Milagros* or "miracles" are miniature metal replicas of arms, legs, animals, tools, praying figures, or anything representing a concern or problem. Such charms are used as votive offerings to enlist the aid of the divine, or express thanks to the deities, and saints. In return for favours granted or blessings received, one makes a promise or vow: to go on a pilgrimage, or to repay a debt with devotion. This vow, *promesa*, or *manda*, is symbolized by the milagro, which is often worn for the duration of the vow's fulfillment and then offered at an altar, icon or sacred destination.

Daphne wrote this poem during one of our Callanish writing groups.



### Milagros

by Daphne Lobb  
Callanish Physician

How can I speak of milagros?  
Oh that I could wear one  
for every beautiful being that I have visited  
and ask for a cure -  
Yes, that is what I would do.  
For lungs and legs and breasts and tongues  
for bowels and skin and liver and brains.  
Oh so much to be mended,  
that I would wear a cloak  
with charms fastened to every inch of cloth  
like a dream-coloured jacket.  
Oh, and don't forget the charms  
for insight, for love, for wisdom, for strength.  
Those important charms,  
they tell us that really nothing needs mending,  
that we have it all.  
It is just arranged differently in each of us.  
That beneath the charms we wear  
for wishes and promises and vows and blessings,  
there lies a jacket worn with the trials of life.  
Holding strong, keeping us warm,  
reminding us that underneath  
we are all whole.



Milagros

## Art & Creativity at Callanish

by Gretchen Ladd  
Callanish Art Therapist



Gretchen Ladd

"I am not creative", "I can't draw a straight line", "my sister has all the talent." These comments are often heard at the beginning of group art sessions that take place during the week-long Callanish retreats. An atmosphere of both excitement and doubt builds as people gather around the art table for the first time. Some participants have not made art since childhood and it may be an act of great courage just to show up for the session.

Before we even touch the art supplies, it can be helpful to let everyone off the hook in regards to needing any special skills or talents. In fact, what seems most supportive is to approach the art-making as simply a way of connecting with ourselves and the natural longing to create. Like many of our other retreat activities, we can engage painting or sculpting as a means to bring us into deeper relationship with the present moment. We can then let go of the pressure to 'make something' and trust that being ourselves is the key to the creative act. Rather than come up with ideas, we are encouraged to listen closely to the body, feelings and impulses which inform the way we handle and explore the art materials. When we are connected to ourselves we can sense how our hands want to move across the paper and what feels right as we are shaping the clay. We can open the door to creativity through awareness and self-compassion and often discover that behind our concerns about being 'good enough' is a deep well of colours, words, stories and images just waiting to be expressed.

As the retreat weeks progress, paintings, poems and a variety of creations begin to appear around the art table. What has been made are things which have never been seen before because they arise out of the moment and unique feelings and experiences of the creator. Creativity at Callanish comes from turning toward our joys and sorrows and exploring what we find together. Some artworks speak directly to the experience of living with cancer; others capturing memories from long ago. The potential of this creative work to be truly healing is strengthened by the opportunity to be witnessed and held without judgment. With the presence of compassion, the power of art to communicate and provide others with a window into our inner experience can also act as an antidote to the loneliness and isolation that often accompanies illness. Listening closely to the heart, can in itself, spark the imagination and rekindle the creative spirit that lives in all of us.



## The Spacious Heart

by Kirsten Andersen

This past June, Callanish played host to several hundred generous hearts who attended its biggest fundraiser to date at the UBC Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver.



Kirsten Andersen

Those of us lucky enough to attend were treated to unparalleled performances by pianist, Maryliz Smith; flautist, Lorna McGhee; violinist, Joan Blackman; and, cellist, Ariel Barnes.

It was humbling, to say the least, to get up and speak amongst such talented artists; however, I am always grateful for the opportunity to gush about the people and organization that have had such a profound effect on my life.

I began with a poem written a few months ago after I requested (god knows why) and received my medical records in the mail. While what they contained was no surprise, as I already have most of the documents in some form or another, it was a rather daunting and unsettling experience to look at them all again.

Ironically, as depressing as this poem may sound to you, I actually felt better after writing it. In doing so, I felt like I had the final say.

### For the Record

You arrived  
tattered and torn  
bursting at the seams  
spilling forth  
an account of this body  
Four long years  
fourteen hundred and fifty-two days  
narrated across thousands of pages  
by countless doctors  
in Vancouver  
Montreal  
Seattle  
Texas  
all describing the “unfortunate young lady”  
“an anxious 32-year-old”  
“with no history of illness”  
“thin and pale”  
“a sizeable mass in the chest”  
“unusually aggressive disease”  
“no known cure - worldwide”  
palliative chemo for this “tragic case”

Am I tragic?

These words have been dictated,  
transcribed, typed and now delivered to me  
in a ragged envelope,  
arriving with the flyers and bills  
lying beside me in bed this morning  
GPs, surgeons, oncologists, endocrinologists,  
radiologists, hematologists,  
all have had their way with my body,  
its blood, its marrow, its developing cells,  
telling a story  
seemingly hopeless and futile  
sad and tragic  
until  
now

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After writing this poem, I asked myself:

“What did I mean by now?”

“When was now?”

When did the repair of a body, spirit and heart broken by cancer, begin?

It occurred to me that now was in fact long before the few minutes spent writing this poem. That an invisible mending had begun years before when I first walked through the door to Callanish.

It began when I attended my first Young Adult Support Group at Callanish the evening of my first day of chemo in May 2006.

It began when I attended my first retreat in January of 2007, three months after a stem cell transplant left me confused and unsure how to approach the future.

It began at Callanish in the city, sitting in many retreat day circles and writing groups after I learned that the transplant had not done what was intended and that the cancer had spread to my liver and bones.

It began at a weekend workshop entitled the Sacred Work of Dying in 2009 where we explored the emotional and spiritual obstacles to peace of mind and heart.

Heart.

Heart is what beats steadily at the centre of all this work at Callanish. It is offered freely, without exception, without limits.

Whether you are young, old, man, woman, gay, straight, Catholic, Jewish, lactose intolerant, there is a place for you at the Callanish table.

Heart is encouraged and nourished in each of us who belong to this community.

It is what many in this room can attest to, creating the conditions for healing, whether we are living with or dying from cancer.

And it was the support of this unconditional compassion that brought us together that beautiful June evening to share in a feast for the ears, and to rest in the spacious, extraordinary heart that is Callanish.

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### The New Brew Creek Centre cont.

The team is excited about the retreats they can now offer groups for the purpose of celebration, learning and transformation.

Callanish would like to publicly thank everyone at Brew Creek Centre for holding and maintaining such a clear and hopeful vision for our world, and for all the many ways you have supported and touched the lives of so many of our retreat participants.

If you want to find out more about Brew Creek Centre for your groups, their new website is on its way [www.brewcreekcentre.com](http://www.brewcreekcentre.com)



Brew Creek Centre

**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.

## Fruit Crisp

Every season reveals a different crisp! In the winter we use apples and pears and in the summer, berries. A plum crisp in the autumn is delicious.

*3/4 cup flour (we use spelt or rice flour)*

*3/4 cup rolled oats*

*1/2 cup Rapadura or organic granulated cane sugar*

*1/2 tsp cinnamon*

*1/4 tsp salt*

*1/2 cup butter*

*2 tbsp minced candied ginger*

*juice of 1/2 lemon*

### TOPPING:

Cut or rub butter into flour, spices and sugar until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs Add rolled oats and minced ginger. (If the fruit you are using is sweet then you may reduce the sugar to 1/3 cup). Mix fruit (about 4 cups e.g.: apples, peaches, blueberries or a mixture) with lemon juice.

Fill a 9", deep dish pie plate with the fruit. Sprinkle prepared topping on fruit and bake in 350 – 375° F oven for 45 minutes or until fruit is fully cooked.

Note: Lemon is added to apples, pears, and peaches so they will not turn brown. We do not add sweetener to the fruit.



## Honouring a Volunteer

Bill attended a week-long Callanish retreat in July 2009. Not long after that retreat Bill showed up one day with his truck, and said "Might you need my help to take your retreat stuff up to Brew Creek?" He was hired!! Since then, Bill has arrived on the day we leave for retreat, with his big truck and his big smile to help us load all our food for the week, our crystal bowls and gongs, huge bunches of flowers and boxes of books. Then on the final day of retreat, when we are exhausted, Bill arrives bright and early and spends the day lugging and carrying, packing and cleaning for us. He even brought his sister Maureen to the last retreat to help for the day. Needless to say Bill is a Godsend!



**Bill Sutherland**

Bill is also like a little invisible garden gnome. Frequently, Liz and Janie arrive at Callanish to find that Bill has been there early in the morning tidying up the front garden and clipping the grass. It looks immaculate. Even Susan, Bill's wife and their friend Helen planted flowers in our outside pots to greet us when we arrived home after one retreat. We call Bill our "Bonhomme"; our good man. Thanks for all your selfless service and your huge heart. We love you!

## We Remember with Love

MARIA DIZON  
PAM FRASER  
CHRISTIANE KLEINER  
JACQUI PAGE  
RAYMOND NEWELL  
DEEN SELWOOD  
NICOLE SIEMENS

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!

The family and friends of **Kirsten Andersen** and **Irene Lee** for donations in their honour

**Rima Andre** for her beautiful scarves

**Jenn Bos** and **Allison Prinsen** for volunteering many hours with the young adult program

**MaryAnne Brown**, **Caio Nery** and **Jacqui Page** for helping out in the office and garden

**Mike Cates** for his delicious baking for our ongoing groups

**Joni Denroche**, and her children **Steffi** and **Orion** for their dedication and hard work in reaching their wonderful fundraising goal in honour of fellow retreat participant and friend **Rita Wong**

**Suzanne Hong from Granville Island Florist** for her continued support of our retreats with her beautiful flowers

**Doug Evans** for volunteering to oversee our new roof and being our volunteer house handyman

**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 never missing her delivery of flowers and food for our monthly young adult group, and her constant pile of envelopes filled with concert tickets and more...

The family and friends of **Christiane Kleiner**, **Marlene Siemens**, **Ian Tapper**, **Nicole Siemens**, **Doug Webb** and **Jacqui Page** for their memorial donations

**Diane** and **Dick Loomer** for continuing to support Callanish through the proceeds of their Healing Voices CD, as well as for coming with the choir **EnChor** to sing at our Holiday Open House again this year

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

**Eva Matsuzaki** and **Neil Prinsen** for driving participants to retreats

**Laurel Murphy** and **Margaret Bacon** 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 September retreat participants

**Patricia North** for her wonderful concert tickets

**Lynn Onley** for donating her father Tony Onley's painting to be raffled for Callanish and to **Linda Lando at Granville Fine Art** for coming up with the idea!

**Allison Prinsen** for her endless devotion to our design needs, all on her own time

**Queensdale Market**, **West Pointe Organics**, **Market Meats** and **the Salmon Shop** for their discounts on retreat food

**Judy Stanfield** for her 12<sup>th</sup> year of making the famous "Callanish cookies" as well as preparing our retreat food supplies

