



Spring/Summer 2009



Janie Brown
Executive Director

No one is untouched by the disease of cancer these days. Cancer has affected the lives of every single one of us, many of us very directly and very personally, and others perhaps more at arms-length. We hear about the promises of weekends to end cancer, runs for the cure, and courageous battles to be fought and won. Many are empowered

and uplifted by these community events and this language of the brave. They instill hope that one day this disease will not be such an everyday topic of conversation, that not only will there be more effective treatments, but that we will also know more about the causes and conditions in which the disease arises, so that it can be prevented.

I noticed that all the retreat participants on a recent retreat were younger than me. I felt the outrage and the fight arise in me, the not wanting to accept that more and more young people are being diagnosed with cancer each year. Every working day I want more impressive changes in incidence and survival rates. I want to believe that if I fight hard enough, and battle against this truth then I can somehow make a difference. I am Scottish after all!

It seems though that in this fighting stance I am missing something. I become focused purely on some external reality that is disconnected from an inner awareness. Rather than feeling strengthened or empowered by this energy and by the way our society talks about cancer, I feel diminished and disempowered by the language of the "fight" and the false promises. I feel caught in the expectation that I must make some thing or someone the enemy, and that I have no choice but to fight, give up, or run away. Such is the classic fight or flight response to something aversive.

I think about all the people I know who have not "won the fight" and who are living with metastatic cancer, and all those I know who have died. The obituaries that speak of "losing the valiant battle" and "fighting the good fight" leave me wondering if the person died with this mistaken belief that he/she has failed in some way. I see that rather than make cancer the enemy to be fought people must find a way to come into relationship with the disease somehow. To relate to it rather than to reject it.

It is not my, or others' engagement in the fight that inspires hope in me, but the witnessing of the power of equanimity at work in our community of Callanish. To see people soften into a steady, deep intimacy with the way things are, beyond preferences, is my inspiration. To witness the life energy that arises in the giving up of resistance to the truth of the ways things are, is the hope. This acceptance is not to be confused with "giving up hope" but rather understanding that surrender actually affords the possibility that anything can happen. We can hope wholeheartedly for a good

outcome, but it is in the giving up of attachment to that end, that actually frees us up to our living.

We must continue to deepen this community that, of course, wants solutions to cancer but also commits to being there for one another when cure may not be possible. Cancer is not just a disease of the individual but one that arises within the collective. The healing of one person I believe then belongs to the whole community, to all of us. We must have the guts to talk openly with one another about what it means to be sick without blame or judgment, and without demanding that the person take on the fight if they don't want to. And when the time comes to face our deaths we must do so with the support and care of one another. We must ultimately trust in the strength of our hearts to lose without becoming embittered, and to continue loving even when much of what we hold dear gets taken away.

Rather than hearing only the language of the warrior we need to hear more about what it takes to really live life, to find glimpses of joy amidst grueling physical symptoms or side-effects, and to uncover real connection amidst the depths of uncertainty. The inner and outer life can come into relationship with one another. We must listen and learn from the people who understand the work it takes to live knowing that they will die too soon. What is their language? How do they feel strengthened? What do they turn to to inspire hope in their living. These people are my real teachers, right here at Callanish.

Going Home by Laura Paul

*It is the actor, the imposter
who takes centre stage.
Bows, beams, accepts the encore,
the accolades which so cleverly stroke the fragile ego.
It is the chameleon who can do anything
adapt to all, commit to nothing
simply cozy up and change color
with the heat of the spotlights.*

*But somewhere behind the curtains
in the wings
the real play unfolds
Unconscious of the crowd
with no need to please
listening, feeling, ready to surrender
to the pulse, the primal pull
that is timeless
relentless in its certainty
of another place
where the words and song are heard by all
and judged by none.
This is home.*



Hello! It's me, Heart, speaking. Mind wanted to write this piece, but we know Mind would be trying sooo hard to unravel personal history, put forward complex ideas, and find new meaning. Toooo complicated, if you ask me. Heart likes to keep things simple.

For most of my life I've been a nice, ordinary Heart. I held my friends and family very dear, tried to take care of them, like remembering to get a card or a gift on their birthdays and Valentine's Day. I gave them hugs and kisses now and then, always staying in touch.

Then one day, ohhh that dark and dreaded day, the doctor said "You'll need some chemo and maybe some radiation too." What?! *! Was that thunder I just heard? Felt like lightning!! During the weeks and months that followed, stormy clouds rolled in and out. It was hard to hear anything outside because it was so dark and noisy inside. In fact, it seemed best to keep others out of this storm, kind of protecting my dear ones.

Dark of Heartness, that's what I called it. A little white pill every morning dulled the senses. One particularly stormy day I called the cancer clinic for help. We explored relaxation and meditation and what Heart was feeling. Poor Mind was very confused. Counselor said "You, Heart, need Callanish". Okay, where do I sign up?

That was in 2001, and that was the beginning of a long and lasting relationship between Heart and Callanish. The November 2001 retreat was at Brew Creek Lodge. I picked up 3 women from Ontario at the airport, drove 2 hours to Brew Creek sharing and comparing our stories in the car. Heart was already beginning the Callanish stretch – without realizing it.

The retreat program included meditation, Qigong exercises, group discussions, wonderful food, art, music, massage, nature walks. But what do I remember the most? Heart stretches and more heart stretches. Such elasticity, such love – and all in just 6 days. I thought for sure that this stretching would either break me or it would have to rebound back to the smaller, ordinary Heart I've always been. But not so!! It seems that the Callanish HeartStretch lasts.

With time, we threw away the little white pills, kept the meditation, the relaxation, and more. Mind would read some more books about darkness or illness, but Heart found magic in poetry, found that it spoke to Soul. Oh, you haven't met Soul yet, have you? In a way, Soul was the gift of darkness. It was Heart's navigator during the stormy seas. Eventually, HeartStretch was wide and bright enough that Soul had the space for 'coming out', and it became my full-time companion. Soul was very glad to see Heart not only reading poetry, but also beginning to write poetry.

Speaking of poetry, perhaps the most special day for HeartSoul was the Callanish and Chor Leoni concert called Chiaroscuro when MaryLiz and singers put music to my poetry. Believe me, it was very scary to have your Heart running around naked in a cathedral with hundreds looking on. These HeartTremors (small earthquakes?) sort of reminded me of the little talk at the Wine and Cheese event at Hycroft. Somehow, perhaps with the help of Hycroft ghosts, Heart nervously shared its story. Tremors or not, by the end of each evening it was another big HeartStretch.

When Callanish offered an alumni retreat (for those that had been on a previous retreat), Heart was first in line. When day retreats are available in the city, to this day, Heart is first in line. When any kind of concert is put on, when there is a writing or reading group, Heart is there. The stretch goes on and on. S-T-R-E-T-C-H.

Around 2003, Eva was invited to sit on the Callanish Board – a working board, Janie said. Of course, Mind thought "This is for me. I'm ready for work." Not so fast, Mind. Turns out, this job is for HeartBody. Heart is still in charge, but Body required too. Drive participants to/from retreat; move furniture for concerts; bar-tend at fund-raisers; load the van for retreats; and wash dishes (and pots and pans!) at three retreats. Each piece has meant some BodyStretch for this old gal, but more importantly, more bright HeartStretches.

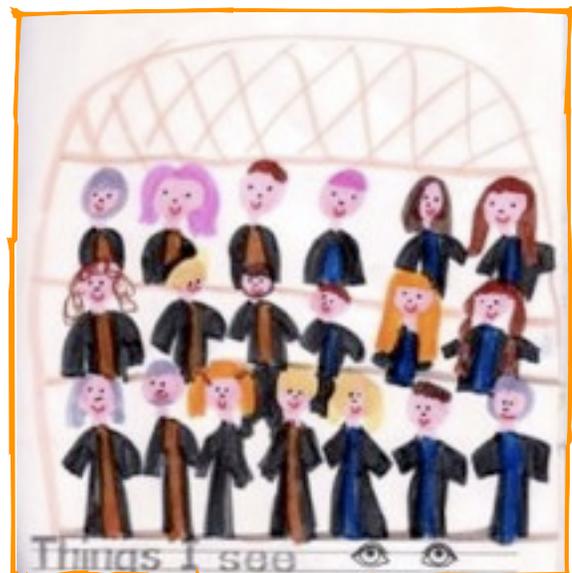
In August 2006 we went to visit the ancient Callanish Standing Stones on the Isle of Lewis in far northern Scotland. It was there that it became so clear that we are all connected, that we all stand in a circle, each of us distinct, yet all connected – through time and space. HeartStretch really spans 5000 years and holds all the hearts in the Callanish Community. It is a community that has the strength and elasticity to stretch far and wide, that holds us, our friends, our families, all that dwell in our hearts. HeartSoul has come home.

"Every Road Leads Home" Universal Gospel Choir and Shari Ulrich Benefit Concert at the Stanley Theatre

On April 18th, 2009, feet were tapping and hands clapping (and a few people dancing in the aisles) as we listened to the wondrous sound of the **Universal Gospel Choir** conducted by **Kathryn Nicholson**, along with the funny, poignant and fabulous singer/songwriter **Shari Ulrich**. It was a night to open the heart and uplift the spirit. The drawing below was done by Janie's niece Faith who sat in the centre of the front row. The smiles capture it all!!

True to Callanish, there was both laughter and tears that evening, as we acknowledged the power of music and song to remind us of all the beautiful aspects of our lives that cancer can never take away.

A huge thank you to **Martha Lou Henley** for sponsoring the evening and to all those who gave of their time and energy to make this such a memorable evening.



by Faith Bradshaw Brown

Love and Relationship; The Teachings of Callanish

by Jan Wells



My diagnosis of cancer was a life-changing shock, which ended my teaching career and caused great sadness for my family and my friends. My cancer was metastatic and the emotional and mental struggle was hard, for metastases mean the certainty of death, but the uncertainty of when that death will be. Those of us with

metastatic disease may live for months or years, for a few years, or for many. There begins a cliff top walk of unpredictability, unsure of the way, expecting the path to crumble but always hoping there will be a way around the abyss.

When I found the Callanish Society I found wisdom to help my family and me learn to live with my cancer. Through the love and experience of Janie and the team who create the Callanish community, I have joined circles of belonging, which have touched me deeply. Through retreats, the Writing Group and the beautiful experience of "Strength Within" relaxation group I have come to look beyond the world of medical treatments and alternate therapies which care for my body, and learned to focus as well on the needs of my inner being. The emotional and spiritual work at Callanish has shown me a way to live with the uncertainty of metastatic cancer.

While affirming a deeply-held belief in the power of a positive attitude and a love of life, I have come to understand that hope of life and acceptance of death are but two halves of the same equation. The journey towards the acceptance of the inevitability of death is not easy. It is challenging to open the heart and mind to a new awareness, and to seek some meaning in the diminishing of the person I once was, and to learn an appreciation for the person I am becoming. It is a transition. I have found at Callanish that through love and empathy for others my heart opens and softens bringing with it peacefulness, a calming of the spirit, and an inner tranquility for myself. Love and relationships have become the key for me.

Callanish circles overflow with love, irresistible and infectious in its boundless acceptance. Judgment is not part of the conversation: each individual has a unique essence that is respected and celebrated. I have learned that everyone has a unique response to disease and that there is no right way to manage illness. We all respond as we see fit and Callanish teaches us to accept ourselves as we are and to love others the way they are without judging them.

The journey I have taken has led me to review my own life through this new lens: that of acceptance. It has been an intense and a personal journey. I have reviewed relationships, past and present and thought long and hard about my role in the lives of others. I have thought about decisions I have made and their consequences. Some very practical actions have resulted from this work; I have prepared for my death, in my relationships long before that death has actually come about. It is one of the gifts of a chronic illness, that it allows time for this preparation. The work at Callanish has brought about a new appreciation for me of the importance of recognizing the love that others bring into my life. I have time to acknowledge that love and to build and strengthen those important connections between myself and others. I have talked openly about the experience of living with cancer, and as a result have found people full of gratitude that they can share the experience instead of being afraid of it.

Without Callanish I might never have learned that receiving love from others is as important as giving and doing and being a force for change in the world. There are times, I now know, when it is enough to be a receiver, not passively living without meaning, but actively participating in life through the act of acceptance. It is my

hope that this learning, which has meant so much to me, may be passed through me to others. Love and relationships give meaning to my life as my illness progresses and my gratitude to those at Callanish who have shared the wisdom of their experience is boundless.

(I would also like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Karen Gelmon, my oncologist, who has looked after me in the same spirit as Callanish).

The Herd

by Kirsten Andersen

*The lone elephant
though large in appearance
seems the most vulnerable of species
ungainly and grey
she knows when she's in the room
Alone
appearing shy and awkward
she does not know
that untethered
her foot can move freely
she can walk forward
walk away
from the loneliness, grief, despair
she can walk
to where the sun comes home
to the earth on the horizon*

*Here – the herd
they remember her
surround her in an elephant embrace
trunk to tail
tail to trunk
they form a single line
a tender thread
of unspoken connection
they move
as one grand silhouette
quietly etching their grace
their existence
into the memory of the earth*



Janie in Thailand 2008

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.

Blueberry or Blackberry Spelt Pancakes

Pancake day at the retreat is always greeted with enthusiasm and smiles. I often think it is a reminder of summer camp or over-nighting with friends. Our pancakes are exceptionally healthy and at the same time very light. We use a whole spelt flour with the bran still in it. We use rice milk and lightly whipped large free range eggs. If you are using medium eggs toss in an extra as this is what makes these pancakes so light.

Sift together:

1 cup spelt flour

2 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp sea salt

Mix together:

3/4 cup rice milk

2 Tbsp expeller – pressed canola oil or sunflower seed oil

2 free range eggs

Pour wet mixture into the dry just until combined. Add *1/2 cup of berries*. Fry each side in a heavy frying pan brushed lightly with oil or butter. Serve with freshly ground flax, chopped almonds, warmed maple syrup and a spoonful of yogurt.

We always make a fruit syrup to go along with the toppings. A chopped apple, a cup of blueberries, a tablespoon of butter, and a little maple syrup, simmered together until the apples are tender is an easy and delicious topping.

Callanish has a new website thanks to the hard work of Allison Prinsen and Dan Helmer.

We are delighted to have such a beautifully designed website with lots of photos and up-to-date information about our programs and upcoming events. Take a look at www.callanish.org

Honouring a Volunteer

Allison first came to Callanish through her participation in the Young Adult Cancer Network in 2005. Soon after joining the group and experiencing retreat, Allison let us know she was interested in 'giving back' to Callanish. We said a big "yes" and since that time she has donated her design skills to create numerous projects including event posters, invitations, holiday cards, poetry books and most recently our new website. Despite her busy schedule at work and school, Allison is a devoted volunteer and Callanish board member. Allison has given so much of her time and energy to the Callanish community, but perhaps her most precious gift is how she shares her tremendously open and insightful heart.



Allison Prinsen

Thank you Allison.

We Remember with Love

TREICE BACKS
ANGELA CECIL
SUE HARRIS
KATHERINE LENMAN
BRIAN MEHAFFEY
VICKI MATCHES
LORI MOROSOFF
EILEEN SPILLET
CAROLYN WALTERS
JACKIE WITTMAN

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 quiet generosity

Aban Security for their generous support in monitoring our building

Kirsten Anderson for taking us on another wonderful journey through writing from the heart

The family and friends of **Angela Cecil, Sue Harris, Katherine Lenman, Carolyn Walters** and **Jackie Wittman** for their generous memorial donations

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

Dympna Devlin, Eva Matsuzaki, Lorna McGhee and Jeanne Russell for volunteering in the kitchen during our week-long retreats

Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation for their ongoing scholarship support and matching funding

Louie Henley for sponsoring our *Every Road Leads Home* concert, a beautiful new gong, items for the house including a new kitchen stove, food & flowers for our young adult group, tickets to some of the best concerts in Vancouver

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

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

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

Jan du Monde who creates wonderful bookmarks for retreat participants

Laurel Murphy & Lorna McGhee for the gift of healing sounds for our monthly relaxation group

Queensdale Market and **West Pointe Organics** for their generous discount on healthy retreat foods

Ross Regan for the delicious spelt bread for retreats

Carol Robertson for the gifts to the house, tickets for Unique Lives and the many ways she supports the Callanish staff and community

Jeanne Russell, Eva Matsuzaki, Monica Forster, Louie Henley & Neil Prinsen for their help in loading and driving for the retreats

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

Claire Talbot for her many hours of volunteering and especially for the "*Sacred Work of Dying*" retreat

Universal Gospel Choir and **Shari Ulrich** for creating a wonderful & heartfelt concert and successful fundraising event for Callanish