



Janie Brown
Executive Director

Words from Janie

The Callanish Team left for our 83rd residential retreat just three days after the U.S. election. The only place I wanted to be that week was in a small world of our own making, with people dedicated to the values of respect, honesty, generosity, and love, in the face of personal and global tragedy. I wanted to be immersed in the rain-drenched forest, walk along the raging creek, look up at the night sky with its largest moon in seventy-five years and be in the

company of people who have the courage to feel it all, to know there is nowhere to hide from the present moment.

The day after the election I received a flurry of poems from friends who were trying to make sense of the world unfolding before our eyes. This poem touched me deeply, written by twenty-six year-old Somali-British poet, Warsan Shire, Young Poet Laureate, London (2014).

what they did yesterday afternoon

by warsan shire

they set my aunts house on fire
 i cried the way women on tv do
 folding at the middle
 like a five pound note.
 i called the boy who use to love me
 tried to 'okay' my voice
 i said hello
 he said warsan, what's wrong, what's happened?

 i've been praying,
 and these are what my prayers look like;
 dear god
 i come from two countries
 one is thirsty
 the other is on fire
 both need water.

later that night
 i held an atlas in my lap
 ran my fingers across the whole world
 and whispered
 where does it hurt?

it answered
 everywhere
 everywhere
 everywhere.

On this past retreat, like all retreats over the past twenty years, we asked people where it hurts, and they told us. Like the world, they too hurt everywhere; they hurt in their bodies, in their minds and in their hearts. Cancer takes much away from a person: body parts, hopes, dreams, the future, trust in life, life itself, friends, faith and many, many other things. Rather than collapsing into despair like many people want to when tragedy hits, the people who choose to come on retreat discover that a community can hold the hurt of every person by listening and accepting the heartbreak in one another's worlds.

I returned from retreat a few days ago, and realized the enormity of what had shifted inside me from being with a group of activists for their own freedom, in spite of cancer. Being around people who can open their hearts in the midst of pain, reach towards another person to support and care, laugh until their sides hurt, activate their bright creativity, and reconnect to their humanity, restored my faith in the choices I can make to put my energy into the values I want to see upheld in the world around me.

A friend once said, "The world emanates from within," a phrase I have reflected deeply upon over my life. This past week I got closer to understanding its meaning. While I still hurt for the world I feel a steady resolve to keep loving and caring and helping people to heal, thanks to belonging to a community of people who deeply love and respect life, in all its forms. Thank you to the November 2016 retreat community for helping me right myself to what matters. Thank you for showing me that the world I relate to outside myself is often a reflection of where I put my attention inside. To me, the Callanish community feels like a powerful antidote to the hurt, a balm that comforts and reassures and strengthens all of us to hold to our values in this world, no matter what.



Dee Westwood

Dear Death by Dee Westwood, retreat participant, August 2016

I was diagnosed at the age of 35 with Stage 2, Grade 3, triple negative ductal breast cancer on April Fool's day, 2014. Surgery, followed by chemo and radiation was the course of action until a positive genetic result for BRCA2 the summer of 2015 started another series of, this time, prophylactic surgeries. Attending the young adult retreat with Callanish in 2016 was life-changing. Even now, months later, I am still digesting the fruits of the hard work we

all did in that special place, and I, who grew up without sisters, now have many to add to my chosen family. I may never be able to properly articulate how just listening and being present, and being listened to and supported with laughter, tears, kindness, music, love, and great food, cracked my heart open even wider to allow more love in.

I wrote this piece during one of our morning groups on the subject of our relationship with death.

Hello darkness my old friend... We've known each other for a long, long time now... Since stardust and miracles, through the passage of time and the music of life. You're like an invisible, slightly overbearing force, and we walk this winding path together, hand in hand, arm in arm.

A few times you've carried me... You whispered to me when my body was broken and fighting. You whispered, "Not yet," and I rallied.

And then, when he died across town, I felt you. I felt urgency and then the release when you must have walked with him and led him beyond. I knew in a moment that you had already taken him. I'd told him it was okay to go, that we loved him and would miss him but it was okay, so he walked with you.

Years later, when her heart nearly stopped I was so afraid when you gave me courage to write the words I needed to say. You helped me meet the fear and speak my heart. More love, so much love. The next time I noticed you sitting with me, we sat in that waiting room, while fear clutched at my chest and I couldn't eat or rest... You sat, like a dear wise grandmother weaving her tapestry of love and fear, joy and pain, and hope - so much hope. I watched you walking with my baby son, his body broken, his tiny little form scarred and eyes swollen shut, my scent and touch his only comfort. And you smiled and you whispered, "Not yet" again. And we loved. So fiercely, so completely, we almost had forgotten you were there.

We've been closer lately, you and I. My old friend. My constant companion. And while I do not fear you, I fear what comes after. I fear what becomes of my children if I die when they are small.

Who can take my place? And would I be replaced? Would they remember me? And I want to bargain with you but the only thing I have to offer you, you will get anyways. So instead, as always, I invite you to the table. To join us and remind us again and again and again to love, fiercely, for time is short but love endures.

Let my legacy be love. Thank you, death, for reminding me what is most important to me: making sure my loved ones know and feel and hear my love, whispering through the forest, laughing in the brook, yelling from the mountain tops.

Healing Circles Initiative

We are excited to have recently partnered with Michael Lerner at Commonweal (www.commonweal.org), Diana and Kelly Lindsay at Healing Circles Langley (www.healingcircleslangley.org), and other centres in North America, to continue to offer circles of support for people with cancer, their families and caregivers, and for those in grief, around North America.

Our hope at Callanish is to expand our groups at Callanish, to support people who have not yet been on retreat (our waiting list for retreat is growing!) and also provide training and support to individuals connected with Callanish around our province, who are interested in starting circles in their communities. Please be in touch if you are interested in learning more about these opportunities.

New Circles at Callanish

Grief Circle

The first monthly Grief Circle was held on November 23rd from 7-9 pm. This offering is a time for people to sit in a safe, sacred space to share memories, stories, feelings and thoughts about a loved one who has died, and the experience of mourning. The circle is for people who have lost a family member, or friend, to cancer, as well as to any other causes of death.

The group will be facilitated by Callanish counsellors: Danielle Schroeder, Susie Merz and Janie Brown.

Support Circle

Our monthly Support Circle begins on Thursday, January 12, from 1:30 to 3:30 pm for people with cancer and their family members/caregivers. This circle will be open to past retreat participants, as well as newcomers to Callanish who are interested in connecting in a safe space about what it means to have a cancer diagnosis, both for those with cancer and for those that love and care for them.

The group will be facilitated by Callanish counsellors: Susie Merz, Danielle Schroeder and Janie Brown.

Please check callanish.org for ongoing monthly circle dates. Please call or email to register for circles or with any questions.



Lana Groves

Words by Lana Groves, past retreat participant, July 2015

In July 2013, I was diagnosed with triple negative, 'metaplastic' breast cancer. Scarier than the diagnosis was the fear of navigating all the medical appointments. I had been agoraphobic from the trauma of my son Andrew being killed eleven years earlier and I knew that I would now be forced out of my isolation by this diagnosis.

The complications of my double mastectomy surgery did a number on my already tattered nerves and home care nurses had to come for five months to deal with a wound that wouldn't heal. My body couldn't tolerate chemotherapy and so my oncologist decided that chemo had to be terminated after only one treatment.

Determined to find a solution to my fears about an aggressive cancer that would not be treated with chemotherapy, I signed up for a Callanish retreat at The Brew Creek Centre. I think I may have chickened out and secluded

myself had I not promised to drive two others to the retreat.

Arriving at the beautiful Brew Creek we were greeted by the staff at the parking lot. They carried our luggage and took each of us to our private rooms. Tessa sat on my bed and I felt like I had known her forever. She was so calm and attentive that I soon felt at home.

I rested in my beautiful room and looked out over the amazing Brew Creek grounds. I joined seven other women along with the staff for an amazing dinner of baked sockeye salmon and salads from the gardens out back. It was the best meal I had ever had and I'm sure that was because of the love put into the preparation. It felt like the staff were put on the planet just to nurture us.

We spent the evening in a circle around the fireplace sharing our stories. This circle every evening became a sanctuary for me. Although it was serious and sensitive and deep I hadn't laughed so much for years. We were each given a ukulele to play and strummed our ukes and sang each night. I was curious to note that I wasn't tempted to run off to the seclusion of my room. Each morning we had activities that were very fulfilling and thought-provoking and we had the afternoons for alone time to process it all, or we could spend time with the others wandering the grounds, or lounging in the hot tub. The overall experience was something that I think would be spoiled by trying to put it into words. It was a mystical and momentous experience that felt like it was given to me by some kind of divine intervention.

When I got back to town I felt overwhelmed and couldn't adapt back to my old life. I was changed and stunned by the effect Callanish had had on me. I was a bit embarrassed to admit that I wondered if Andrew had a hand in sending me to Callanish. His good friend Margaret Bacon had been volunteering at Callanish for years and I believe that seeing her again, and making the connection to Andrew and the grief we both shared, felt like a first tiny opening of my heart to explore life again. I had shut it down for safety that morning in emergency when I sat with his body.

I had tried other support groups but had just felt the pressure to heal. I didn't want to be held responsible for not healing because I didn't have a positive enough attitude and still ate Kraft dinner! At Callanish, there is no analysis of why people heal. We are just individuals with unique stories. I felt acceptance of where I was at in the moment which even included the permission to die. I was given the freedom to explore my heart and soul in ways that were very healing for me. Without gimmicks, life just flows and this unconditional acceptance was not only significant for my physical health, but I also felt the beginnings of healing from the immense loss of my son and my recent medical traumas.

Over a year later, I am still feeling the healing and opening and so is my daughter. Although I had spent the last several years trying to protect her from my grief, anxiety and PTSD, she still felt my pain. These changes in me have eased her fears. I was even able to talk to her about death and how I was no longer afraid because I had Callanish, a calm and loving presence in the face of death. Acknowledging that death is a possibility means acknowledging that it might also not come for a long time and that makes each day a joy...even the ugly days have a tinge of hope, gratitude and acceptance.

An added bonus to the mystery and magic of Callanish for me is that the Callanish centre is across the street from my apartment, so I attend all the programs I can there. It is like an extension of my retreat. I can see the Callanish glass awning from my balcony and when I need to soothe my soul I just glance across the street and breathe.



Thank You To Our Team Fondo Cyclists And Supporters

Thirty-two cyclists crossed the Finish Line in Whistler after a gruelling 122 kilometre climb from Vancouver on Saturday September 10th, to raise funds for Callanish. Thank you to the team for your effort, dedication, and generosity in making this experience so deeply meaningful and successful. And thank you to all the amazing supporters who sponsored you!

Aimee Taylor, a past retreat participant, decided to train with the team. Here are a few words from her which describes a taste of what she accomplished. Thank you for the inspiration!

From Aimee the day before the ride:

Tomorrow, along with 31 other Team Callanish members, I will be riding my bike to Whistler for the Whistler Gran Fondo, 2016. When Janie asked me to be a part of the team this spring, I had just finished chemo for my recurrence of metastatic cancer, and could barely walk up three flights of stairs without getting winded, but somehow I knew I couldn't pass up this opportunity.

The Fondo is much more than a bike ride for me. It is a way for me to have control over my body. I may not win against the cancer in the end, but I will beat it tomorrow, even if just for a day. I am bigger than my cancer, and I can do extraordinary things, in spite of it. It doesn't have to define me. I am riding to change the lives of many others with cancer, who will get support through Callanish. I am riding for Kate, a friend of over 20 years, who died just a few weeks ago, and who taught me so much about how to be a mum while dealing with cancer. I am riding for Ashley, a Callanish young adult friend who was diagnosed on the same day as me in 2013 and is now also dealing with a recurrence. I am riding for Alexa, my three-year-old daughter, who is my main inspiration. I am riding for me. I am riding for my cycling partner, Allison, a core Callanish team member, who will be by my side the whole way up and has been a huge source of support and motivation for me.

B.C. Cancer called me today to tell me they could fit me in for an MRI tonight to get better imaging of my new tumour, and that I'd have to start fasting for 6 hours prior. I told them no. Not today. Because for once, something is more important than tests and treatment and cancer. This weekend, I'm taking control back. This weekend, I will ride across a Finish Line that holds an incredible amount of symbolism. I will finish. Cancer can wait.



Chocolate Mousse (Serves 4)

- 1 cup chocolate chips*
- 4 eggs, separated
- 5 tbsp. organic decaf coffee or water
- 2 tbsp. vanilla extract
- Chili powder**

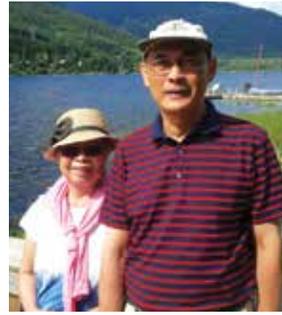
*chocolate chips: naturally sweetened, semi-sweet

**for an extra zing add a pinch of dried hot chili powder

(for a chocolate bonus or a more bitter chocolate mousse, add 1 tbsp. organic cocoa powder)

On a low heat, in a heavy saucepan add the organic coffee (hot) to the chips and whisk until smooth. Add the egg yolks and whisk over low heat for 2 minutes. Take off the heat and add the vanilla. Beat the egg whites until soft peaks form. Add the chocolate mixture folding it in until the mixtures are combined but the whites are not broken down.

Pour the mixture into stemmed glasses and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.



Rose and Tony

Honouring a Volunteer

Tony Tan first came to Callanish with his wife Rose Chung just after she attended a retreat in May 2013.

After retreat, Rose became a regular at Callanish for Monday meditation and Retreat Days. She initiated the making of our stunning community quilt which hangs in the lobby at Callanish. After Rose died, Tony began to attend Monday meditation

and he found it comforting to come to the same place Rose had come for many months through her illness. He said he could feel a deep connection with Rose in the circle which helped him with his grief. One day, Tony overheard Liz and I talking about our office requirements with regards to bookkeeping. Having just retired as an accountant Tony generously jumped in to offer his help. Every 1-2 weeks Tony comes as a volunteer to Callanish as our bookkeeper and we are so very grateful. We also feel that Rose would be so pleased that Tony too has become a regular!

We Remember with Love

Kate Belliveau
 Jacqueline Cummings
 Helen Podmoroff
 Doug McNichol
 Lily Murphy
 Doeshka Timmer
 Maria Pauchley

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

Special Thanks to:

The family and friends of **Jeff Abeysekera, Ashley Brear, Liz Evans, Martin Holloway, Helen Podmoroff, Nicole Siemens** for their generous memorial donations.

Donna Workman and **Carla Gregor** for having donations sent to Callanish in lieu of birthday gifts.

Martha Lou Henley for her never-ending generosity of spirit, food & flowers, concert tickets and more.

Jeanette Frost for donating many hours to lead the Sunday recreational cycling group.

The **Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation** for their generous scholarship support and matching funds.

Bowen Island Gives for their amazing summer hike for Callanish raising \$5400.00!

Doug Evans, Don Matsuzaki, Buddy Sakamoto, and **Bill Sutherland** for helping us pre and post retreat.

Michael Luco of Earthrise for providing stunning flowers for retreats and city events.

Renee Mitchell at **Choices Market** and **Market Meats** for their discount on retreat food shopping.

Bruno & Sally Born and **Graham Pap** at **Finest at Sea** for the gorgeous fish for our retreats.

Stephanie Sauvé for all her generous support with our website needs.

Allison Prinsen for volunteering her time for our design needs.

Les Amis Du Fromage for donating amazing cheese platters for Liz Evan's memorial gathering.

Bill Sutherland for maintaining our roof and garden.

Eva Matsuzaki for writing heartfelt thank you cards to our donors.

Laurel Murphy and **Margaret Bacon** for the gift of healing sounds and touch for our relaxation group.

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

The Brew Creek Centre for their ongoing generosity and support and especially for being so generous with the memorial service for Liz Evans.

Sarah Kramer of Tattoo Zoo for her wonderful Halloween fundraiser.

Our fabulous baking team of **Sherri Silverman, Janet Silver, Susan Stine** and **Karen Hoffman** for the infamous cookies.

Randy Merz, Susie's brother for helping stain our back patio.

Justine Greene, Sarah Sample, and Claire Talbot for volunteering to wash dishes on retreat.

Neil Prinsen for driving participants to retreat.

Suzanne Hong at **Granville Island Florists** for bringing beauty to our retreats through her flowers.

Chor Leoni for the proceeds from their 'Healing Voices' CD.

EnChor choir for singing carols at our Holiday Open House.