

MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2020
WINTER
QUARTERLY
REPORT



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

A government in transition. A global pandemic killing thousands every day. A planet continuing to warm. Humanity beyond the point of collapse and potential extinction. All life threatened.

More and more of us are realizing that unlimited material progress is a myth, one that is feeding the root of each of these problems. We see that these problems are global and collective; therefore, we need a collective solution that goes beyond the efforts of any single individual, group, or nation.

At CEDAR, as our trainees develop wisdom through meditation practice, they also gain skills in leadership that empower them to act on their deep and growing compassion. As a community, we are developing trustworthy collective intelligence capable of responding to untrustworthy collective madness. This is hard work. This is vital work. We are here to do nothing less radical than to shift global values towards caring for all of life.

Four years ago, when there were just eight of us, we took on over a million dollars of debt to establish the Monastic Academy for the Preservation of Life on Earth (MAPLE) in Lowell, Vermont. In 2018, we established Optimizing Awakening and Kindness (OAK) in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, California. Right now, I am looking around our meeting table. I see thirty trainees of CEDAR from our three monastic centers: MAPLE in VT, OAK in CA, and WILLOW in Canada.

WILLOW is a new monastic center outside of Toronto, Canada which has been established over the past year by Jasna Seishin Todorović, a long-time member of our CEDAR family. We are honored by and proud of the difficult challenges Seishin has taken on to bring this form of modern monastic training to Canadians.

A major, long-time supporter donated \$100,000 this quarter to funding the launch of CEDAR as an overarching governing body. Going forward, CEDAR will play a more active role in guiding and overseeing the monastic academy branches.

With critical U.S. elections and the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was a pivotal year on the global stage. It was also a pivotal year for CEDAR. We weathered incredible challenges and actually grew, both in numbers and in dedication. We are fortunate to be doing this most challenging of tasks which is crucial for our shared world. I am proud of the long way we have come thus far and look forward to the many more advances this next year.

In friendship,

Peter Xūramitra Park
Executive Director



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OAK (CALIFORNIA)

This has been a period of exploration for OAK. We connected with many old and new friends this quarter, creating and strengthening many relationships. We hold them, as we hold our relationship with you, sacred and precious in their own right, even as we feel the excitement of sharing the many wonderful gifts that will come of these relationships.

Soryu Forall's arrival at OAK marked a significant dive into the integration of Awakening and Responsibility in our community. On the Awakening side, he led two intensive week-long retreats.

On the Responsibility side, we continued to forge connections to tech leaders in a number of ways. We held multiple events and retreats for friends and supporters, including a weekend immersion with tech innovators and founders of the South Park Commons community. Participants reported that their relationship to life was transformed as a result of our offerings. We continue to bring our teachings to leaders from the Center for Applied Rationality (CFAR), Seasteading, 1517 Fund, The Thiel Foundation, Google, Apple, and some of the leading Artificial Intelligence organizations.

In a significant step in CEDAR's maturation, three important members at OAK took deep and significant Bodhisattva Vows. Pan Williams (Panshin), Alice Liu (Kyōshin), and Vienna Looi (Svabhāva) took lay-ordination with Shinzen and Forall, connecting them to the CEDAR tradition and the lineage of Shingon Buddhism.

As we work to model a trustworthy culture, we hold ourselves to the high standards of ethics and integrity in our resident commitments and training. While Forall was teaching at OAK, Jōshin completed a long-term solitary retreat. After Forall returned to MAPLE, Jōshin led the OAK group on a fiery awakening retreat. Many of the participants reported benefits. However, the extremity of some of the practices, such as training outdoors, alarmed CEDAR's leadership who advised OAK to scale back its intensity.

Partly due to this event, Jōshin is taking a sabbatical away from teaching at OAK to train in other facets of development with a teacher in Oregon. Jōshin has stewarded OAK since its inception in 2018. Now he can take a break, without that weighty responsibility on his shoulders, to focus on his own training and personal development.

In addition, another OAK resident broke our resident commitment. While it is common for young adults in a residential, intimate environment to form strong bonds, CEDAR does not allow sexual contact between students who are training together. Most concerning is intimate relations within a hierarchy. Recently, two trainees at OAK fell in love, had sexual relations, and thus broke the residential agreement. They immediately communicated to others about their relationship. As a result, one of them continues training as a resident but has left their position of leadership. The other trainee returned home after completing their term of training.

In order to maintain a good monastic container, CEDAR sent senior leaders from MAPLE to OAK. CEDAR will be more involved in overseeing and supporting each branch going forward. We have faith in OAK as it moves through this difficult, developmental growth.

At the end of 2020, the OAK team left their home of the past year in Berkeley to establish themselves temporarily in Healdsburg, CA. In this winter period, they are doing a lot of group processing and learning how to better cohere as a leadership team. They will be looking for more long-term housing in the Spring closer to the Santa Cruz mountain area.





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WILLOW (CANADA)

On October 1st 2020, after more than a year of planning, preparing, and training, CEDAR's first international branch, WILLOW, opened its doors in Canada.

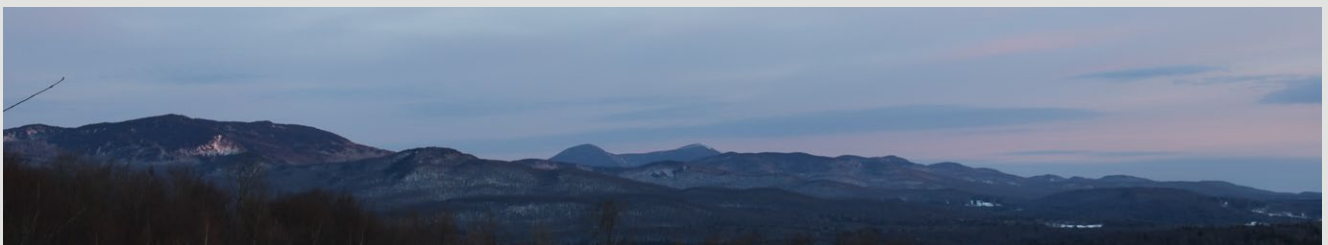
Seishin Jasna Todorović has been a CEDAR community member for many years. She made the decision to dedicate her life to this training in 2019. In May of that year, she purchased a seven-bedroom, ten-acre property east of Toronto and set to work on renovating it to become Canada's first Monastic Academy.

Since every Monastic Academy needs a teacher, in March of 2020 Seishin went back to MAPLE for four months of intensive training, with the intention of qualifying as a teacher in the CEDAR system. This included a six-week solitary cabin retreat, after which Soryu Forall gave Seishin permission to teach.

During her time at MAPLE, a small community of practitioners formed at WILLOW, spearheaded by Brooks Yardley, a former MAPLE apprentice. When Seishin returned to WILLOW in July, she was welcomed back by Brooks and three community members. Since then, all three community members have become full-time residents, working every day to keep WILLOW thriving and enthusiastically engaging with the Awakening practice.

In November, WILLOW launched a crowdfunding campaign which has so far brought in \$15,000 CAD.

WILLOW has many strong ties to communities in Toronto, including the technology startup space, Effective Altruism, Rationalism, Authentic Relating, Consciousness Explorers Club, and Peter Limberg's The Stoa. Through these connections, WILLOW hopes to create a thriving and multifaceted monastic community that will serve the world for years to come.





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MAPLE ONLINE

In 2020, we launched our Awakened Leadership Intensive (ALI) program as a way to introduce new apprentices, residents, and guests to our culture and practices. This course is designed to take four to seven days, and includes instruction in Buddhism, mindfulness meditation, interpersonal meditation (Circling), emotional processing with the Bio-Emotive Framework, and peer coaching. It culminates in a ceremony where each participant articulates their understanding of their vow and makes specific commitments that will move them forward to embody their vow.

This program was originally designed to be run in person at the Monastic Academy. We were able to run four ALIs this year, in March, June, August, and October. The program has been very successful at onboarding new arrivals into our community and culture. It reliably empowers them with basic familiarity with the wide variety of techniques and approaches in our ecology of practices, so that their practice and training can continue to deepen throughout their time at MAPLE.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, we realized we had an unexpected opportunity to adapt the ALI program into an online course. While we are continuing to offer the ALI in person, an online course can bring its power to a larger number of people. This is a unique chance to reach a breadth of people with the depth of our offerings.

In October and November, we ran a beta of a new online program, led by Ryūshin Daniel Thorson, Renshin Lee, and Tasshin Fogleman. A cohort of nine people joined, generating \$4,905 in revenue for MAPLE with a sliding scale from \$400 to \$800. Participants met each week for a two hour session, and had weekly assignments for learning and practicing the material. The course used recordings and transcripts of talks given by Sōryū at our in-person ALI's, as well as a variety of other supplementary materials. The course was extremely well received and we have received very positive feedback from participants.

This success has led us to decide to continue to develop the MAPLE Fundamentals online course in 2021. We will be including teachings from a number of current residents as well as alumni from our program, giving current and past residents the chance to develop their teaching skills. We also plan to create an on-going online practice community for participants, something many people have asked for and we are excited to start offering.

We will be experimenting with different offerings at different price points so we can meet the needs of a wide range of participants. We hope that as the MAPLE Fundamentals program matures it will develop into a new, sustainable source of income that is less dependent on in-person offerings. We also believe it will be a valuable contribution to our wider community.





FINANCIALS

Like many nonprofits, we have had a challenging year. Our guest programs and revenue were far less than we expected, as the pandemic forced us to cancel many in-person events and programs. However, our financial health is doing extremely well given the circumstances. Our community has risen to the challenge of supporting our mission at this critical juncture, demonstrating its generosity and belief in our mission.

In 2020, MAPLE paid back a total of \$128,400 on our property loan. \$30,000 of that amount was paid back this quarter. Four lenders in 2020 also forgave all or part of their loan for a combined total of \$87,200 loan forgiveness.

We signed our property loan in March of 2017, for \$1,135,000. We began paying interest in 2018, at which point the principal and interest combined were \$1,195,279. We currently have a remainder of \$683,079 on the loan, which is due by March 2027. We could not have done this without the extraordinary generosity of our lenders and donors. We are currently paying a total of \$7,696 each quarter in interest.

In 2020, our Vermont location, MAPLE, had a revenue of \$700,648 with expenses of \$561,511, including loan repayments, for a net total of \$139,137. Meanwhile, our California center, OAK, has brought in \$193,140 in revenue with expenses at \$124,718. A long-time MAPLE donor also gave a \$100,000 donation to seed operating costs for our umbrella organization, CEDAR.

At the beginning of the year, we projected \$130,000 in guest revenue, but we brought in a total of \$102,768. This means we lost approximately \$30,000 in guest revenue due to COVID-19.

Major expenses this quarter included \$30,000 towards loan repayment, \$5,000 on legal fees for the village and \$2,000 on designing water and wastewater systems for the Village.

\$170,000 of the \$700,238 MAPLE revenue is earmarked for future Village infrastructure construction, loan repayment, car repayments, and vow grants. Given these earmarked funds for future projects and continued expenses, MAPLE had a budget shortfall in 2020 of \$31,273. We have been working to cover this shortfall through donations, which can be made at monasticacademy.org/donate.

CEDAR 4TH QUARTER

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$30,913	\$323,410	\$7,000	\$382,039

*This includes more income than the three types listed

CEDAR 2020 YEAR-TO-DATE

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$103,178	\$784,864	\$94,200	\$1,093,223

*This includes more income than the three types listed

Figures listed above do not include WILLOW, our Canadian location, which is currently not connected legally to our American non-profit organization.



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FUNDRAISING

MAPLE Resident Tasshin Fogleman led a small donor campaign, focused on closing the gap in our operating budget for the year caused by shortfalls from COVID-19. The donor campaign was centered around a post on his blog, **What Maple Needs** (<https://tasshin.com/blog/what-maple-needs-2020>).

In the post, Tasshin shared how his cabin retreat at MAPLE earlier this year helped him to cultivate the ability to stay sane in difficult and changing circumstances, and how he hopes that sanity serves the world. He also shared that he has seen similar shifts happen for the others who did cabin retreats this past year:

"I also saw similar transformations happen in four of my closest friends—Peter Xūramitra Park, Daniel Ryūshin Thorson, Jasna Seishin Todorovic, and Lauren Renshin Lee—all of whom also had a chance to do extended solitary retreats at the Monastic Academy this year. I see my friends demonstrating clarity, kindness, courage, and dedication at new depths."

For the small donor campaign, we suggested donors give donations of \$33 or more based on their ability. We raised just over \$7,000 from 49 different donors, with some donors giving up to \$1,000.

In addition, MAPLE received a major donation of \$25,000 this quarter from a long-time donor. This same donor made a donation of \$100,000 intended to establish CEDAR as an oversight organization for 2021.

A long-time community member also funded MAPLE with a \$5,000 seed donation towards sustainability projects such as renewable energy or ecovillages.

A new major donor this year, Benjamin Pence, made a second gift this quarter of \$11,000, totalling \$24,000 in donations this year. We were grateful to have Benjamin stay with us for a month in October and November, after visiting MAPLE for the first time in June for our second in-person Awakened Leadership Intensive.





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PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Over the years, we have expanded our offerings beyond residency. Through these offerings, we expand the impact of our work to include a larger community, and we increase the degree to which our work is financially self-sufficient. These programs include apprenticeships, coworking visits, Circling interpersonal meditation retreats, Shinzen Young meditation retreats, Awakened Leadership Intensives (ALI), and Bio-Emotive emotional processing retreats.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 in 2020, we reduced our public offerings and lost over 30K in expected revenue. Even so, we moved forward undaunted by the pandemic and gratified by the support and generosity of our community. Thanks to our community, we are able to continually adapt and expand..

We formed a partnership with Circling Europe (CE). We are collaboratively launching a Circling six-month training program hosted at MAPLE. With the reputation MAPLE has gained over the years as a trustworthy container for deep transformation, we are quite happy to work with Circling Europe to train people in interpersonal meditation and leadership. In addition, several residents will be participating to become certified as Circling teachers.

We have expanded our coworking program to offer up to five spots each month to coworking guests who can work remotely at a discounted rate. One long-term coworker was Toby Yūshin Sola, a former resident and a cofounder of Brightmind, a meditation app based on Shinzen Young's Unified Mindfulness system.

We are beta-testing more online program options such as our MAPLE Fundamentals Online Course, an online adaptation of our Awakened Leadership Intensive (ALI) week-long program. We aim to also provide further educational online opportunities after residents and guests leave. More details will be announced through our mailing list, website, and future reports.

We also aim in future years to deploy monastics into the world as a kind of monastic conservation corps or pastoral care deployment. Teams of three monastics would be deployed to different causes, movements, and towns anywhere from a day to months at a time to host mini-retreats and develop trustworthy culture. In working with local communities, the monastics will receive direct leadership challenges and apply the wisdom and love they have cultivated in the monastic container.

All of these efforts require time, focus, and financial resources. We are striving to create and support a widespread community of individuals, families, and organizations whose support will in turn empower us to serve universal good. As our monastics choose to give their lives to realize the direct truth and to live lives of service, our community's participation is crucial to our continued effort.



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MAPLE VILLAGE & LAND

Last year, we completed the construction of a 41' meditation hall, or Zendo. This building has allowed us to serve more people as interest in our community and offerings has grown.

We have also purchased the materials for a smaller, 30' meditation hall to house our Dragon Program, the training track aimed at bringing people to classical enlightenment. The materials for this meditation hall are now stored on our property and we hope to break ground on the new meditation hall in mid-2021.

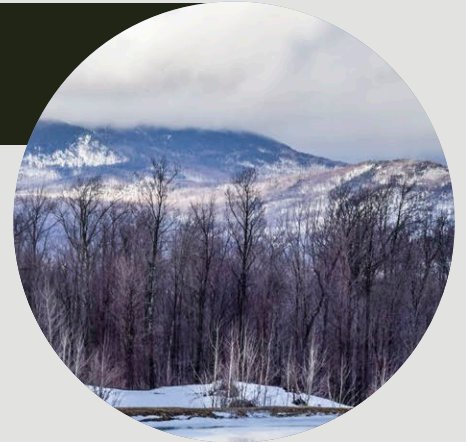
We continue to move forward with our plans to create the MAPLE Village. Last quarter, we filed all of the state and town permitting. Those permits have been approved, so all of the legal preparations are in place and we can move forward with construction in the new year.

Our first villagers, Rich and Renee Dee, are moving forward and aim to complete the construction of their home in 2021. They have found a local builder and are now working on designing their home with Unity Homes, a firm based in New Hampshire. We are tremendously excited that these long-awaited plans are coming together. We are grateful for their friendship and that they will be the first members of our Village community.

We have made creating the Village one of our two major goals for 2021. Completing the Dees' home, our first house in the Village, will require collaboration on many fronts—not just practical aspects like legal and construction but also learning together how to be in community on a shared property. We believe integrating lay life with monastic training will create the conditions for a new, more trustworthy culture to develop and spread through our world.

This is a great time to live in the MAPLE Village. Many families and organizations from throughout the country have visited MAPLE in the past quarter to consider it as their potential, future home. Many of these potential villagers are working on a similar mission to deal with existential threats to our environment, artificial intelligence, and civilization redesign. Real estate agents report Vermont housing is booming with homes selling above asking price. More than ever, the value of Vermont and living in an ethical, monastic community provide great benefit.

If you are interested in learning more about the Village, please visit the dedicated page on our website: monasticacademy.org/village. Feel free to reach out at any time to discuss becoming a villager.





LEADERSHIP EMERGES: PROFILE ON KYŌSHIN LIU

Kyōshin grew up in Guangzhou, China until she moved to New York City with her parents at age 10. After graduating from Brown University with a degree in Computer Science, she worked as a software engineer for about ten years. During this time, she accumulated many unhelpful mental patterns, resulting in depression, anxiety, self-hatred and loneliness.

She began teaching herself psychology, philosophy, and interpersonal communication, as well as practicing meditation and mindful self-compassion. Gradually, she has embraced new ways of showing up, including eating a 100% plant-based diet to stop participating in causing animal suffering, and dancing like no one's watching whenever she feels called to.

In June 2019, she attended Sōryū's first talk at OAK and was intrigued by his candor, insightfulness, and ability to see people unusually clearly. She began attending OAK's morning meditation and chanting, until one morning she felt as if she was going to where she truly belonged, and knew that she needed to train with MAPLE and OAK. She has since trained at both locations as an apprentice and now as a resident. She received lay ordination this October.

Why did you join the MAPLE Mindfulness and Leadership training residency?

Based on interactions with folks at OAK in Summer 2019, I got a strong sense that this community is the most trustworthy I've seen so far in helping people cultivate virtues, and not using virtues for greed or destruction, but for honoring life.

Leaders I've met here strike a good balance between seeing people where they are with unconditional love and respect, and inciting them to break through their conditioning and reach for their highest aspirations. These are some of the skills that I'd like to cultivate the most.

How have you benefited from your time here?

I've received so much from training here, in conscious and surely yet unconscious ways. I'm learning to trust in community again by being in a place where we're loved unconditionally and treated as having intrinsic worth. I'm learning to trust in friendship again by connecting with people who have shown me love and valued connection with me even when I felt the least worthy of love.

With loving community and friendship as foundation, I'm radically transforming how I relate to failure in service of others from terror and dread into equanimity and openness. It's a huge gift that I'm more empowered to learn from failures and not make them into excuses to stop myself from fulfilling my vow.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Inquisitiveness is a quality I cherish in myself that I give much credit for bringing me to this point in my path. At the same time, I also tend to turn it on myself and generate a lot of anxiety and self-doubt. Questions such as "Can I really do this?" or "Am I really doing okay?" can nag at me and cause much stress.

I'm learning that while there's wisdom in self-monitoring, I can also trust myself a lot more than I think.

What are your goals? What are you looking forward to as you continue to train here?

I'm looking forward to working in community on skills that I recognize as being crucial for offering service to the world yet I feel great resistance in learning on my own. Besides learning to trust friends, I also look forward to becoming a more trustworthy friend myself.



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MOVING FORWARD

As we go into the winter period, we shift once again towards Awakening focus. Soryu, our head teacher, will be modeling the importance of Awakening by entering solitary retreat from December to February. We look forward to the great medicine he brings back.

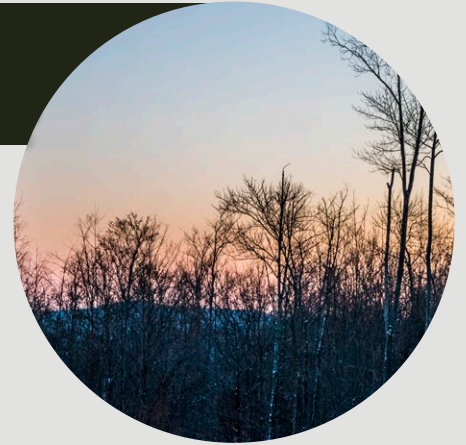
Meanwhile, more residents than ever will be entering solitary cabin retreat starting in January. We aim to fill our three cabins at MAPLE continuously from January to June with residents from MAPLE as well as residents from OAK and WILLOW. We view Awakening as fundamental. Thanks to the community we are building with you, we can invest in these members, providing all of their basic needs. It's also testament to our good work in Responsibility that each academy can thrive while allowing their skilled leaders to focus solely on Awakening. CEDAR aims to continue sending senior leaders from MAPLE to the other sister branches. Each of these nascent centers will learn diverse lessons from different leaders.

At MAPLE, we have three new residents coming on board in January, all of whom are past apprentices from this summer and fall cohorts. We will continue welcoming long-term apprentices.

Over the next year, MAPLE will endeavor to establish and enrich our programs. We will be looking to launch our online programs and courses along with an online continuing education community to support graduates of our programs. As we plan for a post-COVID-19 world, we aim to begin hosting pop-up mini-retreats and workshops throughout the country in places ranging from people's homes to businesses. These will be led by small squads of monastics. If you wish to host such a program, please reach out to us.

Our MAPLE community continues to grow with the excited addition, coming soon, of our village community. We look forward to the realization of our dream of families, schools, gardens, and collaborations of a few dozen people developing the skills to live together in harmony with each other and the world.

All of our progress, all of our accomplishments, all the support of our growth engender both hope and determination as we face the knowledge that our planet is in deep crisis. We aspire to nothing short of a global social, cultural, environmental, religious golden age spurred by a movement of these monastic leaders willing to do anything and everything to be trustworthy leaders. For the sake of all beings, we continue forward.



WINTER SCHEDULE

January 15 - 22

Awakening Silent Meditation Retreat

February 12 - 26

Two-Week Silent Meditation Retreat with Soryu Forall

March 2 - 7

Circling Europe's SAS First Weekend at MAPLE

March 19 - 26

Awakening Silent Meditation Retreat with Soryu Forall

All events subject to change or cancellation based on developing news/events.

JOIN US

You are always welcome to visit for a day, a week, a month, or longer.

Our address is:

751 Page Rd

Lowell, VT 05847

If you'd like to come, or to be in touch for any reason, please email at info@monasticacademy.org or call at 802-540-0820.

Thanks again for your support. Together we are building a new, trustworthy culture.

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