

## Community Questions Choices Connection

*...Cultivating Harmony in the Great Community of Life*

The word community means a group of people supporting each other, belonging, giving and receiving, sharing and creating together. As our world struggles with issues of violence and war, isolationism and consumerism, how do we remedy the disconnection we have cultivated between our fellow humans, animals and the earth. How can we re-grow our communities?

Our editorial circle felt one of the major contributors to the deconstruction of community and the disconnection to the earth is the loss of women's wisdom...the loss of *Sophia*. For hundreds of years, the female perspective on topics ranging from spirituality to business, medicine to politics has been deliberately suppressed, eradicated and/or ignored. This is a dynamic our world can no longer and will no longer endure: a resurfacing of women's wisdom, power and leadership is occurring on a global scale. Feminism, humanism, environmentalism, etc. are repaving the way for women to stand up, give voice and take part in the world. Laws and human rights affecting women and girls are beginning to change on all continents; a re-emergence of feminist spirituality and the sacred feminine is occurring within religions worldwide; and since 9/11, we have been witness to the largest collective peace movement in the history of humanity.

It is imperative that society nurture and safeguard these growing trends. Access to education plays a critical role in ensuring this progress, this resurfacing of knowledge, this shift of perspective. Through education, we can create a new kind of leader, a new kind of citizen and a new paradigm for participation in the affairs of our community, our country and our earth based on wisdom, equality, justice, peace and compassion.

Within the last few years, the number of women elected to positions of national leadership has increased. An exciting example occurred recently when the citizens of Chile elected their first female President, Michelle Bachelet. Her election victory is significant since Chile had been under a male-dominated, military dictatorship for years, before its returned to democracy in the 90s. (President Bachelet has already fulfilled her campaign promise: making half her cabinet women). Other noteworthy women recently elected as national leaders include: Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller of Jamaica, Executive President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of The Phillipines.

In order to build and nurture our local and world community, we (in the West) need to ask ourselves why we are not changing our lifestyles when it is becoming clear that our consumerism is damaging to our fellow humans, animals and the environment. The warnings are being issued, whether it be through catastrophic storms or debilitating smog, through mass outbreaks of violence and war or disease and sickness. Is the corporate dollar really so important and alluring? Is our need for *stuff* more critical than our need for air and clean water...? More critical than giving our fellow humans the dignity of an honest wage? Are we really willing to let our grandchildren or their children live in a world where polar bears are extinct?

We believe it is important for people to begin understand-

ing that *not* caring is wrong, that silence is assent, that apathy is no longer an option. Ignorance is *not* bliss, it is detrimental and damaging; it is careless and cruel. Consumerism is breaking down our good global community because we have no collective consciousness as to how excessive wealth is being created or sustained. We are actively and deliberately deterred from choosing between right and wrong by the consequences of our individual choices, hidden or buried by those who profit from our spending. We need to get ourselves outside of the spin and the glitter and determine if we are being (mis)led onto a path than plays upon our desires and wants

rather than our morality, compassion and definition of justice. Is media and advertising the new opiate of the people?

One way that groups are coming together to cultivate connectedness and compassion is through ritual. Ritual shifts consciousness, raises awareness and forges relationship. Rituals can create or re-create a connection between individuals or groups of individuals that may not see their commonalities on the surface. Ritual also creates a collective energy of its own that can aid in shifting the consciousness of the world in order to bring about real change.

Asking questions is always the beginning. Searching for ways to find a collective solution, an inclusive solution, a communal solution is our challenge. Our children, ourselves, our earth and her creatures are depending on it. What will you choose?



Grace de Jesus-Severin / Las Internationales Manila

“It is our choices...that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.”

-J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*



## London Bans Pesticides!

As soon as the first seed was planted, the pest control measures started. For years, many households and public spaces have subjected the billions of tiny plants that make up our lawns to chemical pesticides and herbicides. In two years, that will all change: London city council voted in favour of a bylaw banning the cosmetic use of pesticides.

This is a radically important bylaw for Londoners as the non essential use of pesticides endangers human health and our living environment. The Ontario

College of Family Physicians has reviewed research that links serious illness such as brain cancer, prostate cancer, kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer, non Hodgkin's lymphoma, leukemia, nervous system effects, birth defects, fetal death and intrauterine growth retardation to the exposure to pesticides. Pesticides are designed to destroy living organisms so by their very nature can also be harmful to humans and animals. Children are especially at risk since they are smaller and have an underdeveloped immune systems. The Canadian Cancer Society, The Sierra Club, The Humane Society and The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment are among many groups and institutions that urge the elimination of the use of pesticides and at the very least call for a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. Does using chemicals to kill a few bugs or weeds really make sense? Repeated applications of pesticides kill off beneficial organisms, sterilize the soil and allow resistant insects to breed.

There is indeed no firm proof that the use of pesticides is safe. As David Suzuki points out we should adopt the precautionary principle: where there are threats of serious damage and a lack of full scientific proof that the chemicals are safe there is no reason to continue the use of pesticides.

Before the 1950's all lawns and garden care were essentially organic or natural as individuals used manual techniques and natural materials such as manure from the local farm. Culturally we have moved away from labour intensive home remedies. Today people have a renewed interest in ways to care for their lawn without using chemicals.

The natural approach to lawn and garden care will have a positive impact on soil health, microbial life and plant life. In *How to Get Your Lawn off Drugs* by Carole Rubin, we learn that lawns and gardens will flourish if you follow the 6 basic principles: soil preparation, plant selection, tolerance of imperfection, proper maintenance monitoring to spot problems at an early stage, and adapting the least-toxic treatment strategy.

Here are a few facts to help you work with nature to improve the living environment

- Over 95% of bugs are either beneficial or do no harm.
- Water is one of the most effective weapons against pests
- Ensuring your plants are healthy and vigorous is the best prevention
- You can make your own insect -killing sprays and repellants from ingredients such as vegetable oil and dishwashing soap. anise, catnip, garlic and hot peppers.

**The Circle will be closed for summer holidays from the Canada Day to the Civic holiday long weekends (3rd July - 8th August). Please hold all library returns until we re-open in August. Thanks!**



## On Our Shelves...

TURNING TO ONE ANOTHER:  
Simple Conversations to Restore Hope  
to the Future

by Margaret Wheatley

In this beautiful, easy-to-read book Margaret Wheatley outlines her belief that we can change the world if we start listening to one another again. She believes simple, honest, human conversation, that is not adversarial in any way can restore hope for the future.

In three parts, the book outlines Margaret Wheatley's passionate view that conversation can inspire action. She offers poetry, quotes and pictures for reflection, and then ten short 'conversation starters'.

In order for conversation to take us into a deeper realm-where we each have a chance to speak, feel heard, and where we each listen well -Wheatley encourages certain behaviours. We acknowledge one another as equals.

We try to stay curious about each other. We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners. We slow down so we have time to think and reflect. We remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together. We expect it to be messy.

Margaret Wheatley believes that great change begins when people begin talking to each other about their experiences, hopes and fears. This book has no other purpose than to encourage those conversations, to clarify our thoughts and share our experiences and our dreams.

If you want to join the conversation with Margaret Wheatley as facilitator, look for the Re-Imagining Leadership & Brescia University College sponsored weekend event in October...

### Other Titles by Margaret Wheatley:

1. *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*
2. *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*
3. *A Simpler Way*

# Events at the Circle...



The Circle has begun a process of evolution and transformation. We are excited about the possibilities to come. Please stay tuned for new programs and events to be revealed in the fall!

## More Than Just a Book Sale

Saturday 25 November 2006  
10 am - 3 pm  
Brescia Auditorium  
Free Parking



**Art Craft Books Draws**

Info on donating books: 519-432-8353 x28288

The Circle has a new email address: [circle@uwo.ca](mailto:circle@uwo.ca)

## ...Brescia...



**BREAKFAST FOR  
Bursaries**

**Thursday, October 19, 2006**

7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. London Convention Centre

Featuring keynote speaker :

**Pamela Wallin**

Canadian Consul General to New York

For tickets and sponsorship info:

(519) 858-5005 or [brescia.foundation@uwo.ca](mailto:brescia.foundation@uwo.ca).

Proceeds enable local women in financial need to gain a university education at Brescia.

Pamela Wallin, one of Canada's most accomplished journalists was a reporter with the Toronto Star; a national political producer and commentator for CBC Radio; and the host of CTV's Canada AM. She became the first Canadian woman to take on the role of Parliamentary Bureau Chief.



## Margaret Wheatley at Brescia

Dr. Margaret Wheatley is a world renown leadership expert and organisational consultant. She is a best-selling author and the co-founder of The Berkana Institute, a charitable global foundation serving life-affirming leaders around the world.

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>  
October 2006**

Margaret Wheatley  
*Re-Imagining Leadership:  
Finding Our Way*

7:30 p.m. Brescia Auditorium  
Lecture & Parking are Free  
Women & Men Welcome  
Space is Limited  
A *Sophia Series* Event

More info: [www.reimagineleadership.ca](http://www.reimagineleadership.ca) or 519-432-8353 x28293

Sponsored by: Re-Imagining Leadership, Brescia University College & partners

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

Margaret Wheatley  
*Re-Imagining Leadership:  
We Were Made For These Times*

Registration Required:  
\$100.00 (before 15 Sept.)  
\$125.00 (after 15 Sept.)  
9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Brescia Auditorium

Parking free Women Only

## ...and Beyond

13 July - **A Herbal Medicine Show: A Few Plants is All You Need!**, Spirit of the Earth— The Living Centre, 7-9pm, \$20, learn about a compilation of natural home remedies by being able to gather remedies right from the garden.

15-17 September - **Wise Women Weekend**...a weekend gathering for women of all ages. To meditate. To celebrate. To rejuvenate. Huron Camp (Hwy 21, near Bayfield), \$110 (before 15 Aug., \$125 after) info & registration: [www.wisewomanweekend.com](http://www.wisewomanweekend.com) or 519-228-7632

Synergy in Motion presents: *Dance Your Spirit Free Workshop Series* with Juna & Sabine

8 September - **Introductory Evening to Dance Your Spirit Free Workshop Series** - 7:30pm

23 September - **Energize Your Body - Stepping Out of The Blaah into the Yaah!**, 11am-4pm

14 October - **Live Your Passion - Harnessing the Power of Your Emotions**, 11am - 4 pm

12 November - **Unwind Your Mind - Focusing on What Makes Your Heart Laugh**, 11am - 4pm

2 December - **Embrace Your Essence - Daring to Be Alive**, 11am - 4 pm

All events are held in London. For info & registration: [www.synergy-in-motion.info](http://www.synergy-in-motion.info) or 519-690-1479



**Thursday 21 September**  
6:45 pm

The Peace Park  
(Ridout & York)

Speakers - Rally - March  
After party—TBA

# Principles & Practice...



*cultivating harmony in the great Community of Life*

Principles and Practice is a new column dedicated to highlighting women's efforts to create change in the world. Whether it be individually or collectively, these are women dedicated to living their vision, putting their beliefs into action, their principles into practice...



Darlene Ritchie is the Executive Director of At^Lohsa Native Family Healing Services. She works tirelessly to raise awareness on Native rights and issues of homelessness, poverty and violence against women. She is a dynamic and inspiring speaker and avid storyteller. The interview she gave to *The Circle* was so rich with story only a small portion could be published in this forum. Below is an excerpt of a creation story Darlene shared...

**Darlene:** "...there are many times you assume that everyone has had the luxuries and gifts that you have had, when often this is not the case. This world is unjust and a fragile place to be and in a minute your life can change- you could be walking one minute and the next be a paraplegic. When I would get into that place where I thought everything was unfair, my mother would always tell me the Sky Woman story....

'In the beginning everything was water and air. We [humans] were in the sky and the animals were in the water and we knew of each other. There were laws for both of our worlds: humans couldn't live in the water world and the animals couldn't live in the sky world.

In the Sky world there was a solid rule for peace. The reason was because as human beings, we are spineless creatures. In each of us there is good and bad. It is really key to remind ourselves on a daily basis to be good... to keep our minds in a good place...to not be envious, jealous or angry. It is law up there, that we shared everything, that no one owned anything, that everything was everyone's. Everything grew on the Tree of Peace and everyone ate from this tree.

In this story, Sky Woman was pregnant and her hormones were going crazy. She didn't want to have to keep going back to the tree, she wanted one in her own backyard. She asked her husband to take a piece for her but he said no because it was against the great law. She decided to do it herself.

So she went to the tree at night and was taking a piece of the root, but she did not realize how deep the roots were. She dug and she dug, where she eventually had to hang on to the limb of the tree so she could keep on digging. While she was digging, she fell from the limb and fell through the sky world, but in her hand she had the root from the Tree of Peace. The Creator knew what was happening, but He couldn't stop it because she broke the law and some things you cannot change. He watched her fall; the animals below could see her falling as well and they didn't think she was going to make it. The duck flew up and caught her on his back. The animals tried to figure out how to get her back up to the hole she fell through because they knew she could not live in the water. They tried and they tried and they couldn't figure it out and then they got really tired. The turtle came up from the bottom of the ocean floor and he said 'sit her here and rest and try to figure out how to get her back up there.'

In the meantime, she was eating what was on the limb- the strawberries and blueberries until she was left with just the seeds and the limb. She was getting tired and weak and the animals were

worried about how they were going to feed her. So she told them that if they have soil she could plant the seeds. The Muskrat swam to the bottom of the ocean because there is muck on the bottom that is like mud. He collected some mud and passed it on to the beaver's tail, who then put the soil on the back of the turtle. Sky Woman searched through the mud with great care and determined what was the best soil. The Creator was amazed at how the animals helped her so much and thought how can I help this...?

He sent for his eldest son, the sun, and his eldest daughter, the moon, and put them into the sky. This put fire and water together, which brought life. This was a miracle... it was conception...it was life. It was a miracle that people could live out of air and animals could live out of water. This is the miracle of life; this is how love works. Things can seem hopeless, where your heart is on the floor, where you are free falling from the sky just like Sky Woman did...worried what you are going to do with your child, how are you going to feed them. These are the same worries we have today. This story shows us how Sky Woman didn't give up. She took the best seeds and the best soil. She walked around that turtle and sang songs and respected the animals- because it was their world without them she would have died.

Now we sit here, on the back of this turtle, thousands of years later and we see the fruits of her labour. Not just the trees and the flowers but you and me. She carried our seeds, there was only one seed in the beginning. Scientists are now talking about genetic structure and how the basic structure of life is the same for the trees, the animals, the blades of grass and humans. This is life's miracle, the oneness of the whole. It isn't just about people; that is a small minded way of thinking. All life are carriers of water on land and we have a duty and a responsibility to help and make things better than they were before, to build on what Sky Woman did and to build on her accomplishments and her contributions. We are her line, whether we are yellow, red, black or white. We all have the same genetic structure. Everything carries water.

For my whole life I have struggled to live a life that thinks like that, that sees everything as a carrier of water. This is opposed to today's world where what is important is how fast you can answer a question in class, how fast you can memorize the formula, how pretty you can look, how much can you be like everyone else...but not how can you help. We have built a fake foundation that is not going to hold us in the end. Begin to ask yourself: how can you help? Picking up garbage can help... smiling at someone helps. Begin by planting some seeds.

**"Owheo Wohwe means carrier of water...we are all carriers of water on this land." -Darlene Ritchie**