



MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH



CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2023
SPRING
QUARTERLY
REPORT

ABOUT US



Description of CEDAR

CEDAR (Community for the Experience and Development of Awakening and Responsibility) is an international network of communities working together to create a more trustworthy culture through monastic training and leadership development. At CEDAR, we are creating monastic academies—twenty-first-century educational institutions for the spiritual leaders needed for this time of crisis. MAPLE in Vermont was the first established community, and we have now expanded to include Oak in California and Willow in Canada.

History of MAPLE

MAPLE (Monastic Academy for the Preservation of Life on Earth) is a full-time residential mindfulness and leadership training program to develop awakened leaders. Founded in 2011 in Burlington, VT, MAPLE now runs a world-class monastic training center on 125 acres in Lowell, VT. We are also building an adjacent village to scale trustworthy culture and values to impact the globe.

History of Oak

Oak is a monastic academy founded in 2018 that provides monastic training, trustworthy friendship, and spiritual guidance to those addressing society's greatest challenges in the San Francisco Bay Area.

History of Willow

Willow is the newest monastic academy located near Toronto—the first international member of CEDAR. Founded in 2020, Willow brings modern monastic training to the many beautiful communities in Canada, particularly those in Toronto and Montreal.

Center for Mindful Learning

Center for Mindful Learning (CML) is the legal, non-profit name of our United States 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2011. CML has supported mindfulness projects such as Modern Mindfulness for Schools (ModMind), the Monastic Academy, and Mindful City Project.

JOIN US

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ONLINE RESOURCES

www.monasticacademy.org
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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

As the snow continues to fall, the community maintains focus on the collective goal of entering samadhi (deep states of meditation) and attaining insight during this three-month Awakening Intensive. We have devoted significantly more time in the calendar to silent Awakening practice, with multiple ten-day retreats and our yearly two-week retreat in April culminating with a Vesak ceremony (on May 5) celebrating the life and teachings of the Buddha. Guests and residents alike are experiencing, with each next retreat, the ongoing deepening of this community's devotion to the path.

While MAPLE has always been experimental in nature, we strive to ensure the community is steeped in the wisdom of tradition, giving us firm footing for our living practice. Bodhi, serving in his role as training coordinator, has done an extraordinary job crafting a curriculum for our evening Dharma Study sessions. With a mixture of reading sutras, lectures with Soryu, and group discussion, we are developing our understanding of Buddhist doctrine. The impact of these teachings on the mind is palpable.

We are very excited to see long-time friends at our **Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration on May 6**, the day after our **Vesak ceremony on May 5**. This will mark the end of our Awakening Intensive and the transition into our next season. We hope to see you there.

Following this season of contemplation and celebration, we'll begin more active engagement with the land and our relationships. Our property manager, Wenzday, will be leading a variety of projects to care for our buildings and grounds. At the end of May, our senior facilitators will be leading our third version of the Anti-Fragile Heart Retreat, a deep dive into the internal and the interpersonal.

Our mission is to integrate the depths of meditation (Awakening) with direct engagement (Responsibility). Here, we attempt to purify the mind, embody our vow, and infuse wisdom and compassion into technology. In the following pages, we share the various directions we're moving in and their relevance to the mission. Ultimately, all of our projects support the goal of developing trustworthy leaders who can foster trustworthy systems to guide the world through the current collective existential crisis.

In gratitude,

Sophia Karuna Gallagher
Executive Director



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AI RESEARCH WORKSHOP

Among the existential risks facing life on Earth, the emergence of artificial intelligence is of predominant concern. Whether we like it or not, we are increasingly entering an age where humans are merging with machines and algorithms have unimaginable authority over our lives. AI in particular will play a huge role.

The field of AI Safety is urgently trying to figure out how to make AIs trustworthy, racing against their accelerating capacities. (As we would put it, is its growing power commensurate with its love and wisdom?) We here at MAPLE share their urgency and concern. Our AI alignment research program is an attempt to seek places for collaboration. Is it possible to guide this technology to be aligned with the dharma?

We held a ten-day research workshop for AI alignment researchers, to give them a place to contemplate some deep philosophical and mathematical questions and to develop a relationship between them and this monastic community. This is the third workshop run within our AI alignment research program and the first to be held on-site at MAPLE. Seven people participated in the workshop, of which five were external researchers, one was a current MAPLE resident, and one was our head teacher Soryu Forall.

The workshop took place over ten days and focused on issues of value change. Two particular research threads were:

- Normativity, in the sense of human norms, including norms around justification of belief and action, as motivated by the essay [“Learning Normativity”](#)
- Deliberation, in the sense of becoming wiser over time, as motivated by [“Coherent Extrapolated Dreaming”](#) (written by a current MAPLE resident).

We are grateful for the earnest, open-minded, and compassionate attitudes of everyone who participated in the AI research retreat. One of our goals for this meeting of minds was to seed a deeper sense of the significance of spirituality when it comes to questions about AI—which are ultimately questions about mind itself and the moral nature of our universe. On that front, we feel the retreat was a success. But of course, there is much farther to go.

While we have the Buddha’s teachings on paper, without our own direct realization, we cannot expect others to be convinced. The practice needs to live and breathe. Then from embodied insight, the truth will shine forth and positively impact the world. With AI, the potential for spreading wisdom is great. So is the potential for harm. Using this as motivation, we fuel our search. As part of this spiritual journey, we connect with all kinds of people, doing all kinds of work, but particularly work on AI and its safe development.



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TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

April 15 will mark our ten-year anniversary of full-time intensive training programs.

On April 15, back in 2013, Soryu Forall and the first four residents of MAPLE (formerly CML) began a monastic training schedule at the Quaker Friends Meeting House in Burlington, Vermont. Three months later, the sangha expanded to include six more, totalling ten residents. Founded on the generosity, courage and resilience of residents and donors alike, the birth of MAPLE was a tremendous community effort.

MAPLE offered Sunday Sits to the Burlington lay community focusing on living a life aligned with the dharma (an offering that continued every week for the next eight years). Meditation sits with interviews were offered to both residents and community visitors in the morning and evening. Interviews are a sacred time in which students receive direct guidance from a teacher on their practice. This is one of many examples of MAPLE's unique mission to bridge the gap between mainstream society and the life of the sangha.

Shinzen Young was a regular presence in our early sangha. He joined us for weekly meals and offered daylong and weeklong retreats. We anchored our foundations in Shinzen Young's system of Unified Mindfulness, which Soryu developed with him over the course of several years.

One early offering was our Modern Mindfulness for Schools program. Soryu and residents visited public schools and institutions throughout Vermont. They taught mindfulness to teachers, students, police officers, and counselors. Further, they developed an online program that taught mindfulness to tens of thousands of students worldwide.

Shortly after MAPLE began, Soryu returned temporarily to Sogen-ji Monastery in Japan to further his own training. During Soryu's brief hiatus, MAPLE advisors augmented the meditation training with a movement and yoga-focused curriculum. This may have been the first seed of the diverse ecology of practices we draw from on the path to Awakening. Later on, this would include Vision Quests inspired by indigenous traditions, and collaborations with institutions guiding practice in many modalities.

Eventually it became clear that MAPLE needed to expand into our own independent space, so we set up shop on a spectacular rental property in Johnson, Vermont, for the next couple years.

The purchase of our current property in Lowell in March of 2017 marked a radical acceleration for our work. Acquiring the original property loan was a vast collaborative effort and demonstration of faith by family and friends. We were able to quadruple our original capacity. We established our short-term training program, our guest program, our long-term training program, and our monthly retreats.

In 2018 and 2020 our California and Canada locations, Oak and Willow, were born. The use of a beautiful townhouse that is Oak's homebase was generously offered to us.

Meanwhile, back in Vermont, two meditation zendos were constructed. The Village of lay people living on the land started taking form. The staff villager position for graduates of the residential training would emerge. Our network would multiply to include collaborations with luminaries such as Zak Stein, John Vervaeke, and Bonnita Roy.

Scott Krien's faith in the original vision gave us the ability to set the groundwork. Shoshin and Kaishin Smith later allowed the residential program to launch with their donations. The Minhas H. Family, Chade-Meng Tan, and Pascaline Servan-Schreiber have further supported our vision and made possible our current progress. Many other kind and generous donors and supporters have joined over the past ten years. We celebrate a decade-long legacy of relationships based on trust as we strive toward our vision with increasing momentum and audacity.





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EMBODY YOUR MEDICINE

For the second year in a row, our Vision Quest guide, Darren Silver, and transformational facilitator, Dayna Seraye, led us in a four-day long dance and movement journey to bring us into deeper connection with our essential nature and anchor our individual and collective medicine in a world where embodied, trustworthy leadership is desperately needed.

Why Embodiment? For many years, MAPLE has been in the inquiry of how to invite more dynamic movement practices into the training. It is through this physical form that we impact this world. It is through connection with the body that the confidence to speak, act, deliberate, and discern the truth emerges. It is through discovering the gifts of our unique physical manifestations that collective wisdom emerges. It is through the purging of layers of armoring that clarity arises.

Rhythm is a fundamental agreement. Rhythm invites and ensures that individuals move in unison. Through this agreement, unity is established. Simultaneously, free-form dance evokes physical, emotional, and spiritual awareness. Through rhythm and music evoking archetypal energies, we create together. We dismantle old patterns that have kept us stuck. These archetypes include the mother, the father, the ancestors, earth, water, fire, air, and spirit.

The dance expanded our emotional range, rediscovering and regenerating lost parts of ourselves that had been cast off, and reintegrating valuable parts of ourselves that are in service to the dharma and the sangha. Storytelling, myth, and metaphor were key parts of the immersion that engaged the mind and deepened its capacity for reverence. The channels for creative energy were blown open.

We give deep thanks to Darren and Dayna for their lived example. We follow their footsteps, literally and metaphorically, in hopes that our vows may take flight.





PROJECT KELVIN

Project Kelvin is a software project aimed at discovering if we can use software to help scale wisdom. Created by MAPLE staff member Trinley Goldenberg, it's an attempt to move toward the Monastic Academy's mission of merging the Noble Eightfold Path with the information age, bringing ethical incentives into data technology.

The first version of the software enables MAPLE trainees to rate each other's actions along the dimensions of Wisdom, Love, and Power, as well as their progress along the Noble Eightfold Path, and aggregates those ratings. Whether a person is cooking a meal or writing a website, the software will give individuals feedback on how they're progressing and scale this feedback in a way that maintains accuracy.

Version 2 of the software is in active development and aims to help individuals make wiser decisions, by letting them weigh their options along these dimensions before they make a decision. This version will also experiment with creating a currency that flows towards people, not based on their ability to fulfill economic preferences (as exists in the current economy), but on their ability to make wise, loving, and powerful decisions. The goal of this experiment would be to create a currency that incentivizes progress along the Noble Eightfold Path simply by accepting and paying with that currency.

The combination of algorithms and economics will prove all-important for life on earth. To truly address existential risk, we cannot ignore them. We expect many learnings in our attempts to merge information technology and the dharma.



WILLOW UPDATE



As winter turns to spring, Willow springs back into action, following several months of invaluable training for Willow leadership at MAPLE.

We are joyful to be joined by our new resident Caroline and her dog Kira. Caroline's experience with governance and not-for-profit work, and her pure heart, are a gift to Willow and our broader community.

Together, we are entering an exciting transition phase at Willow and clarifying our vision and mission. We are making a shift in focus from 'monastic training center' to 'right livelihood dharma house,' where our mission will be to create a replicable model for coliving communities of Buddhist lay-practitioners to live in harmony with each other and all living things.

In this upcoming quarter, Willow will be focusing on offering more accessible mindfulness and leadership programming. We will be hosting daylong and weekend meditation retreats as well as events in Toronto and local open house events in Warkworth.

We are also excited to be developing a data dashboard prototype that will enable our community leaders to quickly get a pulse on Willow and, some day, set an example for other parts of the modern spiritual networks we have contact with. Though still in its early stages, this project may have a lasting impact on Willow and enable collaboration at greater scales.

We are deeply grateful to be able to continue offering this work to our Canadian friends and to all beings.

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: PROFILE ON CAROLINE AUBRY



Caroline grew up in the Province of Quebec, Canada. Most of her adult life has been dedicated to founding and directing nation-wide social impact organizations in various fields ranging from higher education to sexual violence prevention and international development. She now works as a Governance Design consultant for purpose-driven organizations. Working on herself to become the best possible steward of power and be a force for good in the world has been her inclination for many, many years.

INTERVIEW WITH CAROLINE:

Why did you join the MAPLE Residency Program?

Two years before finding out about MAPLE, I started paying close attention to existential risks, and as I pondered, it became clear to me that these problems stem from one fundamental problem of perception, of mistaken beliefs, of worldviews that perpetuate suffering, violence and destruction. In other words, the problem originates in our minds. Refusing to give up and accept that selfishness, greed and hatred are inalienable characteristics of human nature, I chose to join MAPLE. This community is entirely dedicated to purifying minds, to the development and deployment of a worldview based on wisdom, love and compassion. I believe that is what the world needs the most at this time, and I feel a deep sense of responsibility to meet the challenges of our time with courage and humility.

How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?

MAPLE offered me immeasurable gifts: a renewed faith that good, earnest, *trustworthy* people still exist, that together we can actually change History for the better. MAPLE showed me what it feels like to be deeply seen and loved. MAPLE offered me a way of life that is meaningful and ethical. Through MAPLE, I found a purpose and a family absolutely worth giving my life to.

What has been your biggest challenge?

My biggest challenge was to open myself up and initiate connections with people in my first few weeks there. I felt lonely and I didn't know if I belonged at all. After a while, I realized that if I wanted to feel connected, I was the one who had to put myself out there and open up. As soon as I did, everything shifted for me and MAPLE started feeling like home.

What are your goals? What are you looking forward to?

I am now a resident at Willow and I am committed to contribute to making Willow the first of hopefully many, many Dharma Houses within the CEDAR network. By doing so, I hope to allow more and more people to transform their lives to be in accord with the Dharma while also staying engaged in the modern world and to demonstrate that living in a community of dedicated lay practitioners striving to become more compassionate, ethical, wise, loving and trustworthy is not only possible, but accessible. I look forward to furthering my own training and contributing in any way I can to MAPLE's flourishing for the benefit of all beings.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: PROFILE ON WENZDAY JANE



INTERVIEW WITH WENZDAY:

Why did you join the MAPLE staff as its property manager?

How could I turn down such an opportunity! I get to live and work and train together with some of the brightest and most diligent and trustworthy individuals I have ever met. I feel like I have been searching for a place like this all my life.

Wenzday began her professional career doing custom fabrication and scenic arts for advertising, film, events, and architectural signage. This work was fast-paced and demanding and gave her the opportunity to develop skills in leading teams of fabricators, managing challenging projects, and overall a breadth of experience constructing projects in a variety of materials, techniques, and special effects.

In 2008 she founded a unique last mile logistics company in Boston, utilizing a fleet of pedal powered vehicles and cargo bicycles to transport goods around the urban area. Her company mission was to increase community self-reliance and reduce pollution and dependence on fossil fuels. After a decade of growing and maintaining a successful small business, she took a leap to look for a more impactful way to contribute to the world, and so she became a wandering nomad.

How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?

I find it inspiring to live in a community of people who are dedicating their lives to transforming the mind, in order to help solve the problems humanity is facing... a community of people who believe that our individual actions really matter, that to be of service is the greatest good, and who are not afraid to actually face suffering and pain. These values are difficult to uphold alone out in the world. It's too easy out there to simply turn away from things we don't want to face, and to shirk our individual responsibility for protecting life on earth.

What has been your biggest challenge?

I tend to be quite focused and engaged in the practice of work, and I get a lot of joy being of service to the community. It's sometimes challenging to find the right balance between working (there's so much important work to be done) and participating in the schedule of community events (there's so many enriching opportunities to train).

What are your goals? What are you looking forward to?

My goal is to contribute to the development of MAPLE and associated projects, sharing the skills I have developed, in such a way that helps the community grow and thrive.



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FINANCIALS

After a financially strong 2022, we focused on Awakening practice this past quarter. This shift towards inner purification led to a less financially profitable quarter.

CML's income for this quarter was \$80,250 and expenses were \$114,250. About 37% of the expenses are due to our expanded staff salaries. Wenzday, as featured in our Staff Spotlight page, joined us as our property manager. Additionally, some of our oldests residents have transitioned into staff positions. The staff will ease our administrative and property burdens to deliver world-class service. All the staff are also taking significantly below-market salaries to be a part of this mission. A generous donation given to us in 2022 funded these salary positions.

As we step into the spring, we shift towards profitable, public-facing guest programs. We have several programs planned for May through July including our previously successful Anti-Fragile Heart and Circling retreats.

During this quarter, CML made further payments towards its debts, which currently stands at a total of \$1,048,707. This includes our original mortgage for the Lowell property, which currently has a remainder of \$265,000. We also hold a government SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan with a remainder of \$765,183. We are fortunate our SBA loan is locked in at a 2.75% interest given current market rates.

With each passing year, we seek ways to ethically gather resources to share trustworthy teachings. Ten years ago, as a small mindfulness in schools program, it's amazing and unexpected to have arrived where we are today. The dedication, faith, and efforts of thousands of individuals has made this possible. Today, we have a community devoted to the individual purification of mind and the collective shift towards a world of non-killing.



CML 2023 YEAR-TO-DATE

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	TOTAL INCOME*	TOTAL EXPENSES
\$27,795	\$42,142	\$80,250	\$114,346

*This includes more income than the types listed.

Figures listed are the combined financials of CEDAR, MAPLE, and Oak and do not include Willow, our Canadian location.

INVESTMENTS AND DEBT

TOTAL DEBT	YEAR-TO-DATE CAPEX**
\$1,048,707	\$0

**Large asset purchases & investments (CAPEX) are not included in annual operating expenses listed above but depreciated over many years.



POETRY & PHOTOS

Here are some of our favorite poems from the community, which hold the insights that have arisen from the clarity of retreat.

I feel for my heart,
And it seems to be gone,
I don't know how to go on,
Yet something does.

- Jampa



Most people go through life
without making
any
very significant
mistakes,
and yet
regret living.

- Kōshin



There is
a clear way
to touch
a happiness
you
did
not
make.

- Bhadda



A jeweled clump
Of diamond ice
On the spruce bough
Melting

- Jeffrey



Compassion
Needs no reason
Knows no borders
Takes no object
Compassion
Mends the circle
Breaks the cycle
Moves the stars

- Matthew



FUTURE EVENTS

April 18 - May 2

Two-Week Awakening Period with Soryu Forall

May 5 - 6

Vesak and Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration

May 24 - 31

Anti-Fragile Heart Retreat

June 13 - 15

Martial Arts or Awakening Three-Day Retreat

All events are subject to change or cancellation.

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If you are interested in our events please don't hesitate to reserve a spot.

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