

Healing & Learning Working Group

Healing and Learning Working Group Forms to Acknowledge and Learn from Shambhala Crises



The separation of the Sakyong from Shambhala was an extremely painful event with consequences that are both visible and not: Practitioners choosing not to continue studying with the Sakyong or leaving Shambhala entirely, the restructuring of leadership, the shift in focus for sanghas across the mandala. Others are less visible, such as the loss of trust, feelings of hurt, and the need for healing, even in the most uncertain times.

Francine Morin in Montreal (GCC co-representative for Ontario-Quebec) and Joop Laan in Amsterdam (GCC co-representative for The Netherlands) both recognized this need and felt there could be a path forward. In January 2025, they had their first conversation about what would eventually become the Healing and Learning Working Group. The Working Group seeks to acknowledge the harm that was caused and learn from it by bringing it on the Path so we can move forward together.

In the proposal for establishing the Healing and Working Group, they acknowledged

that a culture of silence fostered poor behavior on the part of teachers and members within Shambhala, with many negative consequences. They wrote:

Healing and help were offered though in some cases suffering was not resolved, and open wounds remain in the community. Other people left because they felt the response did not live up to the vision of enlightened society—a community based on wisdom, compassion, and inclusivity.

As we learn and move forward, we recognize this ongoing suffering and that conflicts are still emerging and will emerge in the future. We want to encourage a culture that helps the most vulnerable to speak up and teaches us all to listen.

We are nurturing ways to address conflict and governance that will help all of us progress on the path to create an enlightened society with both accountability and compassion.

In forming the working group, Joop was inspired by the vision that, in ten to fifteen years from now, people will choose to come to a Shambhala center precisely because we have gone through a leadership crisis and division and dealt with it in a healthy way. We are not looking to try to undo anything that has occurred or to resolve any issues specifically, but to explore together and model for each other how the challenges, healing, and learning that we have encountered are brought on to a path of practice.

In forming the Working Group, Francine was inspired by the [Talking Circles](#) held in Montreal around the time of the crisis. The Talking Circles allow each individual to speak from the heart while the other participants practice deep listening without directing their responses to the speaker. “These talking circles allow wisdom to arise,” Francine says. “You realize there isn’t one reality, one truth, one solid perspective.” Those circles were vital to maintaining cohesion and strength in the Montreal sangha.

Ron Renz in Halifax (GCC representative for Atlantic Canada) shared a similar experience: “Lately I’ve been paying attention to the quality of my listening and notice when I immediately relate it to my experience of something similar. I notice now when the conversation flows from “my” perspective (of my experience) or curiosity about the other person’s experience, needs, and understanding.” Ron brings experience in Non-Violent Communication to the Working Group.

Ron joined the Working Group, along with Alice Dan in Chicago and [Barbara Bash](#) in upstate New York. Barbara, an artist also trained in Non-Violent Communication, said, “We are looking for ways to bring healing and connection to the sangha. We have

always been strong practitioners of sitting in meditation together. Now bravery is needed more than ever to be present to different opinions and go beyond judgments of right and wrong and be willing to speak and listen to each other within a wisdom space of openness.”

One of the first actions taken by the Healing and Learning Working Group was to modify the last paragraph on the [Our Story page of Shambhala.org](#), acknowledging that suffering had occurred that has not been resolved, and committing to creating a culture of community care. “We need to integrate skillful practices into our community life that allow us to work with conflict and harm, to not turn away or ignore or be afraid of it,” Francine says.

The Healing and Learning Working Group hopes to build a website to share tools—such as a guide to a talking circle practice and non-violent communication—that deal with our history, with conflict, right use of power, and harm. Acknowledging the complexity of these issues is key: How do you deal with power differences and perceived harm? What do you do if someone refuses to talk to you? How can we evolve to the point where someone who left can feel welcomed back?

In January 2026, at the Global Assembly at Karmê Chöling, Alice Dan took part in the Vulnerability to Abuse of Power circle. Francine took part in the Building Trust circle, which led to the formation of the Trust and Accountability group. The next step is to bring energies and purposes together to create a robust resource for the future.

Both the Healing and Learning Working Group and the Trust and Accountability circle are looking for members. If you are interested, please write to Francine Morin at franomorin@gmail.com.

Resources

- View a full [summary of the 2026 Global Assembly](#) at Karme Choling
- View a [guide to the Talking Circle practice](#) offered by Susie Almgren

Return to [GCC Newsletter, Vol. 1 - Issue 3 - Spring 2026](#)