

Greetings Dear Friends and Clients....

I thank those of you who have been asking about this year's newsletter for your curiosity and interest. I hope those of you who will read this through will find something of value to you in my sharing news of my work as well as many events and processes of my life.



Peru, Christmas Happiness 06



Oh come let us hold the mystery!"
Chellis Glendinning



Tree of Life

My Tarot Work and The Mystery School, Fall 2008

I'm soon heading out for my Spring Tarot Reading trip to the West Coast of B. C. and Washington. I intend to make it East this year – Ottawa and Vermont – when I do my Alberta and Montana trip in September and October but the dates are not anchored yet. I would love to get to Winnipeg again and am looking for a good time to go there as well. It is amazing for me to note that this year marks the 24th year of my traveling across the country to do my readings and workshops. What an astounding journey this work has been for me.

In the Fall of 2008, at last, I will be offering the 3-year Mystery School cycle of workshops once again. The last cycle of The Mystery School began in 1998 and saw those who participated through the turning of the Millennium in 2000 to May 2001, just before September 11th.

The next Mystery School cycle will carry a group of people through these last years of the Mayan Calendar to the end of 2011. I expect a lot to be happening on the Earth in these years to come. It will be a privilege to share this time with others in this way. I love and prefer to do this work in small groups so each person receives the space and attention their process deserves and requires. A co-creative Soul family naturally emerges through this pilgrimage into the Mystery within, as we dance together into the Mystery of these times.

I plan to offer this 3-year Mystery School in two formats simultaneously. One will be an 8 months a year program for people living in and around Nelson and will involve many other excellent teachers in our community. The other format will be a Mystery School for people who live at a distance but can travel to Nelson twice a year for a 14-day workshop each time. In either case, I also intend to offer a 'teacher training' component for those who are interested and able to carry this work back into their own community.

I am pleased to feel the call to offer The Mystery School during these exciting and challenging years to come in human history. If you feel a call in return, please let me know of your interest as soon as you can. Your response will certainly encourage me to begin the work of organizing it all and I will keep you particularly informed. For information and updates, email me about this program at carol@mysteryschool.ca.

A Path of Balance and Love

All our lives have been marked one way or another by September 11, the subsequent madness of the wars that followed, and the growing ecological crisis we are facing. Each of us is being called to find a path of balance and love between, what my friend Duncan Grady calls, "denial and despair". Over these years, I have been propelled into far deeper ground in the mystery of my own life and of life around me. After the end of the last Mystery School cycle and the events that followed, my partner Jim, numerous friends, and myself have been walking a path questing for that balance. We have sought visions to inspire meaning and to generate a consciousness of new possibilities for life in face of all that we are collectively dealing with now. As I have written about in previous

newsletters, our path has taken many unexpected and surprising turns with the inspirations of teachings as well as many adventurous experiences.

We participated in valuable trainings with Eco-philosopher and Buddhist scholar, Joanna Macy, who teaches about “The Great Turning.” The notion that history will mark this time as “the Great Turning” mirrors with a practical way of action what many indigenous peoples including the Hopi, Mayan, & Inkas (Qeros), spoke about regarding this time of challenge and transformation. Ian Lungold introduced us to the Mayan Tun Calendar, an astounding vision map of events and shifts that have and will occur through nine cycles of consciousness change. These cycles began at the big bang and will be complete on the 28th of October, 2011. I was amazed to discover that this map reveals a path of human awakening in the same way as the Tree of Life symbol in my own work!

In our community, we began offering ceremonies to mark the changing of the seasons and joined in the Dances of Universal Peace. Jim and some friends opened a sweat lodge where 30 or more people join us each time a sweat is called. We began a practice of Mandala painting with teacher Paul Heussenstamm which drew people, not only from our community but also from across the country. This soul-fulfilling practice has filled our home with beautiful mandalas celebrating all the elements, various medicine animals, and teaching stories. I also began offering introductory workshops to my community, in the heart-fortifying consciousness reflected by the Tarot and Tree of Life.



Joanna Macy (www.joannamacy.net) Ian Lungold (www.mayanmajix.com) Paul Heussenstamm (www.mandalas.com)

We also found ourselves returning many times to Peru, a land I had lived in for nearly 5 years (1987-1991), but this time we spent a considerable time in the Amazon with shamans, learning about medicine plants. In the Andes, where my several godchildren had grown considerably, we met a group called Wiñay Taki Allyu (meaning in Quechua “forever singing family”), dedicated to reclaiming the awareness and Earth celebrating traditions of the Inkas. Like the Inkas, with music, songs, and dance, they cultivate a culture of balance between the masculine and feminine nurturing a unity with the Earth and Sky. Subsequently, along with our housemate, Terence Buie, we have taken four groups down to Peru to meet this inspiring family and to share with them in this work. With friends, we went to India for 3 months in the fall of 2005 and this fall, into the high desert of Mexico and a Shipibo Village in Amazonia, again to seek perspectives that would expand as well as deepen our relationship with life. We have learned so much and we are definitely in the flow of the “Hopi River”, looking around to see who is with us and deeply celebrating!



Terence, Me, & Jim - Peru 5/06



Paucocha, Amazonia 12/06



Journey into the Desert, Mexico 11/06

These openings in my life that began after the last cycle of the Mystery School ended and quickened around September 11 – the archetype of The Tower fully and collectively activated – have brought me to a new today. A dream I had in Pisac, Peru as the year 2007 dawned, told me that all this effort, challenging as it has been, has been worth it. So let me share with you this last year of my life that lays the ground for what is coming. It is in this context, that the call to offer another cycle of The Mystery School has arisen.

2006 - My Dark Night of the Soul

On January 1, 2006, we were two weeks back from 3 months in India. I just reviewed the newsletter I wrote last year and was reminded of the power of that year in my life. Our pilgrimage to the source of the Ganges River, and my initiation into the waters of this Goddess Ma Ganga opened the door. This was followed by the powerful Dharma Yatra, walking into the realm of Buddha's life, tapping into his recognition of the reality of human suffering. This reality propelled him on his quest for 'enlightenment', a way to hold and meet life more completely.

I start my story with a poem I wrote to a woman I met on the streets of Rishikesh, India as our journey began...

Armless Woman in Rishikesh

What was the path that took
Your arms from you?
Was it karma?
 An accident?
 Or a result of human cruelty?

Now you sit on the hot,
 Humid ground of a street
 In Rishikesh begging
 A bowl before you receives
What you cannot grasp
 Flies move around your face
You cannot whisk away

What keeps you from walking into the Ganges
 Into the liberation of death?
What dreams can your heart hold?

As you glance my way,
 I wonder: "Am I one?"
 I have my arms and freedom after all.
 I want to meet you,
 Knowing full well
 That your utter helplessness
 Is my secret, anguished nightmare

Now as I sit with you,
 Holding, remembering you
 Night and Day this past year,
 I have discovered clearly...
 Your fierce, enduring spirit
 Is my dream.

I bow to you now, humbled in gratitude

This past year has been a journey into the underworld, as my spirit (my connection to life) was in search of a new ground after the darkness of some of my experiences in India. I realize now that my heart had gone into some kind of state of shock that affected me most after I returned home. Ultimately, the beauty I had seen in India did not outweigh the pain and sorrow trapped within. For most of this past year, I found it difficult to even find any tears to express my grief at what I had seen. What I did feel, as I worked with this, was a kind of outrage, feeling aligned with the Indian Goddess Kali, or a strange sense of a numb, half-heartedness. How could a culture seem to cultivate so much abusive treatment of its women and children? My question may seem strangely naïve in the context of the larger world, and my reactions immature, but there I was. The beginning of something...

As we all know, direct experience has so much more power and is so different than television documentaries where we see such suffering at a safe distance. Chellis Glendenning wrote a book entitled My Name is Chellis, I am in Recovery from Western Civilization. In this book she describes the traumatic shock our hearts can feel at seeing homeless people in North America. Usually, we are too unconscious (culturally conditioned) to notice this. Our lives are far less vital from such denial or disconnection from those we are connected to in spirit. Yet, how much connection to such misery can one bear? I know for myself, at the time, I looked everywhere within but could not find acceptance in me for much that I had witnessed in India. I was aware of how many love India. My partner, Jim is one of them. However, I simply could not rise to see any karmic or other rightness of it all. Any perspectives offered felt like some horrid rationalization to me. India seemed to laugh, no – sneer at everything I held sacred in my heart. In a place reputed to have so much spiritual power, I didn't get it! My first task was to accept my non-acceptance.

As I describe all this, it seems ironic because over my years of working with people as a therapist, I have seen horrors equal to this in many individuals' experiences in North America, but the therapeutic or workshop setting made it somehow bearable. In India, it was the unrelenting collectivity of this suffering that so impacted and overwhelmed me. What therapist does a country go to? Certainly my intellect could understand that Mother India had been raped and pillaged for centuries and the cultures had developed in response and people there were doing the best they knew how to do but, while true, that didn't cut it for me. The collective 'coping' that went on in India was stunning in its range, creativity, and religiosity! Yet, there is a difference between coping and truly living. An unfamiliar and shameful sense of inadequacy to meet most of what was around me in all but a few moments here and there, amplified my sense of vulnerability. I felt like the armless woman I had witnessed in Rishikesh. Yet, I also knew my destiny in this life was not to spend years in an ashram reflecting on it all, or to build an orphanage or to find a way to feed the multitudes in India (and this doesn't even speak of or touch upon this suffering in other parts of the world, including our own version in North America).

My spiritual orientation holds the preciousness and value of Earth life. I natively carried this sense into life and the Andes gave birth to the consciousness of this in me. It was the negation of these things I felt in India. The truth is that my companions and I walked on the other side of the Earth and what I experienced deeply disturbed my sense of connection with life, i.e. the feeling of relevance or reality to my own experience of spirit.

Working in the shamanic realms of dreams, visions, and ceremony to address this has been my journey this year. How do I find 'right relation' to all this and myself now? I was in the dark and had certainly lost my 'cool'! This was awkward and embarrassing but deeply true. And this was dancing like a demon on top of my reactions to the sense of wrongness I had carried since 2003 about the Iraq War. I definitely faced a challenging growth edge here!



Ma Kali



A vision of my Heart's journey



Initiated by Ma Ganges

So during the process of this year's descent, I held a fierce will to symbolically cut myself open to seek and go toward the authentic truths within, questing for a more substantial and healthy response.

In an early shamanic vision, I saw that my sense of half-heartedness was quite real as I witnessed Mother India or perhaps Kali herself, at an energetic level, taking my heart (a heart that had recognized herself in the Andean traditions, where women are honored and children are fed) into her hands and ripping it in half, throwing “the left half of my heart” (my feminine feelings) onto the ground and stomping it into the soil of that land. Not a pretty picture. Yet, I realized with wonder, as I ‘saw’ this, that I had not died! I drew a picture (above) to show what I had seen in my vision.

It seemed a miracle that the other half of my heart, definitely bleeding, was still somehow beating! I could see light was coming in and the waters of Kootenay Lake were washing me clean. With the help of Rosalyn, my travel companion, I understood that it had been Ma Ganges herself that initiated me into a new depth of the spiritual practice of living with eyes and heart open to everything on this Earth. Thus, this summer, I found myself in a necessary process not so much of healing, as actually growing a heart that would be big enough to embrace what I had seen with authentic and clear compassion. I had no clue how long this would take. Through a summer Ghost Dance and in a Buddhist meditation practice, called Tonglen, which Rosalyn’s partner, Duncan, taught us, I found some refuge in wisdom of the ancestors.

Lastly, I realized the paradoxically good news of this vision: I had indeed left “half of my heart” in India! In other words, I had connected with that land and its people. I had been touched deeply and had not run away from this challenge. I knew my Soul would find a relevant response in time. Duncan also gifted me with a bear claw that, in the tradition of his ancestors, was used in ceremony to cut through the darkness.



Travel companions in India



Duncan & Rosalyn in Ghost Dance



My India Altar – Buddha & Hindu Deities

Connection from the heart is something I value above all else. For me, love is the basis of the cultivation of our Soul nature, the true spirit and blessing of our precious Earth life. What arises through our heart is our gift to others if it is held with a humble mind and spirit. My work with the symbols of the Tarot and Tree of Life have certainly served this realization and been my guide each step of the way. I have been called to grow up and into a fuller and deeper existence, as we all are, in time. This isn’t an easy connection as you can see! But such connection brings a promise of wholeness; a greater unity with “what is” and the promise of “Right Relation” in time. Theologian, Paul Tillich, called Justice “the forms we create, the decisions we make that serve the reunion of the separated”. I call it “the beauty way”. For the ‘readiness’, that took me to India in the first place, and to my traveling companions who shared this journey with me in their own ways, I am deeply grateful.

A Deepening of the Quest for Ethics as an Organizing Principle: Right Relationship

On the Tree of Life within our body and psyche, there is a place that constellates in us "The Power to Process Negative Life Experience". Part of wholeness is to know that place within and without. It is a big humility training so necessary to being a full human being. “The Power to Process Positive Life Experience” balances this, on the other side of the Tree. The point of balance between the two is the heart! Someone has said that the more darkness you can face, the more light is available. Like a spiral of energy moving back and forth, one feeds the other until we let go into the birth of a whole other way of existence! What is born from the heart is a life lived in an ethic of reciprocal respect, empowerment, love, and natural generosity. Such is the foundation of Co-Creation, through which the alchemy inherent in the basic goodness of humans is realized as daily wonders and miracles. I believe that humans are on that path.



We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For!



The Call to Ethics of Reciprocity



The Tree of Life as Our Body

Recently, I have been reflecting on the power of those who simply stand and bear "witness" as a way of cultivating truth and honesty among people. All substantial shifts began with individuals who started out as a clear "witness" to aspects of life that are not 'right' or 'beautiful.' In so doing, these people have inspired others and then, in a collectivity, they become able, in their pure existence, to mirror heart back to those who need to face what they did; to encourage what Nelson Mandela called "truth and reconciliation". This takes time and patience. This is what the Tarot Symbol of Strength is about. To love life more than one wishes to dominate or control life is the heart's masterwork. This symbol is a counter-balance to the Tarot symbol of The Tower, which became a collective shock in 2001. Both the Tower and Strength lead us into the heart center of our Tree of Life. Awakening a clear and abiding choice of love is crucial to dealing in a good way with the many dark human conditions that exist in our world.

Bringing what is hidden to the light of consciousness is an essential, albeit usually difficult, practice in birthing new perspectives and ways of living. We humans now are definitely in a time where big shifts around human relationships to each other and the planet itself are mandatory. This is an ethic born when Love, Power, and Justice find each other and unite! Real, eyes-open, compassionate justice is what this world so desperately needs right now in as many small or large ways. Many are awakening now. My community certainly has been a source of strength behind me that allowed my heart the possibility of the quickening that India offered me. We are joyfully not like-minded but definitely like-hearted and dedicated to the quest for an ultimate relationship with all our relations.

In this spirit, there is a website a friend passed onto me covering many issues in the world now. It is worth knowing about: www.wanttoknow.info

As the quest for Ethics in human relations grows, we are exposed more and more to things that are difficult to confront and hard to believe. The creators of this site show great wisdom in looking at what needs to be looked at and changed. I love and appreciate how this website attends to the potential for overwhelm and offers positive stories too. A wise heart must discover the balance point so neither denial nor despair predominates. Gad, this website is an astounding commitment of compassion and clarity so that what is hidden can come to the light! We also know that many wonderful things are 'hidden from the light' as well. May we all find the courage to open the eyes of our hearts where the sense of Justice or 'right relationship' lives naturally. It's definitely time for us to do so and I see this website is a contribution to this.

Other Surprises and Blessings of this year – Journey to Peru to meet the Dalai Lama!

This past May, Terence, our housemate, Jim, my partner and myself were lucky to bring yet another adventurous group to Peru to meet Wiñay Taki Allyu, the indigenous family we have been sharing our lives with for a number of years now. I got a chance to dance again with Turibio, the father of the clan, who has recovered from his head injury after his fall last year! Returning again for Christmas this year, we can see how The Wiñay Taki clan is growing in their unity and in their ability to express the ancient culture of which they are guardians. All the children are dancing now! The work they do always brings me to joyful tears of gratitude.



Dianita, Misca, & Turibio



May 06 Peru Group



Araq & Cusi dancing

Another surprise of the Spring tour was the Dalai Lama was coming to Cuzco to do a public talk. Before the trip began, we had done everything we could to get tickets for the talk but to no avail. It was the second day of our trip and the group agreed to stay in Cuzco to attend a live video feed of his talk in the afternoon. I suggested we spend the morning at a very special site, the Qoricancha, the ancient Inka Temple of the Sun, now housed inside the Church of Santo Domingo. This church had originally been built on top of the Temple of the Sun but in 1954, an earthquake demolished the church, revealing the still remaining walls of the Inka temple.

When our group arrived, we discovered that the Temple was closed. I was curious and found someone sweeping outside. He told me the Dalai Lama was coming to have a meeting with the indigenous Q'eros people in an hour. The Q'eros are the keepers of the most ancient Inka ceremonies and rituals. This was a meeting not known by or open to the general public but by invitation only. If we waited, we might see him arriving. Everyone was pleased to have an opportunity to see the Dalai Lama.

If there was any meeting I was meant to go to, it was this one! I had witnessed the first meeting between the Q'eros people and Tibetan Buddhists in July of 1993. My book Sacred Memory, Holy Yearning was based on this meeting. This was the first time the Dalai Lama traveled to Peru so it was quite a privilege to witness this event. For me this meeting could only mark a deepening of the historical shift that began all those years ago with the first meeting of representatives of two mountain spiritual traditions – the Tibetan and the Inka.

Attending this current meeting were Andean Qeros, Tibetan Buddhists and Dominican priests. They were coming together in an ancient sacred temple that, in the past, was a place where all spiritual points of view were honored! The energy of this meeting, I believe, went out into the world and for me completed what had been started when Lopon Tsechu Rinpoche and don Mariano Apasa met nearly 13 years ago. For those of you connected to the Mayan Calendar, I did the math and realized that the time between these two meetings was almost exactly 13 Tuns (360 periods)! While I don't believe that anyone consciously planned it that way, I cannot help but imagine that this meeting may have some significance the expansion of consciousness the Mayan Calendar describes occurring now. What an incredible blessing to have been there to meet the Dalai Lama in the Andes...



The Dalai Lama meeting Issac Flores and other Q'eros in Cuzco Peru on May 8, 2006

Mandalas, Dances of Universal Peace Camp and my Dream...

Nothing is more powerful than our human ability to create a life one would wish for all humankind. It is not about having a lot of money but rather a lot of heart. Appreciation and gratitude for what is around you and the capacity to see and move beyond the superficial addictions of modern life into beautiful relationships in life is a pearl beyond any price, a benefit to the planet, and is, itself, evidence of a future. To take responsibility for our own lives is not about independence, but rather a recognition of the interdependence that is natural to living in this world. The Earth is beautiful, luscious, abundant place. We are Pachamama's flowers. It is our privilege to take our place beside Pachamama by creating a life of loving, respect, and beauty for all our relations. We don't do this alone but in the magic and mystery of the next heartfelt moment. Out of right relationship with ourselves - a good enough sense of self, we enter naturally into the world of diversity. Standing with others in a good way, we will find right relation: a just, co-creative and beautiful relationship with life. According to Ian Lungold, this year in the Mayan Calendar we will meet our 'galactic neighbors'. May we be ready!



Our 7th Mandala Workshop, August 2006



Celebrating the Circle Dances of Universal Peace Camp Sept. 2006

Finally, the New Year's Day dream that I mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter. On January 1, 2007 awaking in Pisac Peru, I had a dream in which I was standing on a hillside overlooking a beautiful and lush green valley. It is very similar to the environment around Pisac at this time of year. Over and across the valley flowed a strong, clear, sharp, exquisite rainbow. I marveled at its exquisite beauty. Then I noticed that, walking up the valley, passing under the rainbow was a river of thousands of children! I fell into bliss understanding without words the significance of this. I took this dream as a really good sign that I am doing something right with my life no matter how 'out there' I have gone. If the children will benefit, anything I go through is worth it.



A New Year's Day Rainbow Dream, 2007



Pisac in the Sacred Valley of the Inkas, Peru, December 2006

Ian Lungold says that as Creation speeds up, more things are possible to occur in any moment in time so it feels like time is speeding up and it will continue to do so as these years pass. I know that the only lifesaver in this great energetic river is our own heart. Duncan Grady says that the Buddhist texts talk about human's innate goodness. I wonder if anyone has ever noticed that God is Good with two wholes, not just one. Relationship is a privilege of having bodies on this Earth! May our innate Good live in Divine Relationship. May all beings be well and happy.



An Offering of Respect to Ma Ganga - Devprayag, India



An Offering of Love to Dianita, my godchild - Pisac, Peru

I have enjoyed the creativity of sharing so many photos with you in this newsletter. I hope you have enjoyed it. In writing this, I hope to encourage you as well to express what is in your heart to those you care about. It is a way to sing our songs out into the universe. It is a way the future is created. I welcome dialogue – comments or questions.

I will look forward to seeing many of you this year.

With love and respect to you and the mystery we share, Carol



In Celebration of the Mystery...our Songs!

Carol Stewart
2358 Bing Road
Nelson, B.C. V1L 6K6
250 825-0104
cstewart@mysteryschool.ca