

Buddhism in Ottawa

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Abstract

According to the 2001 census, close to 10,000 people in the Ottawa-Hull region of Canada identify themselves as Buddhist. At a glance, one can identify communities that represent all the major traditions of Buddhism – Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. Yet, links between them, as well as between the individual groups belonging to each major tradition, are minimal. The purpose of this study is twofold: to provide a profile of the various Buddhist groups in the Ottawa-Hull Region; and to explore the benefits, challenges, and the general feasibility of establishing an umbrella organization that could draw on the talents and serve the interests of those who consider themselves members of the Ottawa's Buddhist community. The scope of this study includes not only those dharma centres and temples that are formally organized, but also the smaller, more informal meditation groups that affiliate themselves with Buddhism, even though they may maintain a more eclectic practice. In other words, the Buddhist 'community' of Ottawa may well include many more than those who formally identify themselves as Buddhist.

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This paper began as a study of the state of Buddhism in Ottawa, Ontario. I began my research with the intent to provide a survey of the extent and variety of Buddhist practices in the nation's capital. However, as I carried out my urban pilgrimage, chanting *Nam myoho renge kyo* with

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the Soka Gakkai group, sitting zazen with the Ottawa Zen centre members, reciting the Heart sutra at the Chinese Pure Land temple, what I first perceived as simple diversity began to take on a profound complexity. The first part of this paper is an overview of Buddhist temples and centres in Ottawa; the second part contains personal observations, reflections, and questions that came to me during my wanderings among the various groups. Finally, there is a catalogue that includes contact information and some brief notes on founding dates, membership and activities. The information in this study comes from interviews with group leaders and long time members, as well as material posted on their websites.

PART I: THE OVERVIEW

Of the twenty-eight groups investigated, most are led by lay people; ten are ethnic community temples, and more than half have charitable status. Before the 1990s, Buddhism was a fairly invisible aspect of mainstream Ottawa life, except perhaps for the happy Buddha images that might be seen in Chinese restaurants and stores. Although the influx of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees during the 1970s and 80s substantially increased the Buddhist population of the capital, almost all the groups catalogued here were established in the 90s or experienced major growth during that decade. One might think it a fairly simple task to catalogue and categorize the Buddhist groups in a city like Ottawa since there are already lists available on the internet. However, a number of aspects complicate the process. There are historical divisions to consider (Theravada/Mahayana/Vajrayana); within those, the subgroups or schools (Pure Land/Zen/Nyingma/Gelugpa); beyond those, there is an ethnic component (Chinese or Vietnamese Pure Land /Sri Lankan or Thai Theravada); and beyond that, the sub-subgroups centred around the teachings of a particular master; and then there are those groups that have trouble with the whole 'Buddhist' label altogether!

As a city, Ottawa is very much a microcosm of Canada's cultural mosaic. This pluralism is reflected in the religious mosaic as well as in the diversity that one finds within cultures and religions. Mathieu Boisvert has commented on the amazing variety to be found in Canadian Buddhism and on the difficulty, therefore, of presenting a general picture of Canadian Buddhists. This was certainly borne out in my research on Ottawa. For example, although Vesak, the commemoration of Gautama Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death, is commonly regarded as a pan-Buddhist celebration, I could not arrive at any real consensus among the groups I interviewed regarding its importance. The responses with regard to what would be an appropriate annual 'Buddhist' event for the city involving all groups were split between those who considered a traditional Vesak

celebration to be the most appropriate, and those who thought that it would be too culturally and religiously focused – the latter preferred to see an event that emphasized practice or teaching, such as a day of mindfulness or seminars and lectures.

There is no perceptibly dominant group of Buddhists in Ottawa such as the Shambhala centre in Halifax. According to Statistics Canada there were more than 9,000 Buddhists in the Ottawa area in 2001, with the expectation that the number will rise to over 11,000 by 2006 and continue rising by 2,000 every five years. The official membership figures, however, for all the various groups combined does not approach that number. Perhaps Ottawa Buddhist leaders have much the same problems as their mainstream Christian counterparts in actually getting the faithful out to church or temple; or it may reflect a more informal householder approach to religious practice.

Theravāda

The formal organization of the Theravada community began in 1980 with the Ottawa Buddhist Association (OBA). This was an association of lay people looking to serve the cultural and religious needs of the newly immigrant Sri Lankan community. To satisfy the need for religious teaching and ritual services, the association sponsored monastics from Sri Lanka. However, problems between the lay association and visiting monastics led to a split in the community and in 1995 the OBA reconstituted itself as the Ottawa Buddhist Society (OBS). This society has evolved into a very mixed group that interacts in English and emphasizes meditation and study rather than worship and culture. The group takes as their spiritual mentors not only the well-known Sri Lankan master, Bhante Gunaratana, but also western monks such as Ajahn Viradhammo, Ajahn Sona, and Bhante Yogavacara Rahula. I was told that for social gatherings and ritual services the Sri Lankan community tends to frequent the monastic-lead viharas.

The Hilda Jayewardenaramaya Vihara (established as a memorial to the Buddhist wife of a prominent Ottawa criminologist), currently also known as the Buddhist Congress of Canada, serves primarily as a Sri Lankan worship and community centre. It offers puja services, Sunday school, and Sinhala lessons for children. The other Sri Lankan temple in town, commonly known as the Ottawa Buddhist Vihara, has evolved in a rather different and interesting way. This temple, resulting from further divisions in the community, is located in a section of town populated by Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Chinese immigrants, and it functions very much as a local venue where all can make offerings and receiving

blessings. The two resident Sri Lankan monks serve a primarily Sri Lankan, non-western, ethnic community, providing them with ritual services, blessings and the opportunity to make merit by feeding the monks. They share festivals with a nearby Vietnamese temple, and after a recent terrible fire affecting the Cambodian community, they were a great source of comfort for the neighborhood.

There are also Thai, Laotian and Cambodian temples in the Ottawa area. The Laotian temple, Wat Lao Ottawa, and the Cambodian, Wat Rattanak Pratip, are organized by lay cultural associations that sponsor community festivals, religious rituals and visiting monastics. The Thai temple, Wat Ratchadham I, is bit different. It is one of seven temples established in Canada by Phra Luang Phor, founder and Lord Abbot of Thailand's Wat Dhamamongkol. It is directly funded and organized by Phra Luang Phor and his designate monks. This temple provides ritual services and acts as a community centre for Thai Buddhists. In addition, it is used as a location for the Willpower Institute Meditation Centre, which promotes the non-denominational meditation teachings and practices developed by Phra Luang Phor. The Abbot's strong Canadian connection is well articulated in his temple in Bangkok where the largest jade Buddha image in the world is to be found, carved from a fourteen-ton block of British Columbia jade.

Finally, there is a small group practicing Vipassana meditation according to the methodology of S.N. Goenka, who trained under the Burmese master U Ba Khin. The group emphasizes the technique-oriented, non-religious, non-sectarian character of their practice – no altar, no incense, no liturgy – the Buddha is simply honoured as the one who discovered this technique. Goenka emphasizes the non-sectarian nature of the Vipassana technique by using the term Dhamma rather than Buddhism. However, the ten-day course, mandatory for all those who wish to learn this form of meditation, begins with taking refuge in the three jewels of Buddhism, the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. In Mumbai, India, the Vipassana Meditation organization is constructing one of the world's largest pagodas that will house authentic relics of the Buddha. I had trouble categorizing this group due to their strong non-sectarian, non-religious stance, but in light of historical and other considerations I decided to include it under Theravada Buddhism.

Mahāyāna

Like the Sri Lankans, the Vietnamese temples began with a community cultural association. This was the Vietnamese-Canadian Buddhist Association established in the late 70s. Similarly, they had a lay

administration that sponsored visiting monastics and that fund-raised vigorously and successfully to establish in 1991 the first Vietnamese temple in Ottawa, the Tu An Pagoda. Subsequently, there were problems between lay leadership and the monastic involvement that led to divisions. The Tu An Pagoda has remained strongly lay-oriented – frequently there is no resident monastic and the chanting services are lead by lay people. It serves primarily the Vietnamese community, but has been very open to other Buddhist groups in allowing them to use their space. The other two temples are directed by monastics. The Pho Da temple is associated with the Unified Buddhist Congregation of Canada and the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. It has a temple in the city and a monastery outside of the city. The Hieu Giang Pagoda is a recent appearance. It was established in 2005 by former members of the Tu An Pagoda and has a resident nun. The main Chinese temple in Ottawa belongs to the International Buddhist Progress Society (IBPS) under the spiritual direction of Master Hsing Yun and the Fo Guang Shan organization headquartered in Taiwan. It is the monastic arm of Master Hsing Yun's endeavours and works together with the lay organization, the Buddha's Light International Association, which has its offices in the same building. This temple is run by a nun and is dedicated to the "Humanistic Buddhism" of Master Hsing Yun. Although the membership is entirely Chinese, Ven. Miao Tsun is eager to reach out to the non-Chinese mainstream community. For example, she offers weekly meditation sessions which are more likely to be attended by westerners. At the Buddha's 2005 birthday celebration some 200 people were present and although barely a dozen were non-Chinese, there was English translation of the service both oral and written. The other two Chinese groups are very small and informal as yet, although the Ottawa Amitabha Buddhist Society, begun in 2002 by former members of the IBPS, already has charitable status. The Amitabha Society is associated with the world-wide organization of Pure Land Learning Centres founded by Master Chin Kung and headquartered in Taiwan. The Tzu Chi Foundation is affiliated with the Tzu Chi Foundation of Canada, which is dedicated to the practices and teaching of a Taiwanese nun, Master Cheng Yen. This organization describes itself as a Buddhist Red Cross or Salvation Army and as such it is primarily focused on social engagement. They are strongly community-oriented and organize grassroots activities such as visiting nursing homes, distributing food, and supporting secular aid groups like senior's societies.

Like the Vipassana meditation group, the Soka Gakkai was also difficult to categorize because, as it was put to me, Nichiren Buddhism is completely different from other Buddhisms. The focus of their practice, which is entirely lay-oriented, is on personal happiness and self

development achieved through chanting the name of the Lotus Sutra. Although the group seeks to distance itself from any kind of religious ritual or meditation common to other Buddhist traditions, nevertheless, in their gatherings, there is a strong feeling of devotion and ritual evoked by the presence of the Gohonzon (the sacred scroll bearing the invocation to the Lotus Sutra), which was returned to its shrine-enclosure at the end of the session by a lady wearing white gloves. Their manner of chanting could be taken as a method of bringing the mind into a one-pointed meditative state. In light of historical considerations, I placed it under Japanese Pure Land. Members are organized according to districts, chapters, areas and regions. There are 13 districts in Ottawa, which belongs, with the Maritimes, to the Eastern region.

A number of groups practice in the tradition of the Vietnamese master, Thich Nhat Hanh, the oldest of which is the Pagoda Sangha. Inspired by the 1993 visit of Thich Nhat Hanh to Canada, the group was formed in 1995. This sangha started out with primarily Vietnamese-speaking members, metamorphosed into a mixed English and Vietnamese group, underwent various divisions, and eventually ended up as fairly small, informal, primarily western meditation group with a Vietnamese facilitator. The Pine Gate Sangha was formed by an anthropology professor who is also ordained as a Dharmacarya in Thich Nhat Hanh's order of Interbeing. The group is very active, they offer twice-weekly sessions and annual retreats, publish an e-newsletter and have recently (January 2005) formed an internet group with forty-nine members. They spearhead various peace promotion activities in the city. Sangha Arana is associated with the Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic, a stress reduction clinic inspired by Jon Kabat-Zinn's work. It was started by an Ottawa psychologist, also ordained in Thich Nhat Hanh's order of Interbeing. It is intended to provide a meditation opportunity particularly for health professionals and to provide continuation for those who have participated in the program run by the clinic. The Dieu Khong Marvellous Emptiness temple was recently established by a Vietnamese nun ordained in Thich Nhat Hanh's tradition. Its membership is small and primarily Vietnamese.

The Dainen-ji monastery, also known as the Zen Centre of Ottawa, and the White Wind Zen Community was established by a western teacher who goes by the name of Anzan Hoshin. He is the abbot and spiritual director of the community that considers itself in the lineage of Dogen's Soto Zen. This is a very strictly organized group and there are many formal procedures for becoming a student and maintaining the practice. Materials used and produced in-house are based on the teachings or translations of Anzan Hoshin. This western sangha has a couple of branches associated with it, but is not itself affiliated with any other Zen monastery or larger

institution. I did not have a chance to speak with the leader of this group since he retired from public teaching in 1991 and is not available for interviews except with serious Zen students. Six monastics, male and female, besides the abbot, form the core of the monastery. The establishment is impressive in its physical appearance and its organization. It is housed in a 9,700 sq.ft. heritage house and carries on an extensive array of activities, including long-distance training programs and residential programs, ongoing Zen meditation sessions – daily, weekly, monthly, yearly – as well as in-house production of tapes and publication of books, dharma talks and translations by the abbot.

Vajrayāna

The Vajrayana community has two dynamic centres. One is the Shambhala centre, belonging to the Kargyu school of Tibetan Buddhism and affiliated with the Dharmadhatu/Shambhala organization established by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. It is one of the oldest organized meditation groups in the city, on-going since 1977. The other is the Joyful Land centre affiliated with the Gelugpa New Kadampa Tradition and the worldwide organization established by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche, well known for the numerous books he has published as well as for the public split between himself and His Holiness, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. Both these centres are well publicized in the city, have very attractive websites, are highly organized, and offer a wide range of courses and classes within their traditions. They are both growing communities – the Shambhala centre recently expanded its facilities and the Joyful Land centre is looking to do the same soon. The Chittamani Mahayana Buddhist Meditation Centre is another less well known Gelugpa group in town. It is affiliated with the Gaden for the West organization and the centres established by Zasep Tulku Rinpoche. It is led by one of Zasep Tulku's senior western students. It was explained to me that the group keeps a fairly low profile as members are focused on high tantra practices and the teacher cannot manage more than a certain number of students – out of approximately fifty enquiries per year, one or two are invited to join the group. The Riwoche and Rigpa meditation groups are small informal gatherings of students of Khenpo Sonam Rinpoche whose main Riwoche temple is in Toronto, and students of Sogyal Rinpoche, founder of the worldwide Rigpa centres. The Ottawa Palyul Centre (also known as Chamundi House Dharma Centre) is the practice arm of the Palyul Namdroling Foundation Canada, a charity dedicated to the support of Tibetan refugee children in India. It is an informal group of mostly western meditators led by a senior student of the

Nyingmapa Lama, His Holiness Pema Norbu Rinpoche.

Buddhist-inspired

In another category I have placed those groups that could be called Buddhist-inspired. Although the organization identifies itself as Buddhist, their late guru, Namgyal Rinpoche, who was trained in the Theravada tradition and recognized by the Sixteenth Karmapa, was a person of eclectic studies and interests. He is described as a universalist who incorporated esoteric teachings from both East and West into his program.

The group continues this eclectic tradition in that their teachers bring to bear on their Buddhist teachings many aspects of western mystical traditions not usually associated with Buddhism, as well as wide-ranging interests such as astronomy, astrology, gemology, or the Tarot. The Willpower Institute runs a yearly six-month program aimed at training people to practice and to teach meditation according to the method developed by the Thai abbot, Phra Luang Phor. Their stated goals are peace of mind and enhanced health and work performance. The courses are offered free of charge and people of all faiths are invited as the practice is advertised as non-denominational and non-religious. Nevertheless, the brief chants associated with the classes pay homage to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and in the walking meditation I attended, the instruction was to repeat 'Buddho, Buddho, Buddho' while walking. The Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic uses Buddhist-inspired techniques of conscious breathing and mindfulness of body, speech and mind as therapy for stress and life problems.

This brief review, of course, does not exhaust Buddhist or Buddhist-inspired meditation practice in Ottawa. There are groups meeting at private homes, before work at the office, at the university, as well as other types of Buddhist-inspired group activities such as the Tara Dancers. There are also individual Buddhist teachers with one or two students that will never appear on any list, so the whole picture has much more detail than is presented here.

PART II: OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Let me begin this part of my report by recounting a couple of recent experiences. The first deals with an invitation from a local radio station to participate in a series of interviews that would introduce Buddhism to its listening audience, a kind of Buddhism 101 overview. I was happy to comply, however, when we actually got talking on the program, I realized that it was rather less about my knowledge of Buddhism and rather more

about me as a Buddhist. The host was very gracious and sympathetic throughout. Nevertheless, I could not shake the feeling that I was an intelligent and familiar creature who had begun to behave and think in a very odd way. The unspoken message was – please help our audience to understand exactly what has gotten into you. The second experience involved a request from someone looking for a ‘Buddhist’ to speak to a class. At first, I thought that the purpose of the guest speaker was to increase the students’ understanding of the religion and provide an ‘insider’ view of Buddhism. I soon realized that this was not exactly the requirement—which was rather to represent the ‘real’ Buddhism as an ethnic religion by one’s exotic appearance, thereby serving as an object of interest for the class.

These experiences lead me to observe that despite the growing popularity and profile of Buddhism in contemporary Canadian life, there is an element of liminality that pervades certain aspects of it. Between the Buddhism that is welcomed as the religious faith of ethnic communities, and the Buddhism that is welcomed as a philosophy and a way of life, lies the in-between world of non-Asian converts to Buddhism. Western converts are frequently regarded as not truly ‘Buddhist’ by those who place Buddhism in the ethnic faith category, and too Buddhist by those who regard Buddhism as primarily a matter of philosophy and meditation technique. Yet another liminal space is occupied by people that I would call non-Buddhist Buddhists. Those who agree with what they know of Buddhist philosophy, who practice Buddhist meditation, and follow Buddhist principles and way of life, but who claim to be not Buddhist. Interestingly, these people can be quite active in promoting Buddhism as a religion – the Rigpa group in Ottawa was organized by just such a non-Buddhist!

I also note that Buddhist groups in Ottawa reflect a modernizing, universalist and humanist movement that has been gathering momentum in both Asia and North America over the last two or three decades. The beginnings of this movement can be linked with the appropriation of Buddhism in the nineteenth century by western intellectuals. It is currently articulated in at least two ways; one takes a ‘back to the original’ or back to the truth of Buddha’s teaching approach. According to this view, the actual historical truth of the Buddha’s life and teaching has been largely lost through gross misinterpretation and sectarian bias, but has been preserved in its purity by certain people. One example of this view is the Vipassana meditation movement. Goenka steadfastly refuses to use such terms as ‘Buddhist’ or ‘Buddhism’ for the reason that this is sectarian religious terminology not used by the Buddha, and which does not reflect the pure universal dhamma taught by the Buddha. Another example of the

emphasis on 'what the Buddha really taught' can be found in the teachings of the Chinese Master Chin Kung whose web site advocates a return to the traditional "original, correct meaning of Buddhism," as opposed to approaches that are identified as either religious, academic, or cultist. The concern with authenticity is, of course, nothing new in the history of Buddhism; more than 700 years ago, Dogen left Japan for China in search of an 'authentic teacher' from whom he could receive transmission of the true Dharma.

The second way in which this movement is expressed is exemplified by those masters who are reinterpreting Buddhism according to a modern global ethos that emphasizes social and environmental responsibility, cultural and religious relativism, conflict resolution, and scientific truth. I wish to make a distinction here between western students of Buddhism who learn from traditional teachers and transmit Buddhist concepts to other westerners, and the very conscious acculturation of Buddhism to a modern western world-view that is being carried out by born-Buddhist teachers themselves. As examples, I would include Master Hsing Yun, who teaches Buddhism from a perspective that shuns beliefs in local gods and spirits such as the popular Chinese earth god, and eschews ancient practices such as geomancy ; Thich Nhat Hanh, who has revised the pratimoksha to make it more applicable to monastics in the modern world and reworked the traditional five precepts into the five mindfulness trainings where the emphasis is not only on personal abstention from negativity, but also on proactive social engagement with others to ensure that they also refrain from harmful action ; and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche, founder of the New Kadampa Tradition that describes itself as 'Global Buddhism' in contradistinction to 'Tibetan Buddhism.' Yet another version of this conscious acculturation is the Gaden for the West organization dedicated to interpreting and integrating Gelugpa Tibetan Buddhism. Established in 1999 by Zasep Tulku Rinpoche, the logo on their web site carries the familiar Buddhist Dharma wheel usually flanked by the two deer that symbolize the Buddha's first teaching in the Deer Park near Sarnath in central India – except that in this case, one of the deer has been replaced by a very grizzly-looking bear!

The tendency towards a redefinition of Buddhism with the emphasis on the essence of Buddhism as universal, non-sectarian, and non-religious brings me back to the idea of liminality and the notion that you don't have to be Buddhist to be Buddhist. One of the more well-loved quotes attributed to the Dalai Lama, the highest spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, is "My religion is kindness." This makes perfect sense if we remember that the heart of Buddhist teaching is the Middle Way of avoiding extremes (Buddhism itself being such an extreme). The liminal

place of the non-Buddhist Buddhists is, therefore, neatly appropriated by Buddhism. But what of those westerners who wish to be 'Buddhist?' What does it mean to be a western lay Buddhist? Will the future of Canadian Buddhism see a separation between monastic and lay whereby the religious sphere belongs only to the monastics? Will ritual and worship in the western lay community fade away in favour of good works, meditation, and much reading? These questions are beyond the scope of this report, but I suspect that the answers lie as much in our conceptualization of religion as it does in redefinitions of Buddhism.

My last observation relates to the trouble that I had categorizing some of the groups on my list. Buddhism as it is practiced in contemporary life no longer fits easily into these academic categories, if indeed it ever did. Contemporary Vietnamese and Chinese Buddhism is already very much an amalgam of Theravada and Mahayana traditions. The various ethno-cultural forms of Buddhism are now more accurately described according to their living expression via the teachings of Buddhist masters who are reshaping Buddhism in a consciously universalistic, humanistic, gender neutral, and lay-friendly way. It is perhaps now time to reconsider these categories and the way that we use them. I will close with a reference to the magnificent Global Pagoda under construction in Mumbai by Goenka's Vipassana organization. Looking at an artist's computer rendition of the finished product, it occurred to me that no matter how radical the reinterpretation, or how broad the humanistic umbrella, whether the name of choice is Buddhism or global Buddhism or humanistic Buddhism or just plain Dhamma – this Dhamma will continue to be defined and honoured as the Buddha's Dhamma and no other.

CATALOGUE OF BUDDHIST TEMPLES AND CENTRES IN OTTAWA

THERAVADA

Ottawa Buddhist Society

- *Contact information:*
123 Saphir Ave, Ottawa, ON, K4B 1J9 Tel: (613) 831-1972
E-mail: obs_secretary@yahoo.ca
Website: <http://www.ottawabuddhistsociety.com>
- *Founded:* 1980 by members of the Sri Lankan community as the Ottawa Buddhist Association. In 1995 new by-laws were adopted and the organization incorporated under the new name of Ottawa Buddhist Society.
- *Associated Institution:* Independent
- *Dedicated space:* No. Regular events are held at the Vietnamese Buddhist Tu An Pagoda, with which the OBS has had a long relationship.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes. The organization has a formally elected Board of Directors and Executive.
- *Leadership:* Lay members rotate by election. Teachers are visiting monastics in the Theravada tradition, primarily western monks.
- *Membership:* Mixed ethnicity. The group is supported by formal membership dues and donations.
- *Activities:* A strong program of twice weekly Dharma talks and study sessions, monthly 'Day of Mindfulness' and annual retreats. Many participants in the Dharma talks are not members, but are attracted by the approach of the current teacher, Ajahn Viradhammo, and the general therapeutic nature of the talks. Well maintained website – monthly newsletter updates and a yearly community newsletter.

Hilda Jayewardenaramaya Buddhist Centre (Buddhist Congress of Canada)

- *Contact information:* 1481 Heron Rd, Ottawa, ON, K1V 6A5
Tel: (613) 739-2721
- *Founded:* 1989 as an offshoot of the original Ottawa Buddhist Association. In 1997 it was registered as a charity under the name, Buddhist Congress of Canada.
- *Dedicated space:* Yes, house donated by member of the community.

Charitable Status: Yes.

- *Leadership:* Lay executive; current resident monk, Kekandure Hemalankara.
- *Membership:* Primarily Sri Lankan. No formal membership dues. Temple is supported by donations.
- *Activities:* Every morning and evening ritual chanting services are performed. On weekends there is a Sunday chanting service and Sunday school is offered for about 12-15 children; Sinhala classes are also held on Sundays.

Ottawa Intercommunity Buddhist Temple (Ottawa Buddhist Vihara)

- *Contact information:* 115 Willow Street, Ottawa, ON, K1R 6W2
Tel/ Fax: (613) 565-0842 Email: sirisumana@hotmail.com
- *Founded:* 2000
- *Associated Institution:* Independent
- *Dedicated space:* Yes. House with one resident monk and one visiting monk.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes.
- *Leadership:* monastic – head monk, Ven Dr. Walasmullage Sirisumana Thero
- *Membership:* Informal, funded exclusively by donations. Mostly non-western sangha, particularly Vietnamese, Cambodian and Sri Lankan. The sangha reflects a very localized community and responds to their needs as they arise.
- *Activities:* Weekly ritual chanting services in addition to major Buddhist celebrations. Activities also include Dhamma discussions, blessing and visiting the sick, attending funerals, memorials, celebrating significant life events.

Wat Ratchadham I

- *Contact information:* 1815 Dunrobin Rd, Kanata, ON, K2K 1X7
Tel/Fax: (613) 839-0809 Email: sawat44@hotmail.com
Internet: www.techwiz.ca/temple/index.html
- *Founded:* Approx. 1995 – one of seven Thai temples established in Canada by Phra Luang Phor Viriyang Sirintharo, founder and Lord Abbot of Wat Dhammamongkol in Thailand.
- *Associated Institution:* Wat Dhammamongkol. The temple in Bangkok houses the largest jade Buddha image in the world, carved from a fourteen-ton block of BC jade.
- *Dedicated space:* Yes. House on fifty-two acres outside the city where two resident monks reside.

Charitable Status: Unclear.

- *Leadership*: Monastic – Phra Luang Phor and his designated monks.

- *Membership*: Primarily Thai – no fixed membership dues.

Activities: The monks are available for the community's ritual needs. The monks perform their regular daily chanting and occasionally people bring food offerings for the monks and listen to the chanting – more often this takes place on the weekends. The temple functions as a community centre for special events, but not for any regular gatherings.

Lao Buddhist Temple of Ottawa

(Wat Lao Ottawa)

- *Contact information*: (613) 591-9814

Wat Rattanak Pratip

- *Contact information*: 5883 Hazeldean Rd, Stittsville ON, K2S 1B9 Tel: (613) 836-0938
- *Founded*: 1985, as the Ottawa-Hull Cambodian Buddhist Association.
- *Dedicated space*: Yes. A house outside the city with resident monk.
- *Charitable Status*: Yes, as of 1987.
- *Leadership*: Lay members rotate by election – sponsor monastics for ritual services.
- *Membership*: Primarily Cambodian. No membership dues – the temple is supported by donations from the Cambodian community, which is almost entirely Buddhist.
- *Activities*: twice monthly – new moon and full moon gathering for ritual services as well as on special holidays.

Goenka Vipassana Meditation Group

- *Contact information*: Tel: (613) 623-3898
- *Founded*: approx. 1984
- *Associated Institution*: Quebec Vipassana Meditation Centre, Sutton, Quebec.
- *Dedicated space*: No
- *Charitable Status*: No. Donations receipted from Quebec Centre.
- *Leadership*: Lay – no formal organization.
- *Membership*: no formal membership – approx. 70-80 show up for their annual information session. Ten-day programs draw a mix of people – Sri Lankan, Indian, Asian and Western. Donations are only accepted from students who have completed a ten-day course.

- *Activities:* Weekly meditation for those who have completed the ten-day course; a monthly one-day program has an average of twenty participants. Since 2000, two ten-day programs have been run in Ottawa with approx. 35-45 participants.

MAHAYANA

Vietnamese Pure Land

Tu An Pagoda

- *Contact information:* 3591 Albion Rd, S. Gloucester, ON, K1T 1A2 Tel: (613) 521-0263 or 247-0920
- *Founded:* 1979 as the Vietnamese-Canadian Buddhist Association. In 1991 the Tu An Pagoda was established.
- *Associated Institution:* Independent
- *Dedicated space:* Yes. House renovated into a traditional Vietnamese temple.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes, as of 1982. Organization has a formally elected Board of Directors and Executive.
- *Leadership:* Lay members rotate by election, visiting monastics are sponsored.
- *Membership:* Primarily Vietnamese – the temple is supported by donations and formal membership dues.
- *Activities:* Weekly Sunday chanting service held in Vietnamese and led by lay members who also provide chanting services when needed by the community, such as for funerals. The pagoda functions also as a community centre and organizes services for important Buddhist holy days.

Chua Pho Da

- *Contact information:* 1002 Somerset St. W. Ottawa, ON, K1R 6R9 Tel: (613) 231-2516 Fax: (613) 234-7756
- *Founded:* 1994
- *Associated Institution:* Unified Buddhist Congregation of Canada
- *Dedicated space:* Yes. Temple in the city and monastery outside of the city.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes. Registered in 1996 as the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Congregation of Ottawa-Carleton.
- *Leadership:* Lay executive; resident monk director – Ven. Thich Bon Dat
- *Membership:* Vietnamese

Hieu Giang Pagoda

- *Contact information:* 4629 Bank Street. Ottawa ONT Canada K1T-3W6
Tel: (613) 822 8535 Email: vientanh71@yahoo.ca

Chinese Pure Land

International Buddhist Progress Society of Ottawa And Buddha's Light International Association (Ottawa Chapter)

- *Contact information:* 1950 Scott St, Ottawa, ON, K1Z 8L8
(613) 759-8111 Fax (613) 236-7743
Internet: www.ibpsottawa.org Email: ottawa_ibps@hotmail.com
- *Founded:* 1996
- *Associated Institution:* Fo Guang Shan Monastery, Taiwan.
- *Dedicated space:* Yes. Renovated office building – looking now for temple/retreat space on the outskirts of the city.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes.
- *Leadership:* Monastic - under the direction of Master Hsing Yun.
- *Resident nun:* Ven. Miao Tsun
- *Membership:* Mostly from the Chinese mainland, but also Taiwanese and Vietnamese Chinese.
- *Activities:* Weekend chanting service and Dharma study in Mandarin. Weekly meditation class.

Tzu Chi Foundation (Ottawa Branch)

- *Contact information:* Tel: (613) 823-8839 Fax: (613) 220-6515
- *Founded:* approx. 1997 – real relief work began in 1999
- *Associated Institution:* Tzu Chi Foundation Canada
- *Dedicated Space:* No. Meetings held in private home or community center.
- *Charitable Status:* No. Charitable receipts provided by the national organization.
- *Leadership:* Lay
- *Membership:* Members are mixed ethnicity – Somali, Indian, non-Asian; eleven out of fifteen volunteers are non-Taiwanese. No formal dues or organization – the group is supported by regular donations from some people. Donations received are turned over to the national body and events are funded through them.
- *Activities:* monthly visits to three nursing homes; fresh fruit and vegetables distributed to the community monthly; support provided for local aid groups such as the Nepean seniors. No meditation or religious program. Serious members try to follow

the Buddhist principles of Master Cheng Yen in daily life – to promote vegetarianism and social engagement with regard to community needs in medicine, poverty, education and culture. On Saturday evenings members gather to watch videos of Master Cheng Yen’s teaching and to gain inspiration from seeing the work done by the Tzu Chi Foundation in other parts of the world.

Ottawa Amitabha Buddhist Society of Canada

- *Contact information:* Tel: 613-723-9683 Fax: 613-723-6316
Email: info@amtb-ottawa.ca Website: www.amtb-ottawa.ca
- *Founded:* 2002 by former members of the IBPS
- *Associated Institution:* World wide organization of Pure Land Learning Centres founded by Master Chin Kung and headquartered in Taiwan at Hwa Dzan Buddhist Library and Hwa Dzan Pureland Learning Centre.
- *Dedicated space:* No. Meetings held alternately in a private home or rented facility.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes, as of 2003.
- *Leadership:* Lay – under the spiritual guidance of Master Chin Kung.
- *Membership:* No membership dues, but the members offer donations to support the activities of the center.
- *Activities:* weekly chanting of sutras, Amitabha’s name, and listening to tapes by Master Chin Kung according to the program of the Pure Land centres – free distribution of Master Chin Kung’s books, CDs and audio-tapes for which the community pays the shipping.

Japanese Pure Land

Soka Gakkai International Canada (Ottawa Chapter)

- *Contact information:* 237 Argyle Ave. Ottawa, ON Tel: (613) 232-1100
- *Founded:* Main centre officially opened 1998, but the group has been operating since the 70s.
- *Associated Institution:* Soka Gakkai International Association of Canada
- *Dedicated Space:* Yes, rented suites in an office building.
- *Charitable Status:* Under the SGI-Canada
- *Leadership:* Lay
- *Membership:* Members are of mixed age and ethnicity. There is a monthly membership donation. The group is organized according

to districts, chapters, areas and regions. There are 13 districts in Ottawa, which belongs, with the Maritimes, to the Eastern region.

- *Activities*: Each district holds three sessions per month to introduce students to the principles and practices of SGI. The main community hall has weekly chanting sessions.

Thich Nhat Hanh Zen

Pagoda Sangha

- *Contact information*: Vinh Nguyen (613) 747-9096
- *Founded*: approx. 1995, as the Warm Snow sangha – inspired by the 1993 visit of TNH to Canada – at that time it was sixty percent Vietnamese
- *Associated Institution*: Plum Village, France
- *Dedicated space*: No. Practice takes place at the Tu An pagoda or the Dieu Khong temple.
- *Charitable Status*: No. Organization is very informal.
- *Leadership*: Lay
- *Membership*: no formal membership – a small sangha, mostly western.
- *Activities*: weekly sessions devoted to sitting or walking meditation, dharma discussion, and practice according to the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh.

Pine Gate Sangha

- *Contact information*: 1252 Rideout Cres, Ottawa, ON, K2C 2X7
Tel: (613) 726-0881
- *Founded*: approx. 1997
- *Associated Institution*: Plum Village, France
- *Dedicated space*: Practice takes place in a private home, which includes the Pine Gate Meditation Hall
- *Charitable Status*: No
- *Leadership*: Led by Dharmacarya Ian Prattis.
- *Membership*: Members are primarily western. There is no formal membership or membership dues – a sangha council meets twice yearly. Eight members are ordained in Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing.
- *Activities*: twice weekly sessions include qi-gong classes and introduction to mindfulness on one evening and dharma talk and meditation on another. The group organizes regular yearly retreats and socials, and peace promotion activities.

Sangha Arana

- *Contact information:* 595 Montreal Rd, Ste. 305, Ottawa, ON, K1K 4L2 Tel: (613) 745-5366 ex. 2 Fax: (613) 745-1186
www.mindfulnessclinic.com
- *Founded:* 2004, as a adjunct to the Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic
- *Associated Institution:* Plum Village, France
- *Dedicated Space:* Yes – in the OMC offices.
- *Charitable Status:* No.
- *Leadership:* Lead by Lynette Monteiro, who is ordained in the order of Interbeing
- *Membership:* Primarily western. No formal membership or dues.
- *Activities:* weekly meditation sessions following the mindfulness practices promoted by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Dieu Khong (Marvellous Emptiness) Temple

- *Founded:* 2003
- *Associated Institution:* Plum Village, France
- *Dedicated Space:* Practice takes place in a house where a nun resides.
- *Charitable Status:* No
- *Leadership:* Monastic
- *Membership:* Vietnamese – no formal organization or membership.
- *Activities:* Sunday morning sutra chanting and sitting meditation practice for a Vietnamese group. Once a month they are joined by English-speaking members of the Pagoda sangha for their monthly Day of Mindfulness.

White Wind Zen

Dainen-Ji Monastery /Zen Centre of Ottawa /White Wind Zen Community

- *Contact information:* 240 Daly Ave. Ottawa, ON, K1N 6G2 (613) 562-1568 Email: info@wwzc.org Internet: www.wwzc.org
- *Founded:* 1985, by Anzan Hoshin
- *Associated Institution:* Independent
- *Dedicated Space:* Yes – 9,700 sq.ft. heritage house purchased in 1996.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes, as White Wind Zen Community Corp.
- *Leadership:* Anzan Hoshin, resident Abbott and President
- *Membership:* Primarily western. Most resident monastics are also employed in the workforce and are therefore able to financially contribute to the monastery.
- *Activities:* Long-distance training programs and residential

programs. Ongoing Zen meditation sessions – daily, weekly, monthly, yearly – average 10-20 participants on most occasions. Production of tapes and publication of dharma talks and translations by the Abbot.

VAJRAYANA

Ottawa Shambhala Centre

Kargyu/Nyingma – Chogyam Trungpa

- *Contact information:* 982 Wellington Ave, Ottawa, ON, K1Y 2X8 Tel: (613) 725-9321
- *Founded:* 1977 – became an official Dharmadhatu centre in 1982.
- *Associated Institution:* Shambhala International/Vajradhatu Buddhist Church of Canada
- *Dedicated Space:* Yes, rented apartments renovated into meditation hall, shrine rooms and offices.
- *Charitable Status:* Donations receipted under the Vajradhatu Buddhist Church of Canada.
- *Leadership:* Lay members rotate by election. Organization and programming is carried on according to guidelines from the group's headquarters in Halifax.
- *Membership:* This group is primarily western and attracts a wide range of people due to the variety of activities offered. Its funding comes primarily from regular membership dues and the revenue from the courses.
- *Activities:* The group offers a very extensive range of programs including introductory Buddhist meditation classes, advanced Tantric practice sessions, training courses in the secular Shambhala program, art classes, and recently a children's program. Serious students are expected to take the courses, level by level, that constitute the different programs.

Joyful Land Buddhist Centre

New Kadampa Tradition - Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

- *Contact information:* 562 Somerset St. west, Ottawa, ON, K1R 5K2 Tel: (613) 234-4347
- Email: info@meditateinottawa.com
- Internet: www.meditateinottawa.com
- *Founded:* 1996, one of six NKT centres in Ontario – ten in Canada
- *Associated Institution:* New Kadampa Tradition - International

Kadampa Buddhist Union

- *Dedicated space:* Yes. The temple houses two residents, a monk and Kadam Margot Emory who is soon to be ordained.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes, as of 1997.
- *Leadership:* Lay and monastic are involved in running the group.
- *Membership:* The group is primarily western and supported by regular donations from senior students and course fees.
- *Activities:* weekly meditation and study classes, as well as more in-depth Buddhist training programs and a monthly children's program.

Chittamani Mahayana Buddhist Meditation Centre**Gelugpa – Zasep Tulku Rinpoche**

- *Contact information:* Internet: www.dharma.ca
- *Founded:* approx. 1984/85
- *Associated Institution:* Gaden For The West Interpreting And Integrating Gelugpa Tibetan Buddhism – an international organization of Gelugpa centres under the spiritual direction of Zasep Tulku Rinpoche.
- *Dedicated space:* private home - resident teacher and retreat master, Dr. Robert Kapitany
- *Charitable Status:* under Gaden for the West
- *Leadership:* Lay
- *Membership:* Primarily western – no formal organization or membership dues. Donations are made towards specific initiatives.
- *Activities:* weekly meditation practice and teaching in the Gelugpa tradition/ annual retreat.

Palyul Namdroling Foundation**Chamundi House Palyul Centre****Nyingma – His Holiness Pema Norbu Rinpoche**

- *Contact information:* R.R.2, Mountain, ON, K0E 1S0
Tel: (613) 774-1010 Fax: (613) 774-0862
Email: palyul@cyberus.ca Internet: www.palyul.cyberus.ca
- *Founded:* 1996
- *Associated Institution:* Namdroling Nyingma Monastery, Byla Kuppe, India
- *Dedicated space:* No – practice held in private homes or rented facilities.
- *Charitable Status:* Yes, in 1997 as Palyul Namdroling Foundation (Canada) Inc.

- *Leadership*: Lay – yearly visits by monastics
- *Membership*: This is primarily a western sangha. It is informal – no membership fees or fee for sessions but there are members who donate monthly towards the charity’s primary mandate, the support of the children of Namdrolling monastery in India. Support for visiting monastics and special events is by donation.
- *Activities*: Weekly meditation practice and Dharma discussion sessions. The group sponsors the annual visit of a monastic and an annual celebration of Tibetan New Year. Other teaching programs are conducted on an ad hoc basis. The group practices silent sitting meditation according to a variety of Buddhist techniques. Its liturgical practice follows the Palyul Nyingma tradition.

Rigpa Ottawa

Nyingma – Sogyal Rinpoche

- *Contact information*: ottawa@rigpa.ca
- *Founded*: 2003
- *Associated institution*: Rigpa Canada
- *Dedicated space*: No. Practice takes place in a private home.
- *Charitable status*: Under Rigpa Canada
- *Leadership*: Lay
- *Membership*: Western group – informal. No membership dues.
- *Activities*: weekly sessions of meditation, mantra recitation, watching videos or listening to tapes of Sogyal Rinpoche’s teaching. Occasionally there is telephone instruction by senior Rigpa students.

BUDDHIST-INSPIRED MEDITATION GROUPS

Crystal Staff

- *Contact information*: Tel: (613) 722-2768
Email: crystalstaff@crystalstaff.org
Internet: www.crystalstaff.org
- *Founded*: early ‘70s
- *Associated institution*: the Dharma Centre of Canada founded by Ven. Namgyal Rinpoche.
- *Dedicated space*: No. Meetings and practice takes place in private homes and rented facilities.
- *Charitable status*: Yes.
- *Leadership*: Lay members rotate by election.

- *Membership*: Sangha is primarily western – supported by formal membership dues and donations.
- *Activities*: The group does not carry on regular meditation sessions but sponsors various teachers throughout the year. Some members offer weekly meditation in their homes.

Will Power Institute Meditation Centre

- *Contact information*: 1815 Dunrobin Rd. Kanata, ON, K2K 1X7
Tel: 613-839-7972 www.techwiz.ca/meditation
- *Founded*: in Ottawa ca. 1995 – associated with the Thai temples established in Canada by Phra Luangphor.
- *Activities*: yearly (September to March) six-month meditation instructor course developed and overseen by the Thai abbot, Phra Luangphor – taught in five centres across Canada. The course involves lectures, discussions, study, examination, practice, and retreat – free tuition.

Ottawa Shambhala Meditation Centre. 119 Ross Ave, Suite 102 Ottawa, ON K1Y 0N6 Canada. Tel. (613) 725-9321 . Search our Site. Search for: Copyright © 1994-2021 Ottawa Shambhala Meditation Centre - Site by Blue Mandala. Shambhala, Shambhala Training, Shambhala Meditation Centers, Shambhala Center, Shambhala Art, and Way of Shambhala are registered service marks of Shambhala USA Privacy Policy. This website uses cookies to improve your experience. Who is this? Buddha Maitreya is the future Buddha. In Buddhism there are 5 "earthly" Buddhas, each associated with one of the 5 ages (Kala) of the world. Buddha Shakyamuni is the earthly Buddha of the fourth and present age. Buddha Maitreya is the final earthly Buddha, expected to appear during the 5th Kala. In his function as great teacher of mankind, he will supposedly lead humanity back to Buddhism. How can I tell? Buddhism was introduced to ancient Japan via Korea in the 6th century CE with various sects following in subsequent centuries via China. It was readily accepted... Buddhism in Ancient Japan. Server Costs Fundraiser 2021. Please help us pay for the servers and web services required to operate our non-profit organization's website. Buddhism is among the smallest minority-religions in Canada, with a very slowly growing population in the country, partly the result of conversion, with only 4.6% of new immigrants identifying themselves as Buddhist. As of 2011, the census recorded 366,830 or 1.1% Canadian Buddhists. Buddhism has been practised in Canada for more than a century. Buddhism arrived in Canada with the arrival of Chinese labourers in the territories during the 19th century. Modern Buddhism in Canada traces to Japanese... Buddhism is the world's fourth-largest religion with more than 500 million followers. All Buddhist believe in peace, and that is what makes them more special. Visiting these Buddhist places will enlighten up your mind.