

December 2009

Dear Friends of Tibet and Kilung Foundation,

We hope your winter season is warm, happy, and healthy. Our last newsletter was sent over a year ago, so this one is full of short synopses about most of Kilung Foundation's projects and endeavors. Thanks always for your interest in Tibet, and your generous support of our work there.

~Diane Berger



Now and future students of KCS

## Kilung Children's School Into Daylight

Great news! The school for Kilung community kids has reemerged after receiving official permission of the local government. First begun in 2006, it then had to operate in the quiet shadows of the monastery for two years, while continuing to receive funding from stalwart sponsors. Now the six-year program will be back in the beautiful school building just below the monastery, and more kids will be welcomed. About 25 students, including girls, will board at the school. One older Kilung monk has been chosen as head teacher. The program includes religious instruction, as well as secular subjects, and it's expected that some of the boys will later continue at Kilung's monastery college. We hope others will carry on to middle school. After the long winter school holiday, the first item on the agenda is building a kitchen so that a school cook can provide meals, and then school can begin. [See photos of the students and school building.](#)

## Our Students Excelling

The former [Ponru](#) students are doing "super-well" at Sershul Middle School, says Kilung Rinpoche. One student is second-to-top in Tibetan language class. Rinpoche said the kids' families have been "so moved by the sponsors. They felt

## Ancient Temple Flourishing Again

Reconstruction of Kilung's original temple is now finished, and a small consecration ceremony blessed the renovated sanctuary in September. A more complete consecration will be done sometime in the future. This past year, finishing touches included the wooden floor, frescoes painted on walls and beams, upstairs rooms, and installation of large statues.



One Kilung community member, Thubzang, has offered 1,000 Guru Rinpoche statues for the sacred structure. The 80-plus-year elder said, "This is my last life opportunity, to leave something for community and practitioners." An altar to cover one entire side wall is being constructed to display the 6-8-inch statues.

Begun in 1770 and sponsored by the king of Derge, the formidable temple survived two and half centuries, and by the 20th-century cultural revolution, had been taken over as a barn. After it was reclaimed and repaired in the 1980s, Kilung Foundation began major reconstruction in 2005. [Read the temple's story on this website.](#)

## Resurrecting a Major Ritual

In honor of the reconstructed temple, Kilung Monastery has plans to revive its annual Vajrakilaya Drupchen, a 10-day round-the-clock puja, in 2010. It will be a big gathering of monastics and lay people from around the area. This traditional ritual was central to Kilung Monastery for two hundred years until the 1950s. Because of a [special connection between the monastery and Vajrakilaya](#), Kilung is a particularly effective place for this practice. Resuming this drupchen is part of reestablishing the heart essence of spiritual life there. [See Kilung Drupchens.](#)

## Shedra Update

Kilung Monastic College, or *shedra*, is moving along in its fourth year. The shedra temple recently received five life-sized red copper statues sculpted in east-Tibetan style. These statues from the Chamdo region, an area famous for sacred art, were sponsored by Victorious Mt. Retreat Campaign of the Kilung Foundation. A major consecration of the statues took place December 2009. Nine impressive deities and yogi's now grace the teaching temple, inspiring the assembly of 20-plus scholar monks in their absorption of buddhist studies.

amazed that the sponsorships have continued for so long." These sponsorships are in the form of a monthly gift of \$10 to the families, to encourage them to allow their kids to stay in school. Across Tibet, one of the most common reasons for students to drop out of school is that their families need them to help herd and farm. This support helps the families get by, and by inspiration, knowing someone across the world cares, encourages the students. Back at Ponru, the school yaks are still there, tended by one Ponru family. The cheese and yogurt goes to these middle school families as additional support.

In spite of this support, recently several of the former Ponru students did leave middle school, preferring to join Ponru Monastery as young initiates. The lifestyle and stresses of town have been challenging of late; there must have been some inevitable fallout after losing one of their schoolmates to a sudden illness this year (see below); they miss their home and family; and couldn't wait to become a monk, in spite of Rinpoche's urging for them to wait. This has left eight students continuing their education at the middle school, with plans to continue beyond.

## Animal Release Farm— Expanding By Inspiration

Kilung's life release farm received a large flock of sheep last summer, hoofing it all the way from Golok in Amdo. Their owners were so inspired when they heard the farm had revived this tradition, that they were motivated to herd the 100 sheep for a five-day journey by horse, and dedicated the merit to their recently deceased mother. Sheep are currently getting \$100/head at market, so this was a very generous act of compassion, in time, effort and resources.



Grazing land of the new Animal Release Farm, in summer

Another donation of 100 sheep was made by the family of Kilung monk Palo, in honor of their father who died last year. The farm now has 300 sheep and other animals, many of which were donated by foreign friends from all over the world on behalf of loved ones. You can read more about [rescuing a sheep, yak or goat from slaughter on this website](#).



Young monks practicing buddhist debate in shedra courtyard.

## Three More Monk's Homes Completed

Last summer saw the building of three additional [homes for Kilung monks](#). The 17 cabins are occupied with 19 monks, providing permanent housing for these monastic practitioners. Beautiful stone plaques with donor names in Tibetan language have been made and will be installed in the spring.

## Ground Broken for Visitor Retreat Center



Winter view from future Kilung Retreat Center

Devoted Asian friends and students of Kilung Rinpoche felt the time was right to build retreat facilities for visiting Buddhists and others wishing to stay awhile and meditate on the slope below Kilung Monastery. About 15 small, simple cabins with distant mountain views will have their own balconies for meditation, and have access to a shared kitchen. The cabins will be available for retreatants and other visitors.

## Health Care Progress



The nomad [health clinic](#) got its start this summer with the building of a small one-room structure near Kilung Monastery. This was made possible with long-sought permission from local government, including funds. Before medical services can begin, more rooms and a full-time doctor are needed. Minimal physician's salary will be provided by the government, so private funding will be sought to improve the compensation, and also to add more necessary rooms, including physician's housing.



Two Dzachuka children were taken to Kangding this fall to treat cases of hydatid disease. They both had successful liver surgery. A third child with the disease was determined to be fighting it off on his own. This often-fatal parasitic disease is spread by contact with animals, especially dogs, and is ever-present in the high grasslands of Dzachuka.

At least at Kilung Monastery, to decrease the chances of contracting hydatid disease, the resident dogs are continuing to receive inexpensive worm medicine on a monthly basis through the [Little Mountain Dog Project](#). In other places, including nomad camps, one avoids this disease with basic, but effective prevention like hand washing; however, it's not always easy to carry this out under nomad living conditions. We are currently considering ways to conduct a hygiene education program throughout Dzachuka nomad areas.

## Traditional Architecture House Finds Land

After a two-year search, land was found and purchased on the outskirts of Sershul town with 360-degree mountain views. A beautiful multi-purpose house and center will be built there showcasing traditional Tibetan architecture, for a therapeutic dose of cultural preservation. Lumber for the house has already

## Heavy Monsoon Weakens Structures

Excessive rains this fall caused weakening of two buildings at Kilung Monastery. One shedra outer wall bulged out dangerously after a roof leak wasn't detected in a couple of unoccupied rooms for several months. The water had seeped into the adobe wall, causing a near-collapse. The leak was repaired and the wall shored up with timbers, which will remain like this through the winter while it dries. The final repair will happen in the spring. In the meantime, the shedra has also installed water drains in the inner courtyard to divert heavy rain away from the buildings.

Also, an old addition of Rinpoche's former house completely collapsed in the heavy rain. Fortunately no one was hurt even though people had been in the upper room earlier in the day. Unlike the main part of the solid two-story house, the addition, which contained an altar and many sacred objects, was not well-built. The majority of items were rescued, such as sacred texts, but some antique clay statues didn't survive. A new wing is currently under discussion for rebuilding at a later time.

The Dzachu Bridge did fine this year, even though the valley flooded again to 2007 disaster levels. Kilung Foundation raised the bridge one meter which has so far solved potential flooding problems. This year's monsoon, however, did wash out many buildings belonging to monasteries and families in Dzachuka and beyond.

## Winter Fodder for Animals — Ancient Practice Revived



**Long braids of harvested wild grass dry from nomad house**

After a snow disaster the winter of 2008, causing thousands of animals to die in Dzachuka, the Kilung Foundation initiated a return to harvesting wild plants to feed the animals in late winter. Kilung community leaders enthusiastically took up the idea, mandating it for every family. Even though the winter of 2009 was mild, the animals benefitted from the extra food during lean times. This fall, the harvest continued so the herds will be protected from starvation if another disaster befalls in spring 2010.

been milled and cut into the appropriate parts. Assembly and construction is planned for the coming building season which begins after the weather warms up. The land sits across the street from the local cultural museum, which will bring more visitors to our new center. Plans are to utilize green technology in the building for which we anticipate an east-west cooperation of advisors. [Enjoy an animated tour of the exterior house scheme and read more.](#)



## Victorious Mt. Retreat Campaign Further Significant Goals

**Thanks to the generosity of donors**, in its first 18 months [Victorious Mountain Retreat Campaign](#) raised over \$45,000 to go toward Kilung Foundation projects, and in order to facilitate retreat time for Kilung Rinpoche. The enormous success of this was evident: Rinpoche completed six months of significant retreat plus pilgrimage last year, while projects in Dzachuka were able to move ahead. VMRC funds made possible the following: sacred art and implements for Kilung's ancient temple; temple consecration; 5 life-sized statues for the shedra temple; additional monks' homes; support for Kilung Monastery, monks, and nuns; monastery prayer flags; monastery jeep upkeep and final loan payment; 5-day drupchen costs for two years; education assistance; and retreat-related costs, including offerings to monasteries and lamas. Wow!

**Please join this uplifting campaign, designed around the Five Buddha Families.** Get [a full description of the campaign](#) on this website. Request the full VMRC report for 2008-09 by e-mail. Contact us to join the campaign, and help strengthen Tibetan culture, quality of life, and Buddhism.

TIBET AT KILUNG DOT ORG

## Yeshe Long House

Kind and generous friends have provided a home for Kilung Rinpoche and me on five acres of lovely forest on south Whidbey Island where buddhist and foundation activities are now taking place. An enormous amount of renovation took place over the summer and early fall before we could move in. For this we sincerely thank the many friends who spent countless hours volunteering their time and expertise, and to Lynn and Nancy, the owners who underwrote another huge measure of professional renovation.

Rinpoche has named it Yeshe Long House, Wisdom's Vast Expanse. In Tibetan *Yeshe* means awareness wisdom, and *Long*, vast expanse. (*Pr. ye-shay lowng*) Combined together with *House*, we were delighted with the coincidental connection to the NW Coast Indian longhouse tradition.



The Kilung Foundation/Pema Kilaya office has also moved to Yeshe Long House. Our mailing address remains the same: PO Box 622, Langley, WA 98260, but we have a new phone number: 360-341-4184.

# Memoriam

Some life passages that we would like to honor~~

**DOCHUNG.** The teacher at Kilung Children's School passed away in 2008. As an older, esteemed lama at Jungyung Monastery, he wasn't an ordinary choice for a school teacher. But Kilung Rinpoche felt someone special was needed, and knew it was a long-shot that the lama would come. But he did, and got the school off to a wonderful start. He was adored and respected by the young students, who seemed to understand very well that this taskmaster was on special assignment to them.

**KHOLO.** The eldest brother of Kilung Rinpoche's family succumbed to liver disease August 2008. He was a peaceful lion of the community, a professional mediator, community organizer, administrator for Ponru School, and led Rinpoche's clan. He was a wonderful, warm, wise man of Dzachuka who worked for the good of the whole community from his heart.

**GURTSO.** The wife of Kholo and mother of ten grown children passed away October 2009. She nurtured a very close-knit family, and oversaw a warm home that was always open to friends and visitors. She died of advanced hydatid disease.

**TSERING KYID.** A bright student at Ponru School who later went on to Sershul Middle School, Tsering Kyid died probably of leukemia in September of 2009. It was a very quick onset of the disease and shocked her family and friends. She was the granddaughter of Kholo and Gurtso, and niece of Kilung Rinpoche. She was an extraordinarily kind and caring young person.

**SHIMO.** The sister of Kilung senior monk Palo and Kilung's Khenpo Sotra, Shimo died suddenly of an undiagnosed illness in 2009. She was born with a disability of memory and remained unmarried, preferring a life with her parents. She worked all her life with animals, leading a pure nomad life, and probably never visited a county town.