

# Contemplative END OF LIFE CARE

professional development training program

Part of the ITM  
Thandadoula Education Project



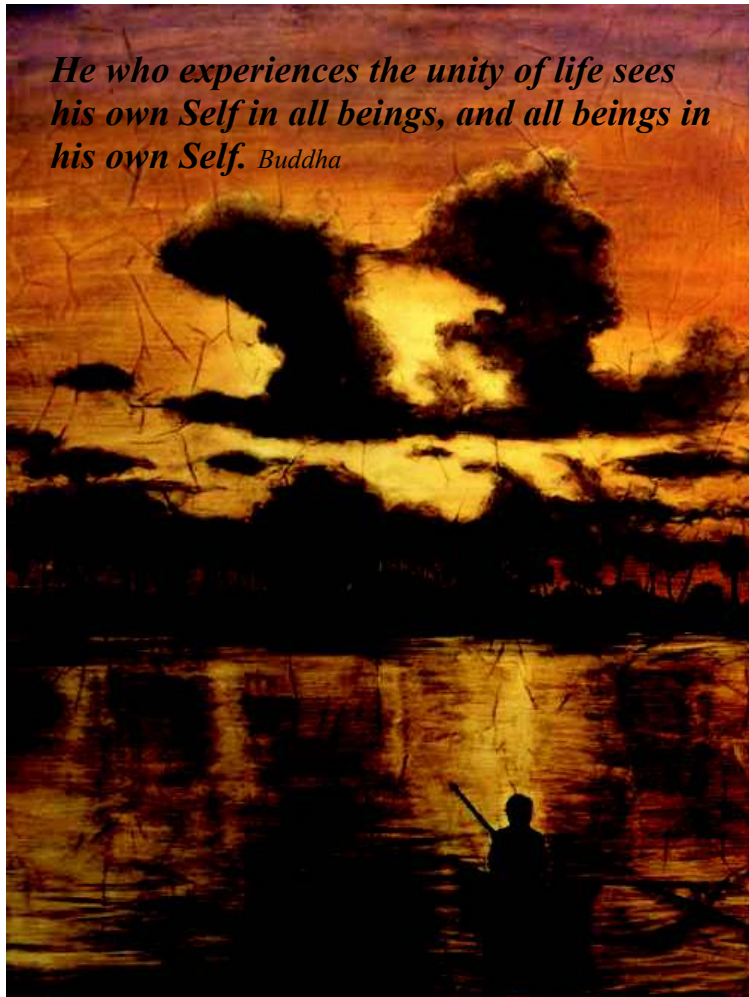
INSTITUTE *of*  
TRADITIONAL  
M E D I C I N E

Developing the Heart, Mind, Body & Spirit

416-537-0928

# VISION

We aim to make dying a process that holds the potential for profound meaning and transformation for both the dying, and the communities supporting them. We have introduced the term 'thanadoula' to describe the art of serving the dying and the dead. Thanatos (in Greek, *Θάνατος* - "Death") was the personification of death in Greek mythology and doula is a servant. The Institute of Traditional Medicine provides a comprehensive, integrated training available to professionals, clinicians, individuals, families and communities, in compassionate end-of-life care.



*He who experiences the unity of life sees his own Self in all beings, and all beings in his own Self. Buddha*

Our Contemplative End-of-Life Care Program provides training opportunities, mentors and support through in-class programs, on-site practicums, and eventual on-line resources for hospice staff, palliative care physicians and nurses, psychotherapists, health care practitioners, social workers, spiritual care professionals, and members from the public who are interested in acquiring competencies that would allow them to be of service to their communities within the discipline of end-of-life care.

Our training program introduces a contemplative dimension to end-of-life care through educating and enhancing trainees' fluency in the bio-psycho-social-spiritual, legal, ethical and medical dimensions of care of the dying, and prepares them to serve in a variety of environments including private homes, hospices, and hospitals. Students receive a number of manuals with over a 1,000 pages of practical tools, exercises, articles and resources.

Through the use of experiential tools, discussions and clinical studies, participants are guided in an exploration and understanding of dying, death, and the grieving process.

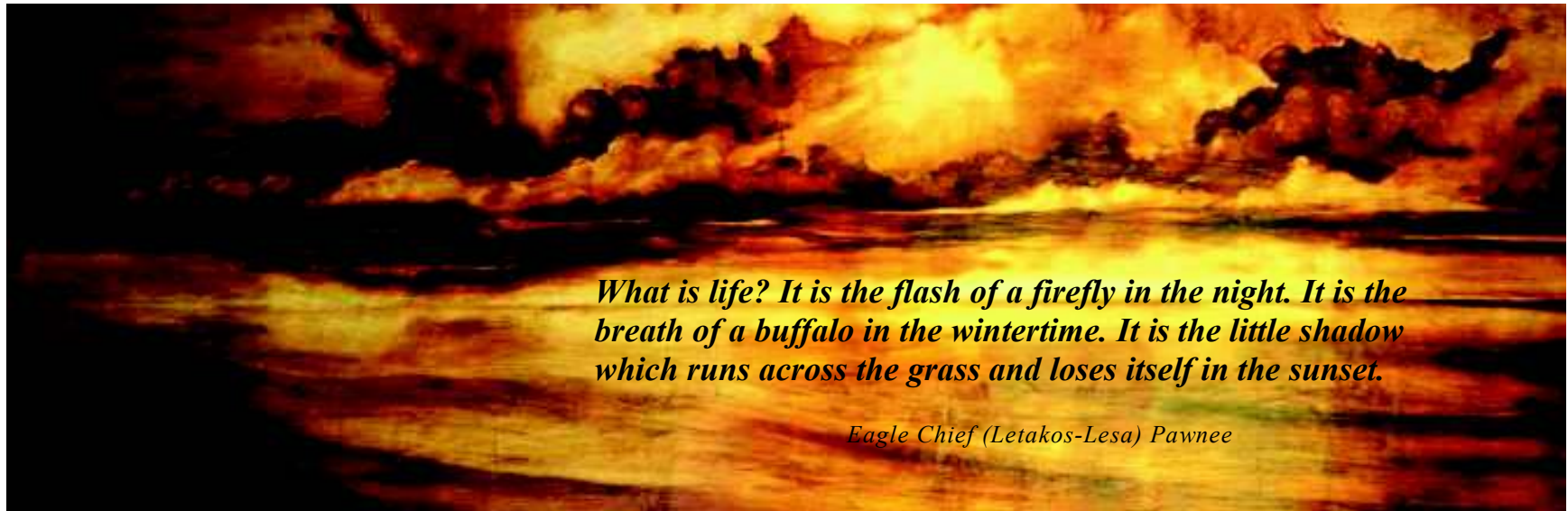
The contemplative approach addresses the spiritual dimension of dying & death and provides the practical knowledge and skills that are required to offer compassionate end-of-life care.

# PURPOSE

ITM's Contemplative End-of-Life Care Program was developed as part of a larger effort to improve end-of-life care in Canada and beyond (Thanadoula Education Project). Over the years, this initiative has brought remarkable teachers and teachings to our institute, (Traditional Chinese Medicine, First Nations, Tibetan Buddhist, Hindu, Psychotherapists, Physicians, and others) representing diverse perspectives and insights into care of the dying. We are committed to our role as a leader in a revolutionary development of human awareness, that is transforming how we live, die and relate to others.

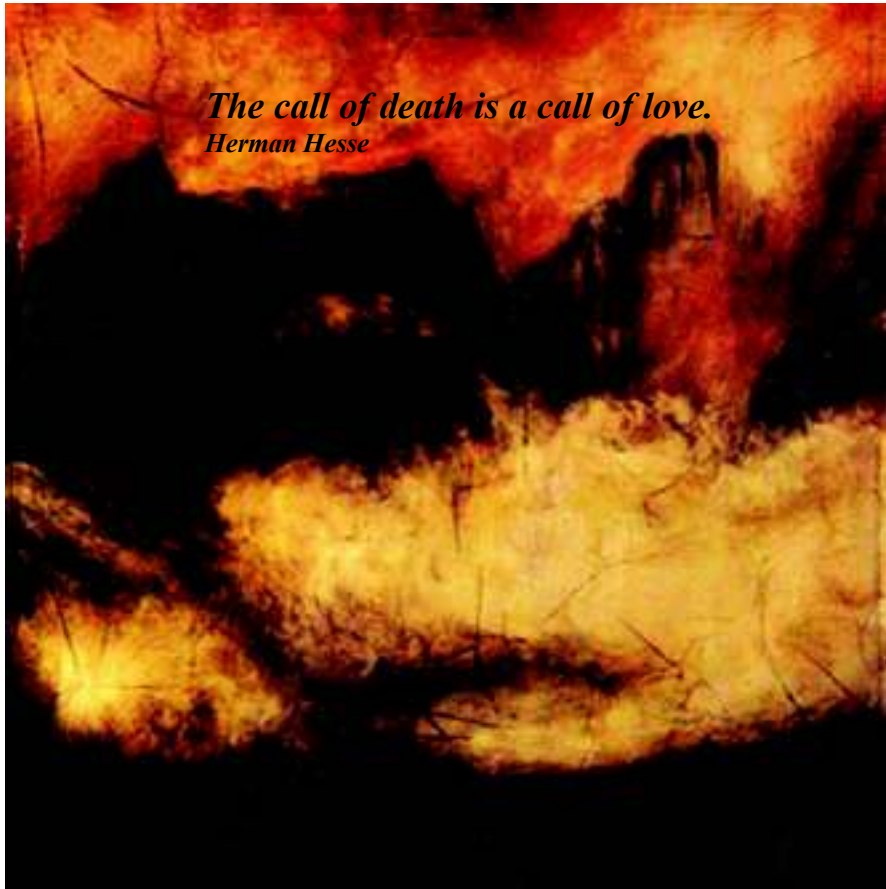
Although many individuals and communities value the quality of care given to the dying, few have the knowledge, skills and support to provide effective end-of-life care. The Contemplative End-of-Life Care Program addresses this need, and provides the training necessary to develop a resourceful and skilled community that can care for the dying and bereaved, while expanding spiritually and culturally appropriate resources, available to everyone.

Recognizing the crucial role that family caregivers play in end-of-life care in our society, we have developed accessible training opportunities to support their efforts in providing for their loved ones. The 'contemplative' dimension indicates a focus on the process of dying as a community endeavour, wherein family, friends and colleagues are called upon to contribute their best qualities and efforts to support the dying and one another.



***What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.***

*Eagle Chief (Letakos-Lesa) Pawnee*



# PROGRAM CURRICULUM

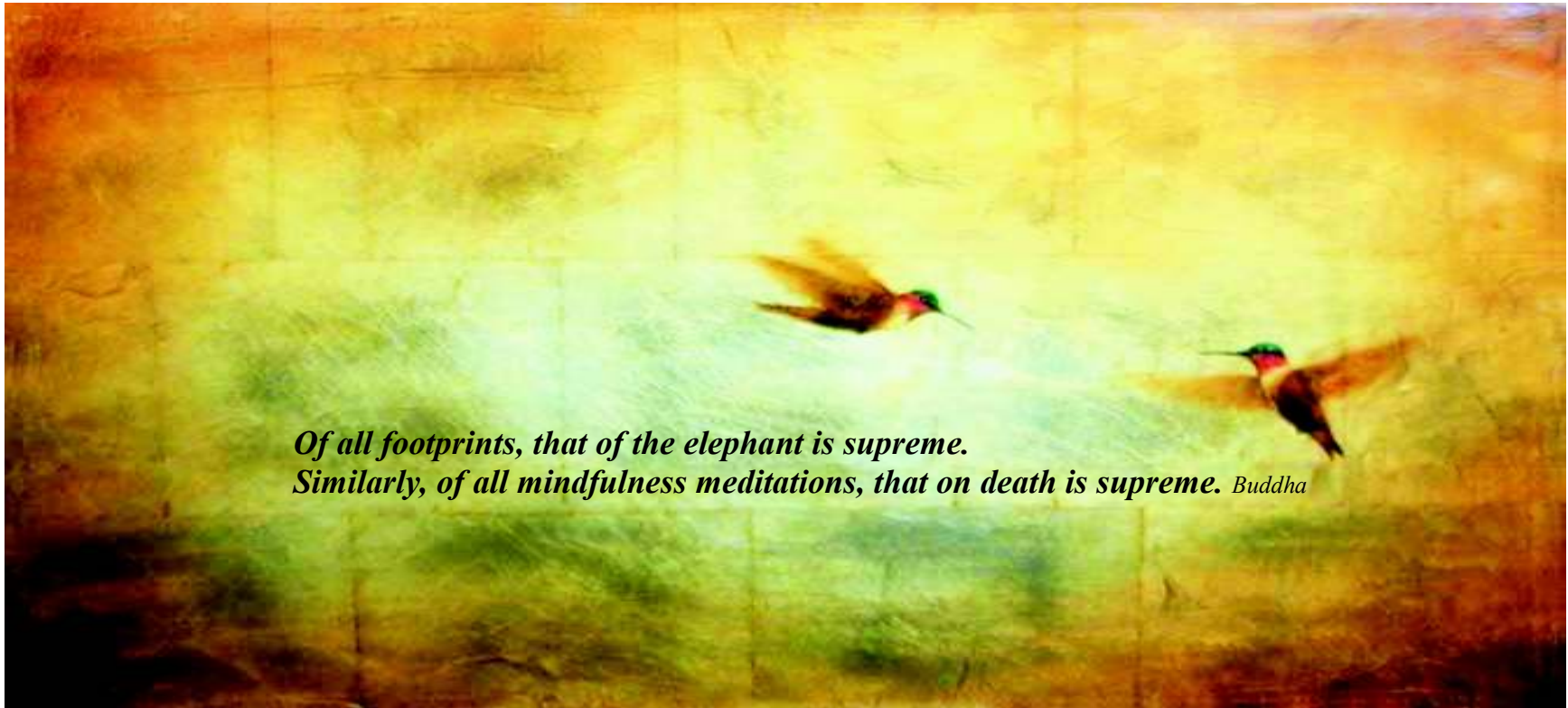
Through eight weekend modules scheduled over an eight month period, students will learn with leading clinicians & visionaries in the growing field of end-of-life care. The training uses an inter-professional model which includes a variety of instructional methods including: experiential, theoretical, creative practices, practicum based learning and case study review.

Students will be introduced to a multiplicity of tools and practices, which will allow them to serve the dying with sensitivity and skill, while cultivating their capacity for presence, wisdom and compassion.

The required core competencies include the introduction and use of mindfulness techniques, practices adapted from the Buddhist tradition, and simple, yet profound rituals for the dying.

Each module will include exercises, practices and processes that can be integrated into a variety of environments. The focus of the program is client and relationship-centered, emphasizing practical and experiential learning.

This contemplative approach enhances a student's capacity to create environments wherein profound transformation can occur, and provides the practical knowledge and professional competencies to facilitate these supportive networks. Students will be introduced to relevant legal and medical terms, concepts, resources and procedures, so they are prepared to assist clients with end-of-life and healthcare decisions. They will learn to create meaningful care plans for the dying and his/her communities, advocate for client's well-being and offer a quality of presence and engagement that can transform the experience of dying to one filled with meaning and grace. The training aims to develop the individual practitioner's capacity for compassionate service as educators and thanadoulas.



## FEES

ITM is dedicated to preserving and protecting the world's traditional medical systems through education and training. For this reason we have established affordable payment options and scholarships to assist serious students in pursuing their passion for and dedication to the field of medicine and end-of-life care. Please contact the Directors for details.

Each Module/Weekend Fee: \$312.50 + HST  
(fees include all materials and practicum)

\*All prices and policies subject to change without notice.

# Faculty & Advisors

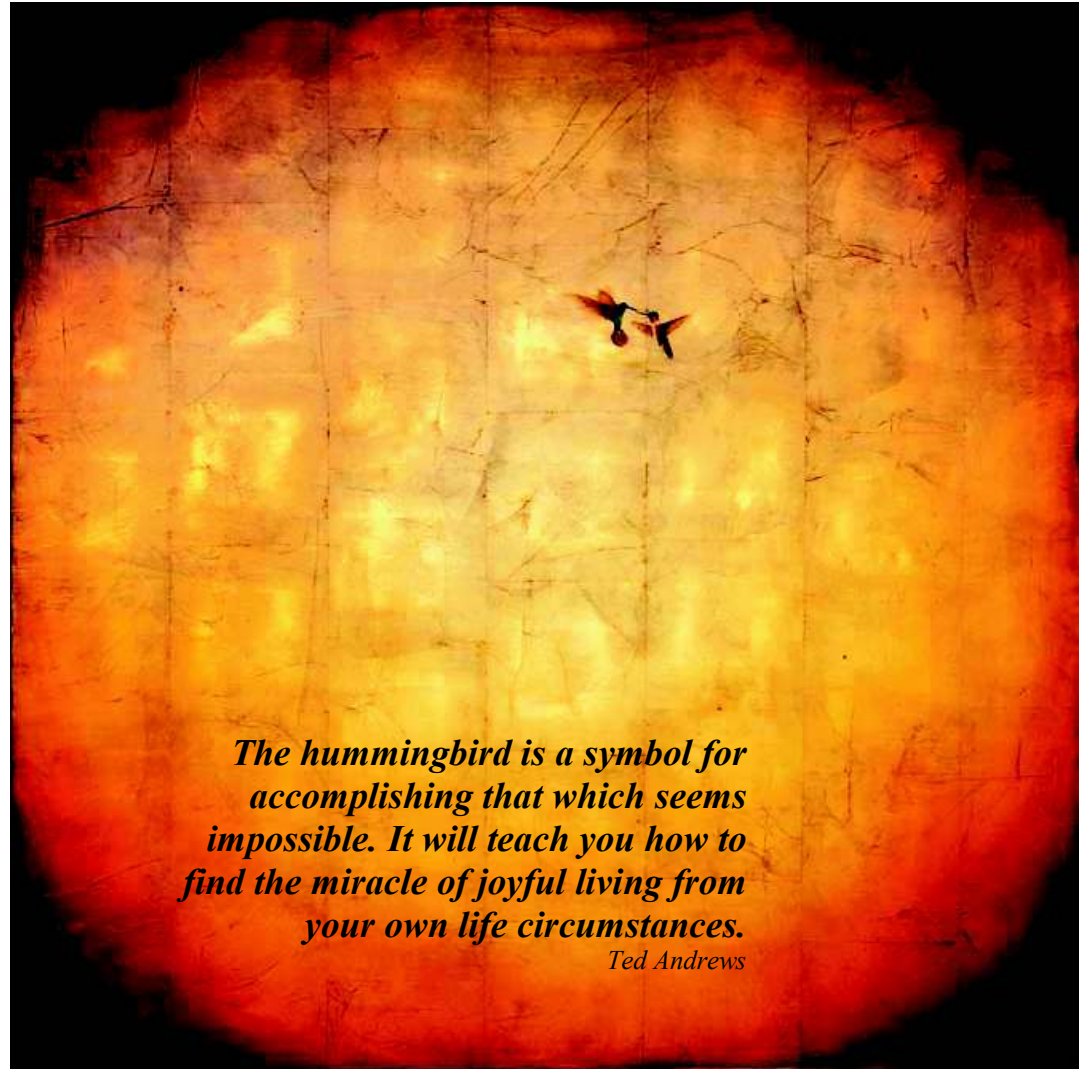
Through this groundbreaking program students will learn from a faculty of diverse and highly trained professionals & clinicians, including pioneers in the field of palliative care, grief and bereavement counseling and thanatology, and visionaries who will share the wisdom of Buddhist, First Nations and

other traditional perspectives on the compassionate care of the dying. ITM hosts local and international speakers & presenters throughout the year, some of whom will be guest presenters for the Contemplative End-of-Life Care Program.

## Program Director

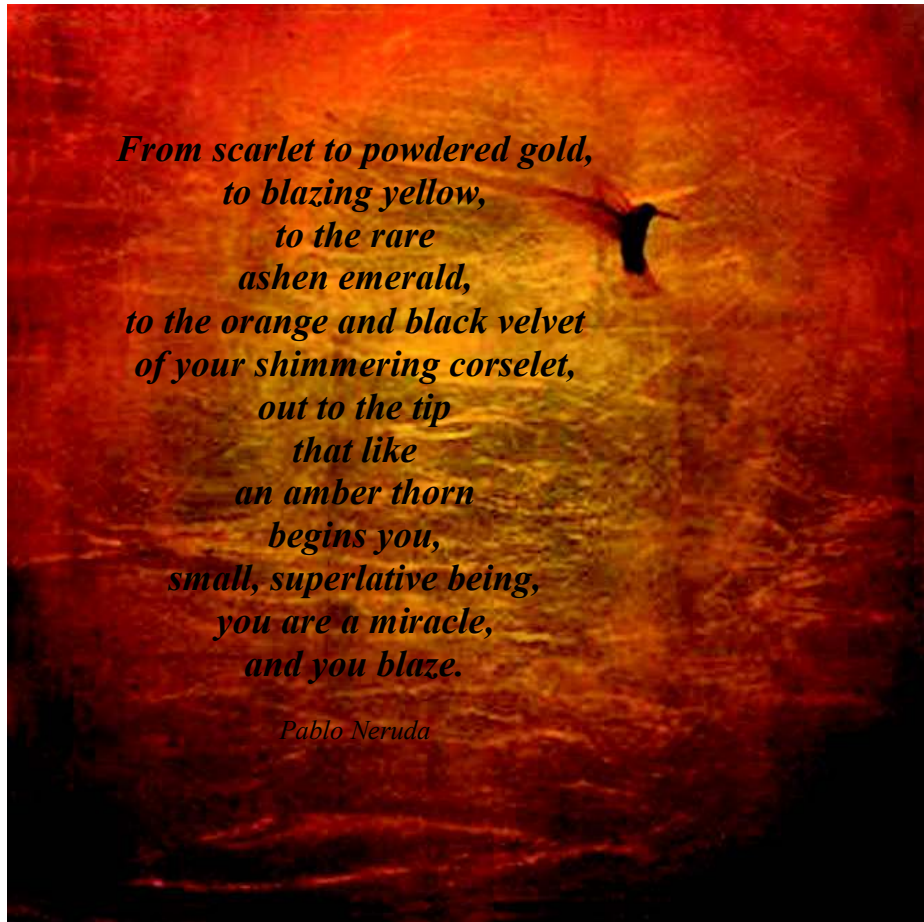
**Dr. Michele Chaban, MSW, RSW, PhD**

Dr. Chaban, one of North America's leaders in palliative & end-of-life care, was the Founder/Director/Clinical Leader of the Psycho-Social-Spiritual Team at The Temmy Latner Center for Palliative Care at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto. Her primary background is in theology, ethics & spirituality with a focus on thanatology & humanism. She works from a bio-psycho-social-spiritual model of care, and much of her practice has focused on palliative care, where Mindfulness Meditation transcends cultural and religious backgrounds. Dr. Chaban was invited by Health Canada to be a member of the National Educational Working Group for Strategy on End-of-Life Care.



*The hummingbird is a symbol for accomplishing that which seems impossible. It will teach you how to find the miracle of joyful living from your own life circumstances.*

*Ted Andrews*



# Areas of Study & Practice

The following topics will be covered through theoretical and practical components.

- Bio-psycho-social-spiritual aspects of dying & care of the dying
- Historical & Philosophical Context to End-of-Life Care
- Cultural Perspectives on Dying & Death
- Spiritual Foundations to End-of-Life Care
- Care of the community, Self-care
- Origins of Grief & Bereavement, Resources
- Mindfulness Meditation as an Intervention at the End-of-Life
- Developing Effective Communication, Listening & Counselling Skills, Heart-Centeredness & Discernment
- Legal issues & Ethical considerations
- Hospice and palliative care resources
- Outer & Inner stages and signs of the dying process
- Death-like Experiences (Alzheimer's)
- Pain and symptom management
- End-of-Life Choices; Euthanasia
- Medical, Non-Medical and Interdisciplinary Interventions
- Informed end-of-life decision making
- Final Passages
- Rituals, Alternative Funeral Ceremonies
- Complicated & Anticipatory Grief
- The death of Children and approaches to this loss
- Medical Systems, Terminology & Practices
- Recognizing and addressing spiritual symptoms
- The Nature of Suffering
- Creating Care plans for the end-of-life

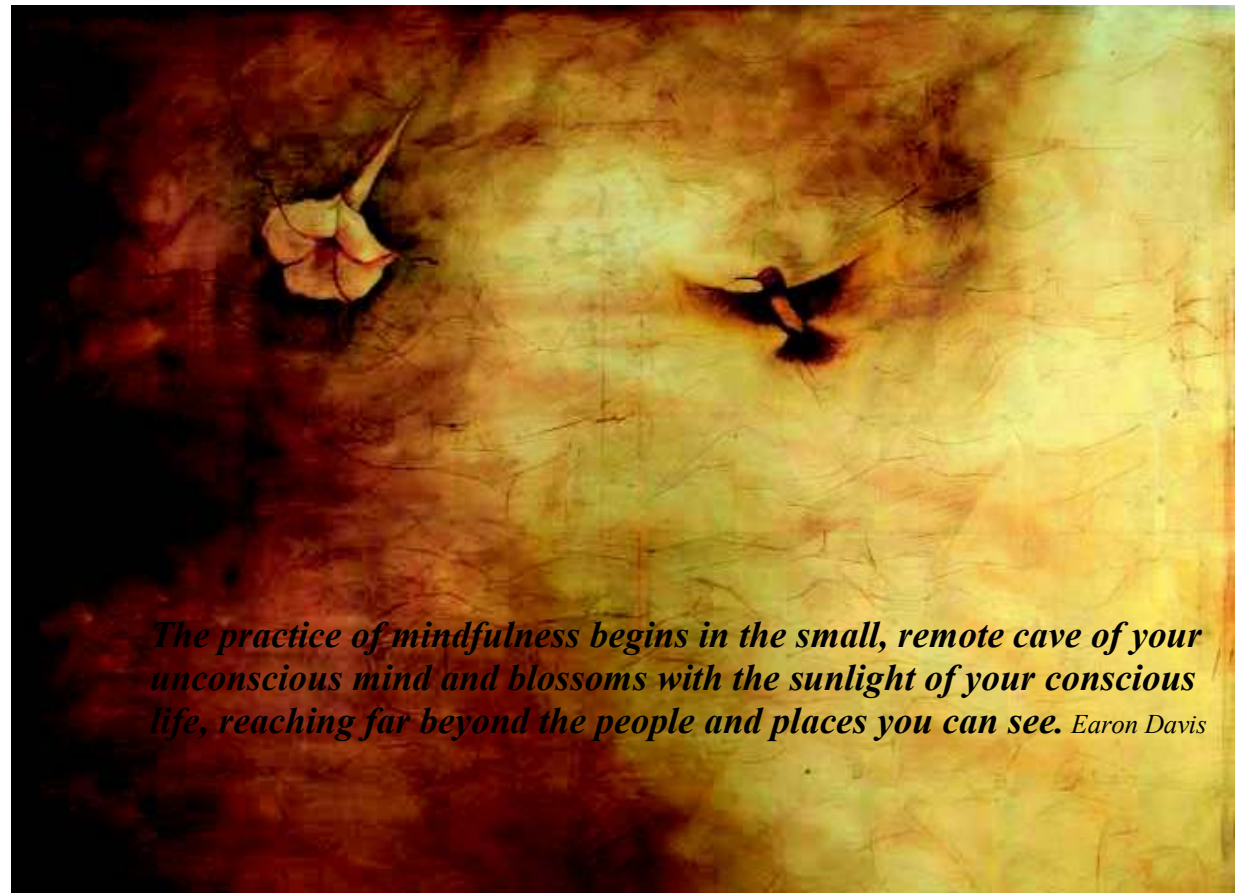
# Practitioner Commitment

All students are expected to participate in a variety of in-class and homework exercises and assignments that will require a personal exploration of experiences, fears, concepts and preparations in relation to their own dying and death. Emphasis is placed on personal integration of the course material, offering students the opportunity for personal, transformational work. Students in this program are also encouraged to cultivate and maintain a practice of mindfulness and meditation. This enables one to fully experience the benefits and challenges that arise from integrating contemplative practices and principles into one's work environment and daily life.

Through the experiential components of the training, students will be equipped with the insights to offer an invaluable service to others, while maintaining and deepening their commitment to personal reflection, inner and professional development and transformation.

Becoming intimate with death makes us acutely aware of our own mortality and the impermanence of life.

Learning to care for the dying, challenges us to reframe our experience of dying & living, toward more spiritual ways of being and knowing.



# Schedule

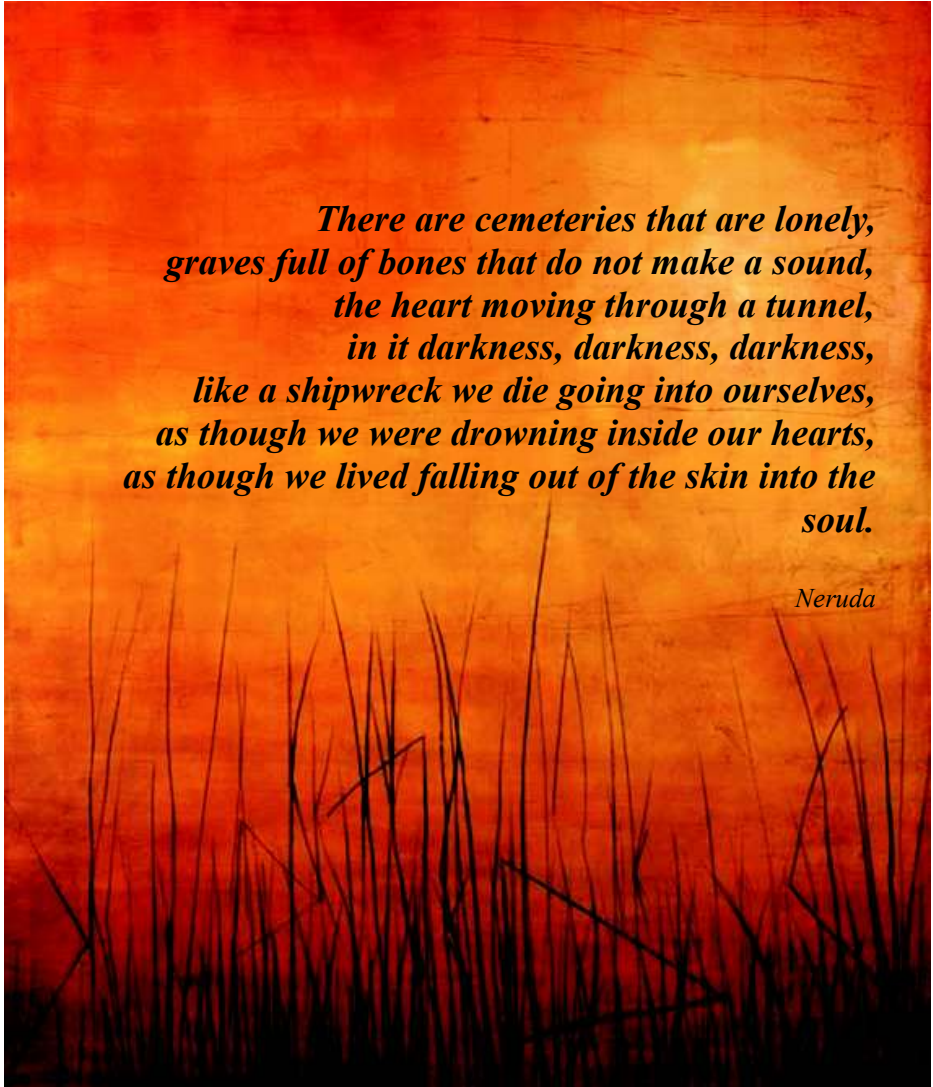
Training will take place at the Institute of Traditional Medicine in downtown Toronto, and practicums at selected hospices and palliative care facilities in the GTA, surrounding areas and other cities throughout North America.

The Contemplative End-of-Life Care Program consists of eight modules offered on eight weekend sessions, once a month. Each weekend is dedicated to a series of topics and techniques facilitated by various experts and practitioners in the areas of dying, death and bereavement.

Participants also have an opportunity to practice through supervised placements, which allows for the integration of learning in practical settings.

The flexibility of placements and weekend scheduling of classes allows participants from various cities within North America and beyond, to join the full program. Advice for finding local and economical accommodation and travel options can be provided.

On-line resources will act as an educational portal, providing further assistance to participants as well as members of the public who are seeking personal support in offering compassionate care to family, friends, and their communities.



*There are cemeteries that are lonely,  
graves full of bones that do not make a sound,  
the heart moving through a tunnel,  
in it darkness, darkness, darkness,  
like a shipwreck we die going into ourselves,  
as though we were drowning inside our hearts,  
as though we lived falling out of the skin into the  
soul.*

*Neruda*

## Module/Weekend 1

### **Contemplative Approaches to End-of-Life Care**

Introduction: This module will provide an overview of key concepts, principals and practices, which will guide the entire training. It will provide a historical & philosophical context, current insights and research into end of life care, as well as examine the evolving role of the end of life care provider. Psycho-social-spiritual theory of hospice & palliative care will be explored. Students will be challenged to explore their personal relationship to dying and death and to articulate their views in a supportive atmosphere of collegiality. We will also explore Mindfulness Meditation & Presence as an intervention at the end-of-life, as well as the Tasks of Dying. The spiritual foundations of end-of-life care, dying and death as meaningful and transformative process for individual dying and for their community, and introductions to rituals will be covered.

## Module/Weekend 2

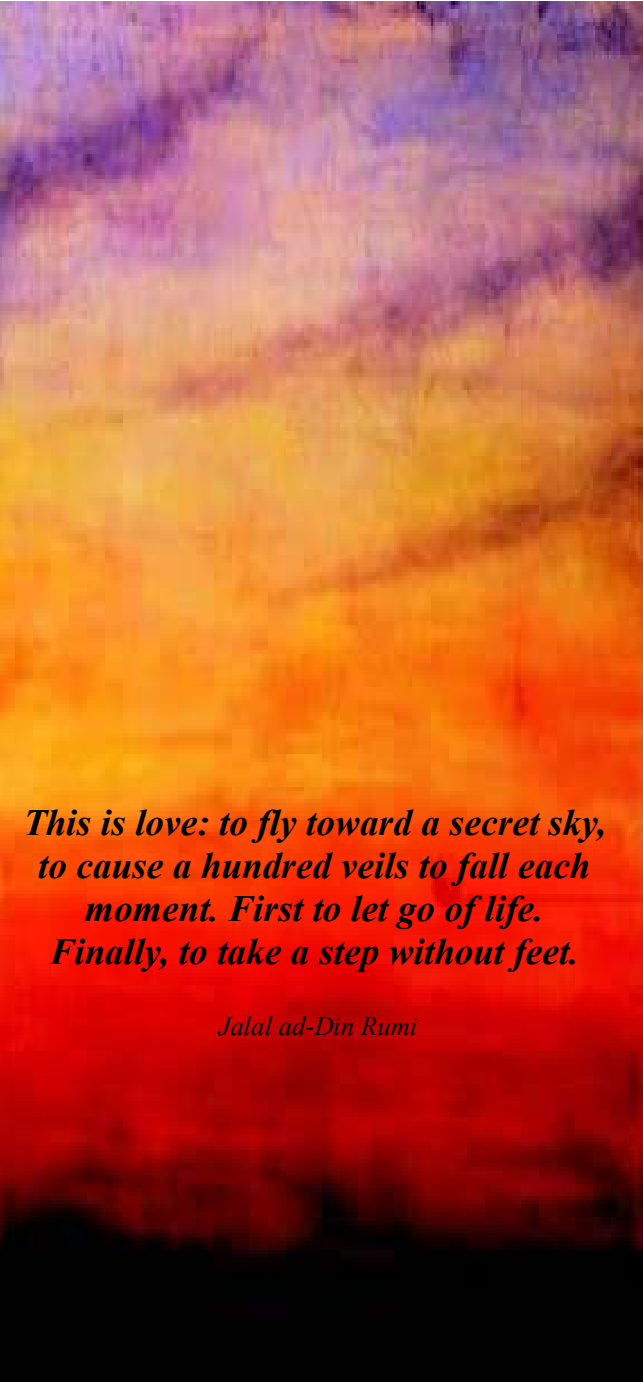
### **Sacred Art of Dying**

The Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition offers insights into the dying and death process that can serve as a useful model and map for end of life care practitioners. We will explore the outer and inner transitions and signs of the dying process and appropriate practices. In this extant tradition, death is perceived as an opportunity to experience profound insight in the nature of life and being. Because the death experience is valued in the aforementioned context, there is need to assist others as a guide. Out of this need, came texts like the famed, Bardo Thodal a.k.a. the Tibetan Book of the Dead. We will explore this working model and practice the specific techniques that have been designed to create a supportive transition for the dying. We will also explore the spiritual preparations for death, end-of-life care interventions, rituals & healing practices, and Indigenous perspectives on dying & death through the Sacred Rites of Passage.

## Module/Weekend 3

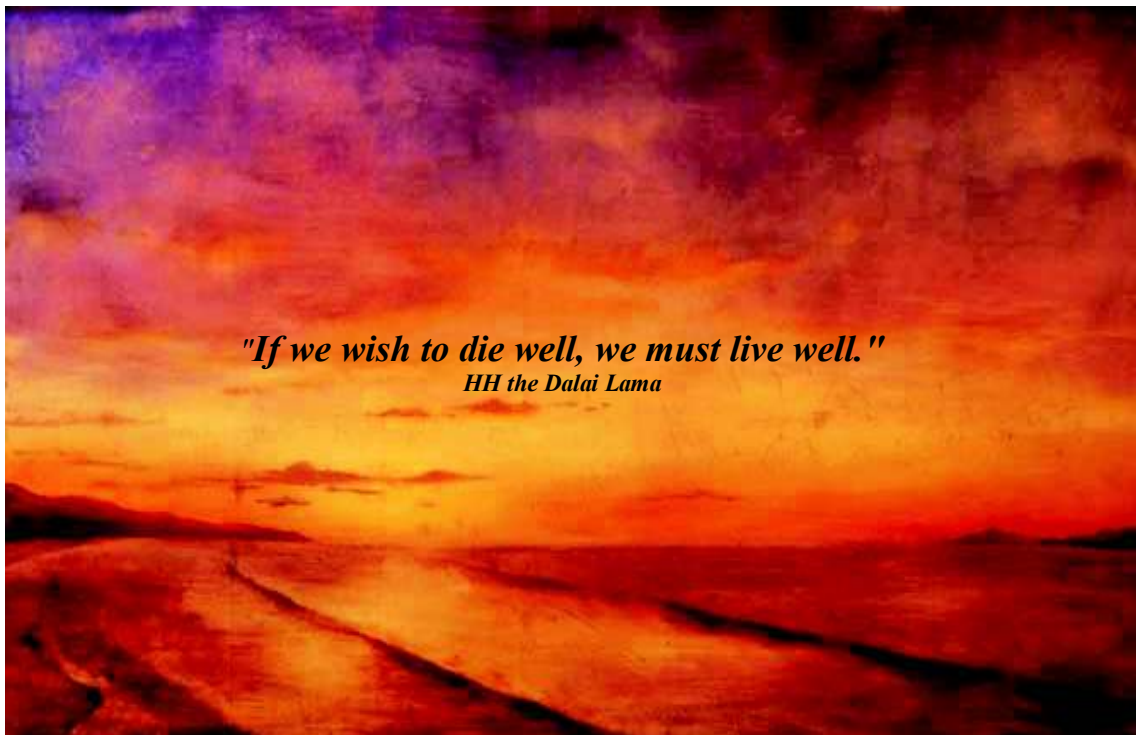
### **Developing Effective Relationships**

Central to the role and responsibilities of the end of life practitioner is relationship; with self, with the dying, with the families with whom you will work, medical staff and others. You will be called on to perform many roles; as a guiding presence, a resource person, and a mediator in times of conflict and tension. The skills learned in this session are essential and expected of an end of life care practitioner: mindful listening & presence, heart-centeredness, discernment and the ability to clearly communicate. The many roles of touch will be explored in student dyads. The above competencies will be honed in practice sessions with experienced facilitators. The emphasis in this module is on building personal resources and awareness which are necessary to work with the dying and their communities. Students will explore all areas of developing effective communication and relationship skills.



***This is love: to fly toward a secret sky,  
to cause a hundred veils to fall each  
moment. First to let go of life.  
Finally, to take a step without feet.***

*Jalal ad-Din Rumi*



*"If we wish to die well, we must live well."  
HH the Dalai Lama*

## Module/Weekend 4

### **Death – A Community Endeavour**

This session requires students to weave together previous learning in order to create care plans for the end-of-life. In creating care plans you will need to be mindful of the theories that have been introduced as well as hone your counselling and community building and conflict management skills. These tools will allow you to work in a variety of situations – homes, hospices, hospitals, and to create plans for the present, and the anticipated need for advanced health care directives and post-mortem considerations. Central to these preparations is the process of community building, with the dying situated at the centre of considerations. The role of the Contemplative End-of-Life Care provider is based on practices which invite the best from all participants – family, friends, colleagues and medical staff. This module provides students with the tools to identify and utilize immediate resources in order to best serve

the dying and their communities. This module will also explore the various legal and medical issues surrounding care of the dying, community resources & services available to the dying, the care of dying children, and Compassionate Care Benefits.

## Module/Weekend 5

### **Dying, Death & Beyond**

As an end of life care provider, you will soon become familiar with the myriad of pain relief and management options both from medical and interdisciplinary interventions. This weekend will also address care for the body in home and palliative environments – techniques that are required to assist a client's movement, hydration, meals and how to tend to bodily functions and needs. It will also address the nature of suffering (psycho-social-physical-spiritual suffering). The session will introduce practical techniques infused with mindful presence. This module will also focus on the origins of grief, grief as a healing process and examine the latest research into grief and bereavement. We will consider different models of grief and how interventions impact the process. We will also explore death-like experiences (Alzheimer's), and ethical considerations such as Euthanasia.

## Module/Weekend 6

### **RETREAT: Weaving Our Stories**

An opportunity to explore the roles/expectations/responsibilities of the end of life care practitioner through a series of group projects, community building exercises, and contemplative & self-care practices. Experiences will deepen one's understanding of the dying process, death, and encourage reflection on one's personal growth throughout the program. This is an opportunity to share our stories and create common ceremony built around our stories.

## Module/Weekend 7

### **Clinical Impact of Rituals**

In this module, students will explore the power of ritual, how to address end-of-life care wishes, the spiritual, religious and multi-cultural perspectives at the end of life. This module will also offer practical training designed to guide students in the process of facilitating alternative and home funerals and ceremonies/rituals. Students will explore death as a sacred time and natural cycle of life, as well as the social, economic, ecological and spiritual benefits of caring for those who are dying within our own communities. Theoretical, as well as hands-on techniques of caring and honouring of a body through the death process will also be covered. Students will learn how to prepare a personal funeral thanadoula kit, learn interviewing techniques to work with families. This module will also provide tools so that one is able to act as a resource and direct individuals to existing end of life options. The funeral industry in our country will also be examined. We will be introduced to Canadian legal considerations around end of life care; wills, options to standard funeral practices, home funerals in Canada, burial options.

## Module/Weekend 8

### **Transitioning**

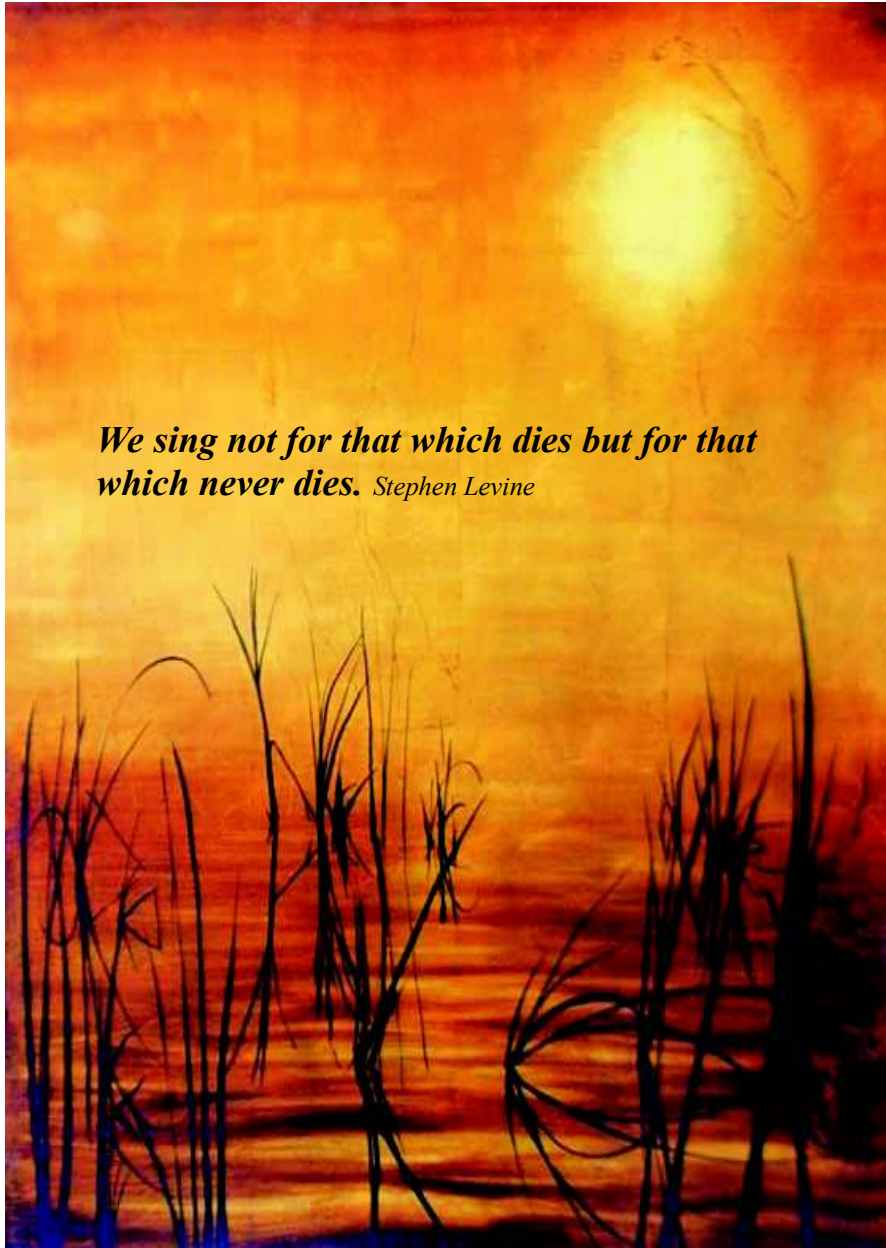
In your work as an end of life care provider, you will serve the dying and their communities at all transitions of the dying process. At the moment death arrives, you will be expected to act as a resource and a competent guide. This session will provide you with a variety of tools so that all concerns are addressed; medical, legal, funerary and spiritual. You will start with many lists and with experience these will become internalized responses. Your role as an educator and agent of change will also be explored. We will close our final session with a ceremony that will be collectively imagined and created. At this time you will have learned the inner and outer skills and practices to be an effective Thanadoula to the dying & their community, to bring mindfulness to the beside, to assist with all transitions, and to offer a contemplative approach for the final passage. We will also explore the literacy of speaking/communicating about our work, how to implement/integrate your learning and experiences into your community, create networks & resources, and discuss ways to inspire educational and cultural change within our communities.



***Love. Serve. Sacrifice. Surrender.***

***This is the path.***

*Sri Swami Sai Premananda*



*We sing not for that which dies but for that which never dies. Stephen Levine*

# PRACTICUM

The off-site practicum is an opportunity for students to strengthen and implement effective contemplative end-of-life care skills in a variety of settings based on personal/professional interest. These can include hospices, hospitals, palliative care centre settings, children's organizations, and other settings within your community.

With affiliations to a number of palliative & end-of-life care facilities, organizations, and practitioners and clinicians within North America, participants will receive the necessary support and on-site opportunities to fully implement and integrate their learning.

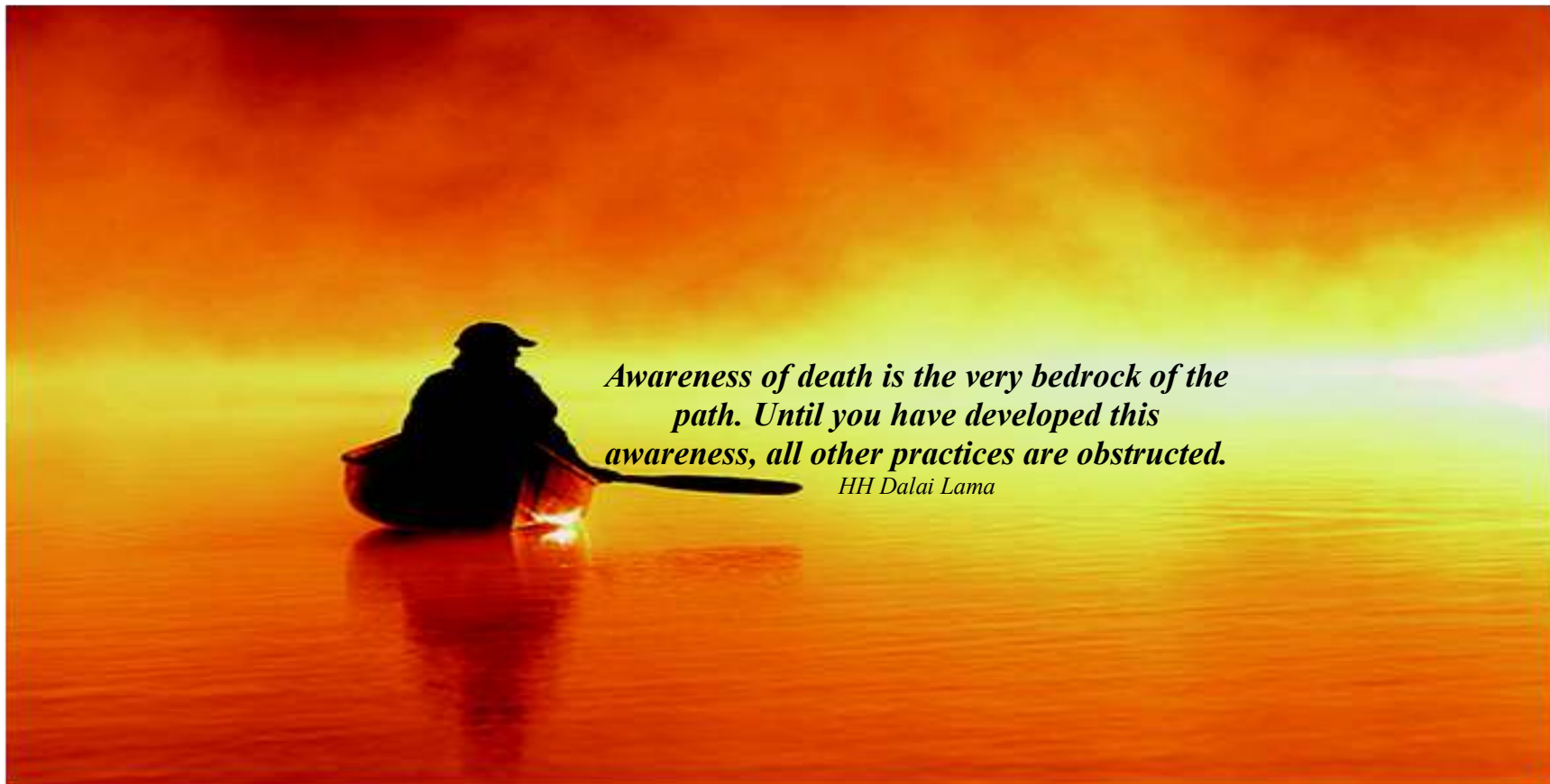
Faculty will be available to offer support, feedback and necessary guidance throughout the practicum period, offering participants many opportunities for self-reflection and guidance in transforming knowledge & learning into action.

For students who are currently working within the field of end-of-life care, a project option is available instead of the practicum.

**\*A total of 60 hours of practicum is required.**

## Advanced Training in 'Mindfulness Meditation in Clinical Practice'

This advanced course is open to students who have completed the Contemplative-End-of-Life Care Program at ITM, and faculty & clinicians who would like to deepen their study in mindfulness practices in end-of-life care. Using theoretical and experiential tools, we will reflect on the meaning of the loss of those we are attached to by sentiment or task, and the loss of self, other and the world in which we live. We will also include the anthropology of dying, death, grief, and bereavement as a deeply human response to the transitory nature of our reality. Through our Mindfulness Meditation practice and reflection we will explore the meaning of life in death, death in life, and how we understand the cosmology this implies.



***Awareness of death is the very bedrock of the path. Until you have developed this awareness, all other practices are obstructed.***

*HH Dalai Lama*



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*You would know the secret of death,  
But how shall you find it unless you seek it  
in the heart of life?*

*If you would indeed behold the spirit of  
death, open your heart wide unto the body  
of life.*

*For life and death are one, even as the  
river and sea are one.*

*Kahlil Gibran*