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Buddhist royalty set to wed

Marriage festival begins today with ceremony that's open to public
By HOLLY FRAUGHTON

Planning a wedding is stressful enough to make anyone somewhat less than Zenlike. But with a guest list of more than 1,300, including royalty, the task becomes even more daunting.

A Tibetan princess, Tseyang Palmo, and her family are in Halifax to celebrate her marriage to Sakyong Jamgon Mipham, whose father founded the Nova Scotia-based Shambhala Buddhist movement.

The princess is in her 20s and performs in a traditional dance troupe. Mipham, who is in his 40s, leads the Shambhala movement and is also an author.

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The couple married in a civil ceremony in Colorado last August but are holding an elaborate, three-day Blossoming of the Sun festival in Halifax beginning today to formally celebrate their union.



Emily Sell, press officer for the event, said many from the bride's side of the family have travelled from Tibet for the celebration.

"Uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and, of course, sisters and brothers . . . some have been here since Sunday . . . and others are still coming in."

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Ms. Sell said the visit to Nova Scotia is a first for many of the family members, including the bride.

The wedding is also an exciting event for Buddhists worldwide.

"This is a very significant union — it's a huge event in the Tibetan world . . . a lot of lineages in Tibet were lost in the Chinese invasion, so this is really a very hopeful . . . moment that these two lineages are coming together," Ms. Sell said.

She estimates there are about 10,000 Shambhala Buddhists worldwide, with "a good healthy portion of us here in Nova Scotia."

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Invitations to the festival went out to all 10,000 Shambhala members and organizers expect about 1,300 to attend.

The festival begins today with an opening ceremony at 4:30 p.m. on Citadel Hill. It is known as a lhasang, which means "sacred purification." The event is free and open to the public, and features a purification and blessing ceremony, musical procession and an archery demonstration by the bow maker to Japan's emperor.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

" A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing. "

Oscar Wilde

On Friday, private ceremonies continue, including empowerment services granting spiritual wealth and long life. There will also be a show in the evening featuring Shambhala musicians.

The wedding will take place Saturday afternoon in the Cunard Event Centre at Pier 23 on the Halifax waterfront, led by Sakyong Wangmo, Lady Diana Mukpo.

The festival budget is \$196,000, which covers the cost of festival events and the wedding, as well as travel costs for members of the royal family. Invited guests have been asked to buy tickets to the event at \$275 apiece to cover the event costs.

The wedding registry is also a bit unconventional. In lieu of traditional wedding gifts, the bride and

groom ask that guests use their website to make contributions toward renovating their Halifax home.

Ms. Sell said the couple plan to spend several months a year in Nova Scotia.

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