

# Heart to Heart



A Newsletter of Sufi Circle Canada  
“Celebrating Renewal”

Premier Issue

Spring 2020

## Welcome to the First Issue of the Revived Heart to Heart – Editor’s Note

Dear Canadian Sufis and friends,  
For some time many of us involved in sufi world in Canada have wished to revive a newsletter such as one produced decades ago, hand-lettered by Akbar Lody Kieken and called by the name of *Heart to Heart*. First produced in 1979 and richly decorated with artistic calligraphy, this beautiful offering arrived in the mailbox, thanks to the efforts of Akbar and contributors. The intervening decades have brought electronic technologies, making communication so much easier. We now had no excuse for not producing some kind of ‘newsy’ communication vehicle a few times per year. We are blessed that many of the same individuals are still involved in Canadian sufi work and so it is fitting to revive the former vehicle whose name continues to reflect our wish to share with each other deeply the stirrings of our hearts. Thank you to all those who have contributed to this premier issue. I have undertaken to produce this first version and the hope is that each subsequent production will have a different editor. Please step forward and help this happen. Happy reading and please think about what you might like to contribute to or see in the next issue of *Heart to Heart*. Love & blessings,

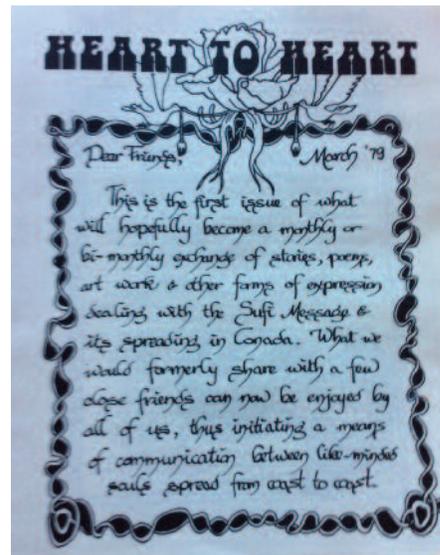
*Nirtan*



Sufis gathered at the 'Self-Realization, The Sufi's Aim' retreat at The Crossing at Ghost River, Alberta in August 2019.

## Then and Now

The original first issue of Heart to Heart is a delightful period piece of it's time offering “...communication between like-minded souls spread from coast to coast.” Akbar Lody Kieken (now with partner Sharda living in Qualicum Beach, BC) writes: “I put together the Heart to Heart newsletter in 1979, using my newly acquired calligraphy skills. At the time the Canadian sufis were mainly located in the East, and I was trying to establish some communication



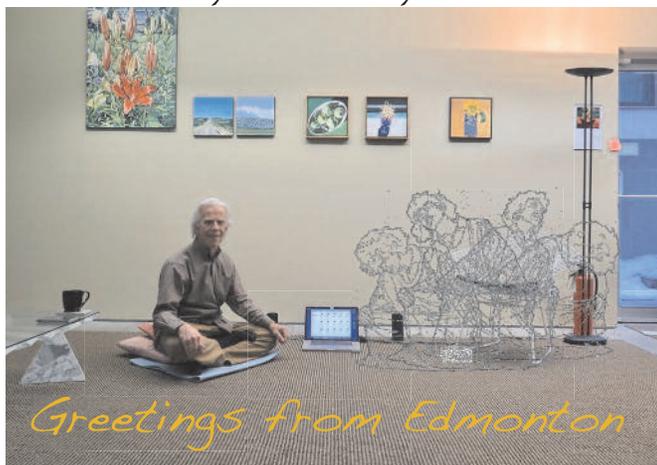
across the country. I hand-lettered each issue and produced it sporadically for about three years. It was at the same time that Lake O'Hara Sufi camp started which served much the same function, to bring together all members of the sufi family.”



A reunion on Toronto Island of East & West members of the sufi family in March 2020, including Nirtan, Shams & son Devin, and Alix (Fazal Mai) and Mai Aru.

## Edmonton Sufi Centre

by David Murray



*In Edmonton we meet weekly for both socialization and immersion into the practices of wasifas and the singing zikar. We have also been meeting monthly to celebrate the Dances of Universal Peace. While we now engage in self-isolation our normal activities have been put on hold. We perform our practices separately and remember that this too will pass. Just a reminder that our website is a great resource for study and self-practice.*

*From Edmonton we send greetings and remain connected through the invisible bonds of our hearts. David*



## A Sufi Healing Journey

by Sitara Karen Minish

These are 'the best of times and these are the worst of times.' Life seems so surreal. Such extremely challenging and scary times, especially for those of us with pre-existing life threatening conditions. However, I remain joyful and count my many blessings... I go back to December of 2018, when I was first diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, stage four. Miraculously, I was completely clear July 17, 2019! Though, January 2020 my cancer had returned. The good news is that, in this second act of my 'Dance with Cancer', as I have called it since the beginning of this journey, I am feeling so much better than when I was initially diagnosed in 2018. I have followed this wise advice from a precious Sufi friend: Turn around and face my fear; breath deeply underneath that fear, all the while trusting and believing all will be well.

I have received all my diagnoses with an unbelievable sense of calm, even surprising to myself! I profoundly believe this reaction may be attributed to my Sufi journey. I believe Divine intervention. I do not feel alone! Sufism has held me up, given me strength and allowed me to look my oncologists' in the eye and tell them very calmly, I am not afraid to die, with the caveat, I just don't want to suffer! Sufism has resonated with me on a very deep level and sometimes I feel as though I am operating on another

## Healing journey cont.

plane, somewhere up there among those beautiful shining stars! I feel cushioned, as if in a fluffy white cloud, suspended, loved, safe....all will be well...

March 28, 2020, I finished my second go round of 'Magic Potion' (as I have referred to my treatments from the very beginning) and I am beyond grateful I received that treatment so quickly. On February 25, 2020 the return of my cancer diagnosis was confirmed and three days later I received my first 'magic potion'! Amazing! I am even more grateful for having occurred so expediently given the chaos we are experiencing in our world right now.

Throughout my dance, I have been exceedingly blessed and continue to be bathed with the enduring healing love and support of the Sufi community! Little did I know when I was first introduced to the Sufi path nine years ago, that it would so profoundly affect my life and, I believe, prepare me for what I was to face in the future. As a beloved Sufi friend said to me, when she discovered Sufism, she had discovered something that had allowed her to be joyful! The sufi community and the love and support of my partner John, my sisters and my medical team continues to sustain me and I do feel so blessed and joyful (Ok, I admit, some days can be a little harder, I am only human!). I thank God everyday for clean air, water, food, incredible healthcare, people selflessly putting their lives at risk to serve us...the list goes on....

I would like to share two affirmations I have recited hundred's of times since my dance began. These Inayat Khan sayings are numbered and I chose the numbers that coincide with these words of wisdom at our yearly Sufi Christmas party, hosted by my beloved Sufi leader here in Banff, Kuan Yin Cindy Pujos-Michel. How serendipitous that I chose these two:

*My body is healed, My heart is kindled  
And my soul is illuminated by the light of God.*

*Providence has blessed me  
No fear. All is well.*

I would also like to share a painting that is part of a collection of thirty 8 x 8 watercolours I am currently working on



when I am physically able to do so. Painting, is proving to be a life saver as well! I become totally immersed in the creative process and everything else just melts away!

*Just Blow My Cares  
Away, watercolour & ink.*

[karenjoyminishartworks.com](http://karenjoyminishartworks.com)

## Remembering Shamcher



*Shamcher Bryn Beorse at the Ontario sufi camp, circa 1977.*

*Gail Russell, photo*

The Canadian sufi effort initially had two great helpers, one in the East and one in the West. In the eastern part of the country Shahabuddin Less, a sheikh of the Sufi Order inspired many to heed the call of the Sufi Message. In Western Canada (Sufia) Carol Sill had been in correspondence with Shamcher Bryn Beorse, a murshid of the Sufi Order who found spiritual titles annoying and asked his not be used. Shamcher visited Edmonton several times and eventually a group of open-hearted sufis took root there. In 1977 these two groups began to interact when Shamcher was invited to the third Canadian sufi camp, taking place at the farm outside Toronto of local centre leader, Anna Paloheimo (now Anna Carling). For many of us it was a life-changing meeting with this remarkable Norwegian – an original student of Inayat Khan, a scientist, author, solar energy pioneer and environmental and full employment activist. Born this month in 1896, Shamcher remains an inspiring friend and teacher, thanks to a massive collection of writings, including fascinating books and a voluminous correspondence, lovingly made available by his devoted student Carol Sill. Her most recent venture has been a weekly ‘Shamcher Archive’ newsletter. She writes:

*Get to know Shamcher through this weekly newsletter, sharing his views, ideas and approach to life - all sent directly into your inbox. Discover Shamcher’s world view. The Shamcher Bulletin brings you snippets from Shamcher’s archives that might help frame and context the world we live in today. This email newsletter has been sent out weekly since Feb. 5 2020, and touches on all the areas from Shamcher’s vast explorations, from economics and energy to yoga and Sufism. It is like getting a letter from Shamcher. Subscribe at [shamcher.substack.com](http://shamcher.substack.com). (Carol Sill)*

Shamcher died April 29, 1980, just prior to the first Lake O’Hara Sufi camp. It was he who had proposed that camps alternate between Eastern and Western Canada. It was also Shamcher who introduced us to Hidayat Inayat Khan, who later became a third instrumental mentor in Canadian sufi work. For more info go to [www.shamcher.org](http://www.shamcher.org)

## Sufi Circle Canada – Who We Are

Maybe we should say “Hu we are,” in keeping with the prayer, “Raise us above the distinctions and differences.” Most of us have been working for the Message in Canada for many years. In the recent past, that work took place as the Sufi Movement in Canada society. That organization formally exists but members selected the name Sufi Circle Canada as a more inclusive banner for our efforts. We are choosing to focus on sufi work in our country, independent of international organizations. Our Canadian sufi history includes close ties with all the orders derived from the teachings of Inayat Khan and we welcome anyone from these groups to join our fellowship and help support each other’s work for the Message of Spiritual Liberty. Please consider becoming a member or a friend. We are happy to spread your news and work with you in the spirit of Love, Harmony and Beauty. We thank Jelaluddin Gary Sill and Fazulunnisa Carole Harmon for their dedicated work over many years. Jelaluddin built and maintains our excellent website [www.sufimovementincanada.ca](http://www.sufimovementincanada.ca). Current Directors include: Nirtan Carol Sokoloff, pres., David Murray, sec., Azima Martha Toy, treas., Kuan Yin Cindy Pujos-Michel, Akbar Lody Kieken and Qahira Fran. Between us we are initiates of most of the sufi organizations connected with Inayat Khan.



### *Toward the One, A Mandala by Qahira Fran Becker*

*This issue of Heart to Heart has been edited and designed by Nirtan Carol Ann Sokoloff. Contributors include: Qahira Fran Becker, Inayat Khan, Akbar Lody Kieken, Fazal Mai Alix McLaughlin, David Murray, Kuan Yin Cindy Pujos Michel, Sitara Karen Minish, Sufia Carol Sill and Nirtan Carol Ann Sokoloff. Thank you Azima Martha Toy for proofreading and David Murray for mailing assistance, Richard Olafson and Carol Sill for technical advice.*



Stay tuned for news of our next  
‘Conference of the Birds’ gathering Spring 2021  
at the Bethlehem Centre in Nanaimo, B.C.

## Celebrating Noor Inayat Khan

by Nirtan Carol Ann Sokoloff

Some of you may remember a small chapbook of my long poem 'A Light Unbroken' about the life of war heroine Noor Inayat Khan (daughter of Pir o Murshid Inayat



Khan), an early publication of Ekstasis Editions. The long poem told the story of Noor's life based on Jean Overton Fuller's biography *Madeleine*, first published in 1952. I have lately been involved in creating an updated version of *A Light Unbroken* with new information and also photographs, such as this one (London, 1943) from sufi archives in Suresnes. In recent years classified information

has been released and new biographies written. Shrabani Basu's *Spy Princess* was published by Omega Press, 2005. *Code Name Madeleine* by American author, Arthur Maggida will launch this Fall. There has also been a statue to Noor created in a London park and an interactive exhibit about her recently opened at Runnymede War Memorial, outside London. A new plaque is going up in London, one of a series celebrating inspiring women of that city and the TV program *Doctor Who* even featured a time-travelling Noor Inayat Khan. Whew... how exciting!

At the same time I find it somewhat disturbing as most of these new tributes repeat a repetitive refrain of Noor as a Muslim Princess Spy. If not entirely false, I consider this narrative, half-true at best. Noor was not a practising Muslim. She was studying Sanskrit, wrote Buddhist Tales for children and named the Church of England as her religion on her RAF registration. As for princess, her great-great-grandmother was the daughter of Tipu Sultan, the Tiger of Mysore. There is a royal strain in the Inayat Khan family – but no one in the family chose to use this kind of title. Her father gave her an esoteric title at birth, Pirzadi, Daughter of the Pir. There is no such thing as a sufi prince or princess. Sufis are the royalty of the inner realm rather than outer kingdoms. As well, she was an agent, not a spy.

Noor, the daughter of the Pir, was a perfect prototype of the new Universal Sufi. Inayat Khan raised her to have the highest ideals including that of selfless sacrifice. One wonders if he comprehended the disasters ahead and instilled in his first-born the willingness to offer service to humanity in whatever way possible. Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) saw in her idealism an opportunity to serve its cause. Many disturbing questions arise when one examines the details of the mission on which she was

sent. Not only was she sacrificed but others, tragically, were then sent on doomed missions through her radio played back to London by Nazis after her capture. In part, the 'officially sanctioned', 'romantic' narrative (Muslim princess spy, enemy of the Reich) is used to obscure the less agreeable parts of her heroic tale, those that raise the issue of the responsibility of those who sent her into Occupied France. Jean Overton Fuller in her biography probed for details. Recent biographers seem to avoid raising the questions. Personally I feel full information and true representation (rather than catchy buzz phrases) is appropriate — for Inayat Khan and his Message, not Muslim but Universal; for Noor as a real person, a modern woman in extraordinary circumstances, not a cardboard stereotype.

(Photo of Noor courtesy of Nekhbakht Foundation)

## Comfort Food – Kuan Yin's Tomato Soup

recipe from Kuan Yin Cindy Pujos-Michel, Banff

### Ingredients:

2 tbs. olive oil or butter or a mixture

1/2 cup minced onion or shallots

4 cups chicken broth

1 28oz can diced canned tomatoes

2 or 3 garlic cloves minced

Salt, pepper to taste

Sprinkle of hot pepper flakes

Pinch of dried basil - to taste

Break up handful of tomato/basil spaghetti into 2" pieces

1/2 cup sour cream, cream or yogurt (or coconut milk)



### Directions:

Heat oil or butter in saucepan and gently cook onions or shallots for 5 min. Stir in broth and tomatoes (mash tomatoes a bit if you wish or leave as is). Add garlic. Cook for 5 min. Add spices. Cook slowly until noodles are cooked, 5 - 7 min. Turn off heat - add 1/2 cup sour cream, cream or yogurt (or coconut milk, non-dairy). Add a couple of dashes of Parmesan cheese. Don't forget the grilled cheese sandwiches!

## Heart to Heart

A newsletter of Sufi Circle Canada.

Issues published in Spring and Fall

Editor for this issue is: Nirtan Carol Sokoloff

Submissions to the next newsletter can be sent to:

casjazz@islandnet.com

We welcome 500-600 word articles, reviews, poems, photos, art work, recipes or anything else expressing sufi ideals of love, harmony & beauty.

Please put 'Heart to Heart' submission as your subject.

Deadline for the next issue is: August 1, 2020

## The Sufi Esoteric School

### Initiation and the Sufi World of Inner Culture

by Kuan Yin Cindy Pujos-Michel

As Universal Sufis following the Message of our beloved teacher, Inayat Khan, at some point in our personal journey we may feel rising within us the desire to be initiated into his lineage. As this feeling grows and we see our path leading to the doorway of initiation, our Canadian leaders/guides are available to offer initiation into the Sufi Message of Inayat Khan. Is this an important or even necessary step? What would we bring to this initiation, what would we take from it?

The word 'initiation' is interpreted in various ways. Some consider it a commitment to a secret order or a promotion to a higher grade. These and other ideas make up a catalogue of misunderstanding as to what may be meant. Inayat Khan suggests that if, when treading the path, the seeker begins to feel there is something behind the veil and is moved to discover that mystery, one then takes the first step. That first step is initiation, associated with the word 'initiative.'

Various stages of initiative include inner guidance from the teacher/mystic within – one's own sincere self. Alternatively, one might find encouragement or confirmation of progress from the helpful hand of an outer teacher in whom one has put one's trust. "If one believes in right guidance from above, one shall always be guided aright."

If truth is to be attained, it is only when truth itself has begun to speak, which happens in self-realization. Murshid writes, "The Truth cannot be spoken, only revealed," suggesting that truth reveals itself. The Persian word for both God and Truth is *Khuda* which means self-revealing, uniting God with Truth. How is this Truth taught and brought to the consciousness? What is that significant first step? Inayat Khan suggests that for the sufi it is through *Bayat* – or initiation, meaning that the trust of a guide is extended to a person seeking the way. It is the linking of the person who is treading the path to the transmission of Truth. Where mysticism has prevailed for centuries, initiation has been regarded as most sacred. Divine knowledge has never been taught in words, nor will it ever be so.

The work of the sufi teacher/spiritual guide is not to teach with words but to tune those who are open to that which is offered, so that the seeker becomes an instrument of God. In other words, the guide is not the player of the instrument, but rather its tuner, and when tuned, the instrument is then given into the hands of the Divine Player. The task of the Sufi teacher, be it on the inner or outer level, is to train mureeds to become illuminated enough to receive revelation themselves.

*Self-realization, to know what we are,  
should be the Sufi's aim.*

*Self-realization is the search for our true human spirit.*

*The work of the Sufi is personal development.*

Our beloved Inayat Khan left us many words of wisdom which are of great importance. When thinking in terms of initiation, please take into consideration his words from Volume X, *Sufi Mysticism*, page 82: "Although the outer



form (of Sufi Initiation) might appear to be a hierarchy, yet the Sufi message leads to true democracy, for it holds the promise of that goal which is the yearning of every soul. This itself is the principal thing in democracy and the reason, according to the Sufi belief is that the divine spark is in every soul. It is with trust and confidence in God, in the Murshid and in the divine

spark which is in one's own heart, that one is assured of success in life if one will only step forward." Most of this writing on Sufi Initiation is taken from the words of Inayat Khan, Volume X, *Sufi Mysticism*.

### Every Sufi Makes a Difference!

Inayat Khan came to the western world in 1910, with a Message of Spiritual Liberty. He called it the Sufi Message, "a religious philosophy of love, harmony and beauty." Since that time universal sufi thought has sprouted both roots and wings around the globe. Here in Canada we have had a fascinating exposure to several currents and are in a wonderful position to really live this Message from the depths of our hearts – with friendship and appreciation of all those who serve it.

By coming together in organization we can support each other to work for the ideals which we hold dear. We can each be more vibrant, more active and more beneficial to the planet and humanity through being a part of something larger than ourselves, within our Canadian family.

We invite you to join this caravan and together we will feel the wind at our back spurring us forward Toward the One (and Toward the Fun!) Even if we start at different places and have very different ideas as to how to proceed, we can still support each other to work towards a more harmonious world.

In the next month or two we will be requesting your support as a member of our Canadian sufi family or a friend of our organization. By 'support' we do not necessarily mean financial support. We mean a sharing of energy and enthusiasm and ideas. We hope you will feel that this caravan is heading in a direction you too are travelling and that we may be fellow-travellers on this beautiful road which we know as the sufi path. *Nirtan*