

# Spirit Talk

*A Core Shamanic Newsletter*

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## The Spirit of the Dance

In many traditional societies the shaman acts as an intermediary between the world of the spirits and the world of man. She journeys into the Spirit World, interacts with its inhabitants and brings back its gifts and healing. In this way the shaman acts as a bridge between the two worlds.

Tools that can help to manifest in a physical way the gifts she carries from the spirits are clearly important: such tools include the creation of power objects, song and story and of course dance. Dance is also used in many places to give direct access to the spirits to non-shamans either by bringing them into the spirit world or by bringing the spirits to inhabit the dancer's own body.

The following article looks at some of the ways traditional shamans have used dance and how we can use it today as part of our own interaction with the world of the spirits.

### The Bringer of Ecstasy

Eliade, in his classic book, describes shamanism as an archaic technique of ecstasy, which in this sense means leaving the body (ex stasis - out of the physical). There are many, many ways that shamans have used to enter that ecstatic state, however dance is one of the more common methods used in places from Europe to Northern America to South East Asia. The !Kung Bushmen of Southern Africa use dance to heal. In an ecstatic state, supported by song

and by rhythmic clapping the dancers call up a healing power called !num. people, during the winter dances initiates of dance societies re-enact the experiences of their vision quest.

They sing the song of their medicine helper, which could be an animal but could also be the spirit of a rock or the great cedar tree. As the community picks up the



song, the dancer then begins to dance the medicine dance of that spirit helper, supported by the singing community. Some dancers become well known and their songs are known and remembered by the community so that as soon as they get up to dance the whole village is singing their song. This practice had largely ceased in the last century, but in recent years has been re-established by teachers including Johnny Moses.

In my own practice there is a difference between the dances I do to enter the spirit world when I call and dance with my power animals and the web-healing dance I was given in a vision one night in the forest in Sweden. The former of these is a responsive physical song that passes back and forth between my power animals and myself, the latter is a ritual with a set form. If the ritual deviates wildly from that form both the patient and myself stand to be at risk from the forces released.

### Why Dance?

Shamans dance to call their spirits, to heal, to seek a blessing, for thanksgiving, to meet the ancestors, to pray. It can be very moving to explore those applications. Through dance, the shaman's body is directly in touch with the spirit world, possibly the most direct bridge possible between this physical reality and that of the spirits.

Dance can be used to invoke power, to call the spirits in and ask for a blessing. A few years



ago I saw an Evenki shaman dance with his spirits, beating a drum and then drag the long mirror encrusted coat into which they had poured their blessings over the audience. The power that poured off that coat onto us was extraordinary.

The !Kung bushmen use dance in a very direct way to heal. As the power comes to them, the dancers are at first in agony, but gradually they come into harmony with that power. They then move over to the sick people and transfer that energy to them as healing. Often this can be very physical with them massaging the sick people or rubbing their sweat into them.

At the Acorn Festival of the Pomo. Big Head masked dancers dance in order to thank the spirits for their harvest bounty. This use of dance as a physical prayer is a common community aspect of dance.

Possibly the best known example of dance as community prayer is the Sun Dance, still practiced by the Lakota and many other nations in North America. In these prolonged dances of several days duration, the participants remain focussed on prayer. The whole dance is seen as a time of focused prayer, prayer for one's family, people, the wider community, the Earth. The dance is also a physical give-away of thanks for being alive. The seeking of personal vision is also an important part of the Sundance, as the dancers push themselves past their limits of into an altered ex-static state in which this world and the spirit world become one.

### Ritual And Dance

As we have seen with the Sun Dance, dance is often used to bring ordinary members of the community into contact with the spirits. In ritual and dance non-shamans can enter the spirit world and interact with its inhabitants or the spirits can possess ordinary human dancers and bring their power out into ordinary reality. Perhaps because of its very physicality, dance seems to open the channels of communication to the spirits for people for whom this contact is not normally possible.

In some places specialised dance societies teach the ability to embody spirits. For example among the Zuni Pueblos of the South West, the katchina dancers bring the spirit power of the katchinas into the villages. Wearing katchina masks, the dancers become the katchinas themselves bringing the powers of corn and rain and clouds, of turquoise and change to the community. It is clear to all the community that although Uncle Joe might be involved in a ritual dance society, it is the spirit Crow Mother who is out there calling the clouds in the village square.

In these rituals the boundaries between the spirits and human beings become blurred. The dancers are both those who pray to the spirits in the dance, and that to which they pray. Indeed this experience of non-duality, of how we are not separate, but part of the Universe is something that is often a gift of dance.

Similarly on the North West Coast of America there are specialised dance societies which work with particular types of spirits. Often entry to a society is only offered to those who have a vision of the spirit involved. For example the Bear Dancers must have seen (usually on a vision quest) the spirit of Bear and in the dance they re-enact over and over the experience of that first vision. Sometimes on the North West Coast entry to such a medicine society could be highly traumatic.

This was particularly so when the spirit encountered in the forest was the hamatsa or wild cannibal spirit. In these cases the dancer was at first a danger to those around him and would try to bite them or tear at them with his fingernails. It was only once those already initiated into the society brought the dancer into harmony with the spirit, that he could openly dance and sing, and thus bring the power to the village.

One famous example of non-shaman dancers entering the spirit world through the power of their dance is the Ghost Dance. In the 1890's a shaman called Wovoka had a vision in which he was taken up to Heaven and shown a way of dancing to communicate with the Ancestors. This happened at a time when disease was rife among the Plains Indians and many of the old rituals and beliefs were being lost. In the Ghost Dance, ordinary people could cry out to their ancestors asking them to come, please and to take them away. The Ghost Dance songs recorded at the time by Mooney still hold records of that. Perhaps the most well known Ghost dance song comes from the Arapaho:-

Ninaa' niahu' na  
Ninaa' niahu' na  
Bi' taa' wu ha'nai sai  
Hi' naa' thi na'  
niwu' huna.  
I circle around  
I circle around

The boundaries  
of the Earth  
Wearing my  
long  
wing-feathers  
as I fly



The dancers danced crying out these spirit songs until they saw their ancestors and fell to the ground journeying far into the Land of the Ancestors. Similar ancestral cults have been observed in other parts of the world.

It is my experience that the power and wisdom that are the gifts of the spirits are felt most strongly when they are physically experienced. If part of the role of the shaman is to embody the gifts of the spirit and to be their bridge into the human world, then perhaps he most truly does this in dancing. So I end with the thought that perhaps the shaman less walks his talk than dances it.

*Karen Kelly is a shamanic practitioner and healer living in Cambridge. She is one of the facilitators of the London Open Drumming Group. She can be contacted on 01223 562838 or email : [karensprittalk@aol.com](mailto:karensprittalk@aol.com)*

*Jonathan Horwitz runs occasional shamanic dance courses including one in the summer of 2003 in Sweden. Participants will work with many of the types of dance featured in this article.*



## Creative Spirits: Trance Dance Painting

Lanz Lowen

### The Experience

Having seen pictures of previous paintings, I was looking forward to the Art Trance Dance offering at the Oracle Gathering. Unfortunately by the time of the offering, I had come down with a severe head cold and had decided it was best I just observe from the sidelines as I helped with the sound system. There were about twenty participants whom the Tucson Bear Sisters formed into a circle. To the left of the circle was a tall wooded column used by the YMCA camp as a climbing wall. On each of the four sides of the column was a 5 foot by 8 foot canvas painted with white gesso.

As a circle, we rattled, called in the Spirits, and then listened to instructions. Participants were to let their bodies move to the music and let the Spirits direct them in their painting. The intention of our sacred painting was to be World Healing. We were encouraged to let our bodies and Spirit do the painting and were cautioned that whatever we painted might be painted



over by another. "All that is painted will remain present whether it is visible or not." I found the idea that someone might paint over what I did reassuring.

To the right of the columns was a table with plastic plates. Each plate had a different color of acrylic paint. There were blues, greens, a deep crimson, a bright orange, yellow, white and black. Brushes of all sizes and many small sponges were carefully placed on one end of the table.

The night was dark, except for the spotlights aimed on the four canvases. The music began. It was Professor Trance – a wild combination of tribal rhythms and rave-like electronica. The music was loud and as the Professor inducted the circle with his sounds, participants began to wave their arms and shift from side to side, letting their bodies react to the music's suggestions. After several minutes,

people began picking up brushes, instinctively selecting a color and dancing toward the tower. The front canvas was soon full of bright orange and a large green tree with black pictograph-looking figures to its left.

The rhythm became increasingly infectious erasing any thoughts I had about my head cold. Although my feet were firmly planted on the



ground, my body was swaying and moving to the voices of the drums. The canvas in front of me caught my attention as if it were yelling out, "I need red!". Soon after, my right hand was holding a plate of red and I was dipping my left hand into the paint and smearing it across the canvas. The strokes were big and bold. I had no idea what I was painting, but I knew that the canvas wanted red and I was responding as quickly as I could. After placing red paint in swooping designs, I noticed the pictographs were mostly painted over by big round blue circles. I missed them and found myself using the black paint to draw new stick figures.

The music continued to shift and I painted multiple colors until I felt done with this particular canvas. I moved to the canvas to my right. Steve, a good friend, was singing to the music as he painted delightedly. He had a sponge with black on one end and white on the other. He was giving everything dots, including the lizard that slithered across the top of the canvas. Ziva, was dancing to my right and I playfully bumped into her. We laughed as we painted together. Suddenly, my joy screeched to a halt as I noticed the woman to Ziva's right. She was painting feverishly while loudly sobbing. I was taken aback, worried by her tears, and wanting to be respectful of her feelings. She was painting with wild abandon – bright lines of purple and pink – shooting energy out across the canvas. It was as if the paint was exploding from her center. I moved to her right and joined with her, hoping I wouldn't distract her in my effort to

support. I found myself painting circles around the perimeter of her exploding colors. Without pause, she continued her painting and her sobbing.

I moved to the canvas in the East. Snakes wound across the canvas. I stood for awhile admiring the colors - the figures that seemed to creep out - the designs painted on their backs. The painting felt complete to me and so I moved to the final canvas which was filled with eyes. Eyes were coming out of all kinds of shapes and in every direction. I liked them and accented them with my black paint.



The music began to ebb as did our energy. A few people added 'finishing touches' as the rest of us stood back catching our breaths and peering into the paintings. When the music stopped and we began to circle the tower,

huddling as a group in front of each of the four paintings. The lights shown down and the colors dazzled us with their brightness. Each painting was quite different, but all four seemed very alive. There was an energy buzzing around them.



I worried as we approached the painting I associated with the woman who had been sobbing. I was afraid I would find it painful or unattractive. As we neared the painting, I was surprised that it was the painting that most intrigued and delighted me. The bold pink and purple bursts of energy were lobbed across the canvas – spewing out like a big bang explosion. Behind them were more contained circles and spirals. At the bottom were two pregnant-looking stick figures dancing with tribal abandon. I didn't know what it meant, but it felt right to me and I loved how it had come together. The following evening during the all-night ceremony, I was surprised to see a very similar configuration bursting across the sky as the moon came up.

We closed our circle by calling out to the night sky what we were feeling.

“Joy.  
Playfulness.  
Freedom.  
Spirit.  
Release.  
Love.  
Light.  
Energy.  
Gratefulness.”

### **Reflections on Art, Spirit and Community**

Some months later, I spoke with Tucson Bear Sisters Laurie Levon and Jo Andersen about their experiences combining art and shamanism. “When you're doing art, the ego steps out and you find yourself more in a heart and soul place – more connected to your essence,” said Jo. She described several openings that occur for many when they are doing trance dance painting. “Your body notices all the senses – first you hear and feel the



music in your muscles and your bones and then you see the images and colors in the painting and in your mind. When you're in a place of Spirit, it all comes alive. You feel the energy in your hand as you move the sponge. It's as if the image meets you halfway, beckoning and informing.”

Laurie continued, “It's amazing how much our unconscious blends with each other. You go to get white paint and when you return someone else is painting ‘white’ in the exact place you intended. We know that the creative process is healing - it connects us to ourselves, to Spirit and to each other. We are trying to take that to a community level. Some of our circle did a painting on behalf of peace in the Middle East. We decided to send this to Ziva in Israel. Ziva was deeply touched by the painting and has used it with various groups within Israel – they've actually been journeying into the painting.”

The Tucson Bear Sisters are also working with the Global Art Project which promotes tolerance and non-violence through the international exchange of art. The Tucson Circle created an altar cloth with images painted on fabric. The altar cloth was exchanged with a beautiful needlepoint tapestry created by a women's circle in Taiwan. On opposite sides of the Pacific, the two circles corresponded and joined their prayers for peace. The Tucson Circle was so moved by the

process they have volunteered as individuals to serve as district contacts in preparation for the next round of international exchanges.

"Our focus has increasingly become international," shared Laurie. "We went as a group to Ireland two years ago and we are very interested in visiting other circles in other parts of the world. If anybody reads this in Mongolia, have them contact us."

At the time of my visit, the Tucson Circle was sponsoring and supporting a series of workshops on Celtic shamanism that Kate Fitzpatrick had come from Ireland to lead. Individual



Circle members were working with Kate to publicize, design and help facilitate the workshops. The Tucson Circle's ability to reach out internationally is possible in part because of the strong sense of community the Bear Sisters have created amongst themselves. Not only have the circle members become family, but their families have become family. Camping trips involving spouses and children happen regularly, members and their families stop by for meals, and the circle rallies when individual members face health and personal crises. It was a great pleasure to be included in this web of warmth and connection.

### The Tucson Bear Sisters

*The Tucson Bear Sisters has a core group of eight women with a larger circle of women around them. They formed in 1992 and have been meeting once a week for the past eight years. Their focus is to use art and shamanism to connect with Spirit and build community. They hosted the 2002 International Shamanic Gathering at Oracle, AZ, providing much of the logistical planning, support and coordination. For more information about the Tucson Bear Sisters and their activities, you can contact Jo Andersen*

at  
Andersenjo  
@aol.com

### The Global Art Project

*The Global Art Project's mission is to spread world peace by promoting tolerance and non-violence through art. For more information, visit their*

*website at: <http://www.global-art.org> or contact Katherine Josten at 520-628-8353.*

### Lanz Lowen

*Lanz Lowen is a Council member of Shamanic Circles. He and Jessica Richter are currently planning a two-day Painting with Spirit workshop which will include trance dance painting. For more information, contact Lanz at [LanzLowen@aol.com](mailto:LanzLowen@aol.com) or visit Shamanic Circles's website at [www.shamaniccircles.org](http://www.shamaniccircles.org)*

# Drum Painting For Dummies

**Patricia M. Kipp**

Sooner or later it will happen to you. One of your power animals or teachers will ask you to paint your drum.

My time came early in my practice. Bison asked me to paint his picture on my drum. I still remember him adding, wistfully, that the loud, steady drumming of the journey beat "reminded him of when he was many on this earth." At the time I was in the process of purchasing a Remo Buffalo Drum and hoped to get off easy with one of the factory-painted designs. But, no, Bison preferred I paint it myself. Me, paint? The last painting I did was in the second grade and I was barely competent at paint-by-numbers, but I got it done. The good news that I want to share with you is that this kind of painting requires no more than a steady hand and, if the spirit really wants the painting done, you'll have all the help you need.

So, if you have enough skill to paint "within the lines," then you, too, can honour a similar request:

## 1. Find a photograph

The Internet is a good place to find one, especially now that Google has a special search category for photographs. However, I would caution that you check copyright laws and secure any necessary permissions—especially if the painting is not for your personal use. Save the photograph as a file on your computer. The bison photograph that I used was about four inches by six inches with the bison filling up most of the area.



The larger and sharper the photograph, the easier will be the next step. If the photograph is not already on your computer, scan it in, enlisting the help of a computer savvy friend if needed.

## 2. Trace the photograph

Print a nice, clear copy of the photograph on ordinary computer paper. Fasten a second sheet of computer paper on top of this copy with paper clips. Using a light table<sup>1</sup> and a pencil, lightly trace the outline of your subject and any important "interior features." The interior features that I traced were: horn, eye, nose, mouth, line where the thick woolly fur met the thin smooth fur, hip and thigh, shadow under the belly, and hooves. Every so often, unclip the tracing and compare it directly with the photograph to see if the tracing accurately captures the features. Once you are satisfied

<sup>1</sup> A light table is nothing more than a piece of glass with a light underneath. My "light table" was a glass-topped coffee table with an upturned desk lamp placed under it.



with your tracing, **carefully** go over the lines with a fine-tipped black marker.

### 3. Size the tracing.

Measure the dimensions of the area on the drum that you would like your tracing to occupy. Take it to the local copy shop and have it enlarged or reduced to fit. Get a few copies "just in case."

### 4. Transfer the tracing to the drumhead

Using small scissors for better control, carefully cut around the outline of your tracing. Place this on the drum and adjust its position until it is where you want it. Holding it with one hand, lightly trace around it with a pencil. If you trace too darkly, the paint won't be able to hide the lines. When you have finished tracing the outline, cut off a portion of your tracing along one of interior features, making sure that you leave a portion of the outline as a registration guide to allow you to realign the drawing. The first parts I cut off on my bison tracing were the tail and the hooves. I realigned the remaining part with the tracing on the drum and traced around these new edges. When I got to an interior feature like the horn, I left the head on for alignment and cut along just the left side of the horn. I traced this line onto the drum. Then I cut the horn away from the head on the remaining lines, realigned it and traced these lines. Continue cutting and tracing in this manner until your tracing has been transferred to the drumhead.

### 5. Select the paints

This is where expert help is needed.

Using a program such as Photoshop, sample the colours in your photograph. Create a second file and create blocks approximately



two inches square of each sampled colour. If you don't have a printer that will accurately reproduce the colours as you see them on your computer monitor, e-mail these files to a friend that does and ask the friend to print them for you. Ask for a few copies of the sample sheet "just in case." Take the photograph and sample sheet to a store that specializes in art supplies because you want help from a salesperson who knows how to mix paints. Hand the salesperson your sheet of colour samples and ask for the fewest bottles of *acrylic paints* that can be mixed to produce these colours. (Just a bit of caution: don't use Liquitex brand acrylic paints, as they do not adhere well to solid surfaces.) Also ask for a bottle of clear acrylic sealer and buy one or two good brushes in the sizes you will need for your project. (I used three: a fine one for details, one about half the width of Bison's legs for the majority of the painting, and one about an inch wide for the large areas.) Also, be creative. The woolly look of Bison's fur was achieved using a sea sponge to dab on the paint. Check out the now popular stamping section of your local craft store. You may find a stamp that has just the image you've been looking for. If you decide to use stamps, again check into copyrights.

### 6. Paint the drum

Cover a large work surface with newspaper or other protective material. Place the drum in front of you and gather the paints, brushes, a bowl of water for washing brushes, and a rag or paper towels. A disposable plate (white, preferably) makes an excellent palette for mixing paints. With the photograph in front of you as a guide and the colour sample sheet to assist in your mixing, you are ready to go. Mix a sufficient quantity of the paint colour that you

will need, as it will be almost impossible to duplicate the colour with a second batch. Dab a bit on the edge of the colour square to check your match, keeping in mind that wet paint is a shade darker than dry paint. Using the picture as a guide, apply the paint to the areas of your tracing, being careful to stay within the lines. If you stray outside a line, you can use a clean corner of your rag or paper towel to wipe away the error. After your painting has dried (in a few hours or overnight), apply a coat or two of the clear sealer to the entire drumhead using a wide brush. You're done!

In addition to painting Bison on my drum, I also added a yellow circle around the drumhead to cover the "Remo Buffalo Drum" lettering. Creating circles that are centred on the drumhead is easy. Take a drawing compass and shorten the pencil end by about an inch. Set the arc distance on the compass to the distance from the edge of the drum to the edge of the circle. Then simply run the pointed end along the edge of the drum to trace the line of the circle on the drumhead. Again, use a light touch with the pencil.

If you are painting a Remo Buffalo Drum and aren't fond of the pale colour of the drum's frame, this is easily remedied. I wanted mine to look more like wood. Since I had several bottles of brown paint left over from painting Bison, I mixed up a suitable wood tone and thinned it down with lots of the clear sealer until it was fairly thin and translucent. I think I used about three parts sealer to one part paint. I painted this on the side of the drum using a wide brush.

Lastly, if you would like to put your name on the inside of your drum frame, here's the way archaeologists label their treasured artefacts: If the surface is darkly coloured, paint a small rectangle of suitable size with white, multi-purpose correction fluid (the kind for correcting mistakes on paper). Let

dry (which will only take a few minutes). Next, print your name using a fine-tipped *indelible* black marker. Let dry (again only a few minutes). Lastly, seal this printing with a coat of clear nail polish; making sure that the coat of nail polish extends beyond the edges of the printing and the correction fluid.

## Drumming Groups

### London

Karen Kelly 01223 562838

### Devon

Rowan 01364 642139

### Herefordshire

Angela Davis 01568 615837

### South Wales

Jan Wood 01835 860 320

### Warwickshire/Midlands

Frances Ommaney 01926 881772

### Yorkshire

Jane Shutt and  
Christine Marks 01751 417795

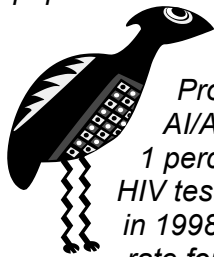


## Two Spirited: A Story of AIDS in the AI Community

Steven Solburg

*Ethnic cleansing and forced acculturation have had a devastating effect on the health and well being of contemporary American Indians. Racism, poverty, ill health, STDs, family violence, alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide have disproportionately impacted American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) populations.*

*A study of suicide rates conducted by the Indian Health Service from 1989 to 1991 found the suicide rate among Native Americans ages 15 to 24 was almost three times the national average. <sup>1</sup>Alcohol-related mortality rates are the highest for all U.S. populations. <sup>2</sup> According to the*



*Department of Health Services Office of AIDS Programs and Policy, AI/ANs comprised less than 1 percent (.07 percent) of all HIV tests given in Los Angeles in 1998, yet the seropositive rate for AI/ANs (3.9 percent)*

*was highest among all the racial and ethnic groups.*

*In this article, Steven Solberg of AIDS Project Los Angeles' POWER Program writes about his experience with one member of Los Angeles' AI/AN community.*

Traditionally each American Indian tribe has their own name for varied-gendered people within their particular culture. "Two-Spirit" is the preferred generic term adopted by an inter-tribal

contemporary movement amongst gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender American Indians. Gender variation

traditionally had less to do with sexual



orientation for many American Indian tribes and more to do with a certain quality of spirit. "Two-Spirit" reflects a distinction in spiritual terms. Such persons were often considered as "walks between worlds people" - possessing healing powers and a capacity to experience multiple realms of ordinary and spiritual reality.

From October 1998 to January 2002 I worked as an Art Interventionist for the Men's Program at the Prevention Division of the Van Ness Recovery House. This Program uses art as a harm reduction strategy for active substance-using gay and bisexual men. Three times a year the program publishes *The Good, The Bad, and the Twacked: A 'Zine From The Guys of the Boulevard*. It was here, at the prevention division of the Van Ness Recovery House that I met a contemporary two-spirited person whom I will call Johnny Changingwolf.

Johnny was part Navajo, part Apache and HIV-positive. According to traditional Navajo culture, Johnny would be considered as nadleeh. Within a contemporary context nadleeh would be similar to the English term homosexual, gay, lesbian, or transgender.

Navajo translation however indicates 'ones ability to change' and would traditionally have referred to an individual who can comfortably walk the path of both male and female – blending the two genders rather than expressing just one. On his Apache side, he would perhaps be considered as nde-isdzan (man-woman).

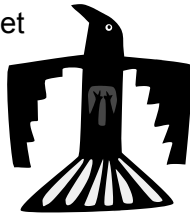
Johnny was definitely a "walker between worlds." He was neither old nor young and possessed a sweet androgynous spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Middlebrook, LeMaster, Beals, Novins & Manson, 1998

<sup>2</sup> Indian Health Service, Trends in Indian Health Services, US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Indian Health Service, office of Planning, Education, and Legislation, Division of Program Statistics, 1998



Johnny travelled between the culture of his southwestern reservation and the street culture of Los Angeles. He transported between the realms of the spirit and ordinary reality as well, even reporting dialogues with the birds. It would be easy to attribute such a statement to drug use or relegate it to one of psychology's pathological categories - but why? Sitting Bull, the great Hunkpapa Sioux warrior/holy man who was killed in 1890, toward the end of the American Indian Wars, also reported communicating with our feathered and four-legged creatures, as did Christianity's St. Francis of Assisi.



Johnnie and a Yaqui Indian pal named Jackson lived out of a camouflaged tent they'd pitched in the Hollywood Hills. Descending to the streets of the city during the day they'd hustle for their daily bread and access social services such as the Men's Art Program at the Prevention Division of the Van Ness Recovery House. The initial incentive to come to the program may have been to fill their empty stomachs with a home cooked meal but the non-judgmental atmosphere, community support, respite from the pressures of survival on the streets, and the opportunity to communicate their daily experiences in art kept them coming back.

Art can be an amazing tool for building self-esteem and a powerful medium for HIV prevention, harm reduction, education and intervention. Johnny attended the groups at the Prevention Division of the Van Ness Recovery House often. His way of working was incredibly focused and deliberate. He was a marvelous artist and his work frequently found its way into the 'zine Twacked. Johnny's artwork sometimes fused Christian imagery with feathers, medicine wheels, eagles, snakes and other power animals as well as illustrations of his life on the streets. He often embellished the images with

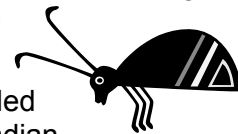
traditional Southwest Indian design elements.

Given that the Men's Art Program at the Prevention Division of the Van Ness Recovery House is based on the philosophy of harm reduction, increased condom use, safer sex and other behavior change among participants can be slow and incremental. But many participants made significant behavior changes. And, we had our share of major victories, such as clients entering residential drug treatment and getting off the streets.

Johnny was definitely one of our victories. Over time he stopped drinking alcohol, using drugs and doing sex work. Johnny also decided he would abstain from sex altogether. The program promoted enjoyable safe sex. Abstinence was Johnny's decision.

He was never able to navigate the health care system for his HIV, though. He just couldn't seem to deal with the bureaucracy. In the one instance when he managed to get that far, he was unable to adhere to HIV medications.

The last time I saw Johnny was on the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue. He did not look well and he told me in his gentle lilting voice that he was on his way back to visit his relatives in Arizona. I had a feeling that I would not see him again.



In April, Johnny called from the Phoenix Indian Medical Center. He had finally crashed. His body was shutting down and he was dying of AIDS-related complications. He was waiting for his sister to move him to a hospital nearer to his relatives and friends on their reservation. He asked me to pass the word on and say good-bye to his "family" at Van Ness Prevention Division.

In our conversation, I was able to thank Johnny for the many ways he had touched my soul. I was moved to tears while he sang two sweet Navajo songs

over the phone to me. Then with my blessings for a smooth transition into the next world, we said goodbye. Some days later, I received a call from his sister that he had died.

Later that month, I attended an ancient Shoshone/Paiute ceremonial dance of renewal and healing I participate in at least once a year. Elders and keepers of the ceremony ask that details be contained and not shared loosely with others. So I will honor that and share only that I placed a photo of Johnny under the central tree we dance around for honoring the ancestors. At each circling around the tree I thanked the Creator for bringing Johnny into my life. And at each circling of the tree felt the release of his Spirit.

As we danced, I'm pretty sure that was Johnny I saw laughing and dancing blissfully in the clouds, looking down on us below.



## Core Shamanic Practitioners' Circle

**Karen Kelly**

About four years ago a small group of shamanic practitioners decided to meet to explore how we might support one-another's' shamanic healing and counselling practise. Out of that initial meeting was born the Shamanic Practitioners Circle.

We have developed a very simple code of ethics that we work within. It is interesting that when we wrote about the circle in a recent Sacred Hoop, we were accused of wanting to be shamanic police and telling others how

to work. It is far from the case – we simply wanted to have some agreement amongst the circle about how we would work, some guidelines against which to review our own practise. For example part of that is that we will have a spiritual practise that supports and feeds ourselves of which shamanism will form a key part. We don't think it is real to be working shamanic ally with others if we are not journeying ourselves. Partly because I support this view, when my spirits told me to take six months off from all shamanic work I referred all of my clients to someone else.

We meet twice a year. Usually when we meet we talk about one or more topics that come up when we work with clients. For example we recently discussed how we handle it when a client starts to talk about good and evil in a very dualistic sort of way. I have found it really enlightening to hear how other people deal with challenges and also to hear how the wisdom of their spirits supports both their shamanic work and feed our circle.

We also often work with actual client case studies where the practitioner is finding it difficult to know how to work with someone.

Our intention is to support one another in have a good, clear practise with clients. We all struggle sometimes, but it helps to have people who are working in a similar way whom we can talk thing over with.

We are open to new members who have completed a reasonable amount of shamanic training and are actively working as healers or counsellors. For more detail contact Jane Shutt on 01751 417795.

# Forthcoming

## Events

### April

#### 11-13 Soul Retrieval

Chris Luttichau

The workshop includes teachings about the concept of soul loss and retrieval, an orientation about the cultural background and practical techniques as practice all over the world.

Venue: Cornwall

Contact: Lu Wray

Tel: 01736 79666

Price: £175

#### 16-20 Roots of Nordic Shamanism

Annette Høst

This course has *seiðr*, the old Nordic form of shamanism, as its basis and inspiration. Traditionally, the practitioners of *seiðr* did not use drums, but a unique combination of a staff and ecstatic song as means for the soul to journey.

Venue: Devon

Contact: Kathy Fried

Tel: 0208 459 3028

Price: £385 inc accommodation

### May

#### 10,17-18 Soul Retrieval

Jane Shutt

Venue: North Yorkshire

Contact: Jane Shutt or

Christine Mark

Tel: 01751 417795

Price: £120 inc lunches

### June

#### 6-8 The Shamans' Journey Basic Workshop

Jonathan Horwitz

The main emphasis of the course is on the shaman's

journey to the world of the spirits. Participants will learn to use the traditional methods of singing, dancing, and drumming to shift consciousness, meet their spirit helpers, and explore the spirit world

Venue: London

Contact: Kathy Fried

Tel: 0208 459 3028

Price: £95

#### 14,21 Introductory Workshop

Jane Shutt

Venue: North Yorkshire

Contact: Jane Shutt or

Christine Mark

Tel: 01751 417795

Price: £50

#### 20-22 Doorway of the Drum Basic Workshop

Chris Luttichau

On this workshop participants will learn practical shamanic techniques for exploring the realm of spirit. They will learn to use shaman tools so that they can continue on their own after the workshop.

Venue: Cornwall

Contact: Lu Wray

Tel: 01736 796660

Price: £150

#### 17-23 Shamanic Healing and the Spirits of Nature

Jonathan Horwitz

We will focus on communicating directly with the Spirits of Nature. We will learn from our spirit teachers and helpers how to sense, identify, and safely remove power intrusions, as well as how to find and use spirit-medicine.

Venue: Isle of Coll, Scotland

Contact: Jacqueline Clarkson

& Nigel Cochran-Patrick

Tel: +44 (0) 1879 230 327.

Price: £455 inc

Accommodation



**27-29 Into the Journey**

Jonathan Horwitz

On this course we will develop our journeying skills, learn to work more powerfully together with our spirit helpers, and discover new possibilities for helping others and ourselves in our daily lives.

Venue: Ireland

Contact: Celia Kee

Tel: +353 743 0024.

Price: 155 Eur

**27-29 Shamanic Healing and Plant Spirits**

Chris Luttichau

Participants will learn classic shamanic healing techniques and get the opportunity to practice them.

Venue: Cornwall

Contact: Lu Wray

Tel: 01736 796660

Price: £175

**July**

**4-6 Doorway of the Drum Basic Workshop**

Chris Luttichau

(See above for details)

Venue: Sjaeland, Denmark

Contact: Markus Schmidt

Tel: 4916 2050

Price: 950 DKK

**25-27 The Shamans' Journey Basic Workshop**

Jonathan Horwitz

(See above for details)

Venue: Halland, Sweden

Contact: Carin Westman

Tel: +46(0)31 775 2630

Price: 1950 Sek (inc. accommodation)

**29-3 Shamanic Dance and Ritual**

Jonathan Horwitz

Today, many are drawn to using rituals in their shamanic practise. At the same time they feel unsure as to how to make a ritual "work" This summer course will

concentrate on becoming familiar with the ways of ritual and magic-ritual dance.

Venue: Halland, Sweden

Contact: Carin Westman

Tel: +46(0)31 775 2630

Price: 4450 SEK (inc. accommodation)

**20-27 Shamanic Drum Making  
Chris Harle-Silvennoinen & Jaana Kouri**

We will explore various stories and traditions from Northern Europe, Siberia, and North America while learning to work intimately with the Spirits in the making of our own healing drums during this intensive week.

Venue: Turku, Finland

Contact: +358-(0)40-536

1626

Price: 430 EUR

**When I Arise**

When I arise I face the dawn,  
When I arise I face the morn.  
Let the sun warm my hands,  
Let the sun warm my heart.

Darkness has ended!  
The sun returns to us all!  
Happy MidWinter!

Blessings to you and your kin!  
Blessings to the place you abide!  
Blessings to the creatures in your care!  
Blessings to your health!  
Blessings to your path!  
Blessings to all those that you meet!  
Blessings to your heart!

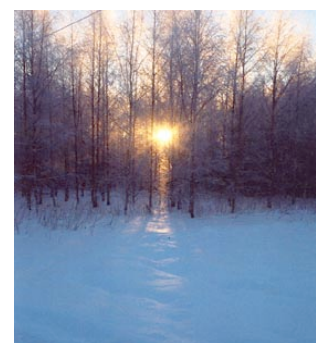
- C. H-S 2002©

Chrisse Harle-Silvennoinen (Sola Voima)

& Pekka Silvennoinen

And the gang at Pohjola

Sola, Finland





**Phone:**  
01223 562838

**Fax:**

**E-Mail:**  
karenspiritalk@aol.com



*We're on the Web!*

*See us at:*

***Shamaniccircles.org***

## Editorial

After a six month break, I am delighted to bring you the new issue of Spirit Talk. This issue focuses on art and dance as ways of expressing shamanic experience in this world. In my own life it has been important to find ways to physically express the power and beauty of the Spirits. Whether a healing comes through in the form of a song, a journey is expressed through artwork or I dance my power animal, these forms of expression help me to make real my experience of the spirits. One of the

joys of shamanic art/dance/song for me is that it isn't about being a good artist, singer, dancer. Rather it is about the beauty that is somehow inherent in any gift of the spirits.

Enjoy...

## About Shamanic Circles

Shamanic Circles is a not-for-profit organisation founded to support and foster shamanic community around the world. Initially set up by a group from the US, we now have council members from as far apart as Japan, Ireland and Israel.

As well as Spirit Talk, Shamanic Circles also hosts a list of drumming circles around the world and organises occasional community gatherings and workshops.

**Spirit Talk**  
120 Argyle Street  
Cambridge  
CB1 3LS

