



## **PranaShanti Yoga Centre**

*By Devinder Kaur, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*

On October 6, 2008, the PranaShanti Yoga Centre opened its doors. On the day that marks the anniversary of Yogi Bhajan's passing, we also celebrated the opening of a space for healing and community. The goal was and is simple, "to provide an oasis in the city – a home that heals your body, calms the mind and strengthens the spirit."



The concept of PranaShanti started many years ago as a newsletter that I created for my yoga students. I chose the name PranaShanti, with Prana meaning "breath" or "life force" and Shanti meaning "peace." My idea was to help spread some of the yogic tips and techniques that I thought were helpful and uplifting. I included tips on meditation, yoga, lifestyle and foods. Because people are often happy when eating, the recipe section was a huge hit. This may also have been because of the cookie recipes that my mom provided.

Over time I started to use more sophisticated software and created a more professional-looking newsletter. I continued to offer it to students in a printed format, but soon, with the increased demand for the newsletter and the cost of printing, I switched to an email format, which is also more environmentally friendly.

Getting to and from class was a real team effort. For many years, before opening the PranaShanti Yoga Centre, I taught at a number of different locations. For each class my mom baked cookies and I made Yogi Tea from scratch. Arrival at class was always interesting with a 30-inch gong over one shoulder, the gong stand and mallets over the other shoulder, and harmonium, sheepskin, iPod and manuals in whichever hand was free. Mom carried the cookies, the Yogi Tea thermos carafe, biodegradable cups and anything else we needed, sometimes a hockey gear bag full of meditation cushions. We loaded everything into the back of my car, drove to wherever I was teaching, unloaded and carried everything usually up two or three flights of stairs. But we kept up!

I have always been interested in opening a Yoga Centre and knew the right time and circumstances would present themselves. After many years of sending out the newsletter and travelling from place to place teaching, in 2008 it was time to seriously look at taking the concept from PranaShanti the newsletter to PranaShanti the Yoga Centre.

A fellow yogini and friend from yoga teacher training, Rai Kaur, had been working as a yoga teacher, and we teamed up to open the PranaShanti Yoga Centre. With our

combined experience and vision we worked towards the October 6 opening date. Within one month of signing the lease the space was renovated and fitted. It was a tight deadline, and there were many late nights as we prepared the space. Throughout the ups and downs of the renovation we knew we did not want to miss opening on October 6.

With much gratitude, the PranaShanti Yoga Centre opened on schedule. Our first Kundalini Yoga class was in honor of Yogi Bhajan. To celebrate the opening and in the spirit of serving all, we offered free yoga classes our first week, and on our first weekend we held two free concerts for the community featuring recording artists Girish and Wah! With the support and kindness of the community and Girish and Wah! we collected generous donations for two great organizations in Ottawa: Harmony House for battered women and Harvest House for addicted youth.

Today, six months after opening, we offer over 70 yoga classes and workshops per week. We are located in the Hintonburg area of Ottawa. We provide hot yoga, hot 26, hot flow, Hatha Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, power yoga, yoga basics, yin yoga, prenatal yoga, children's yoga, meditation classes, gong meditations, workshops and Hatha and Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training Programs. Our first Kundalini Yoga Teacher Training Program is planned for September 2009 and will be taught by a team of teachers: Shadbad Saroop Singh (Montreal), Guru Raj Kaur (Vancouver), Sangeet Kaur (New Mexico), Dev Saroop Kaur (New Mexico), Siri Bandhu Kaur (Ottawa) and me.

Being environmentally friendly is important to us. We took great care to choose flooring materials and fixtures from renewable resources and included such items as a filtered drinking water system so you can refill your reusable sports bottle with pure UV-filtered water. We have three yoga studio rooms and each is individually climate controlled with its own heat, ventilation and filtration systems. The change rooms are a spa experience with ample showers, lockers and complimentary organic shower gel. For community building we have a Yogi Tea/juice bar and lounge area. To support your yoga practice there is a boutique area featuring local, fair-trade, organic and environmentally aware products and for easy access we have over 100 free parking spaces and are on direct bus routes.

Next time you are in Ottawa, please stop by and have a visit and a cup of Yogi Tea. The tea pot is always on, providing complimentary tea all day, every day. The PranaShanti Newsletter continues to be published online every month and yes, Mom's cookies are still served after class! We hope to see you soon. Visit PranaShanti on the Web or e-mail for more information.

Devinder Kaur is a certified Hatha and Kundalini Yoga Teacher, a registered member of Yoga Alliance, 3HO IKYTA and a KRI Level 1 Professional Kundalini Yoga Teacher Trainer. Devinder's approach to teaching is to use her knowledge, experience and positive attitude in a safe and fun style to help people reach their individual goals and to empower themselves through yoga. In 2003, Devinder created PranaShanti as a web-based resource and free newsletter to share the benefits of yoga. In 2008, this concept grew into the PranaShanti Yoga Centre. Devinder teaches Kundalini Yoga and prenatal

yoga and leads Gong Meditations. In 2007, Devinder released her debut CD: Echo – Meditations for Peace of Heart and Mind.

Rai Kaur (Catherine Larrivee Currie) is a certified Hatha and Kundalini Yoga Teacher and a registered member of Yoga Alliance, 3HO IKYTA and a Hatha Yoga Teacher Trainer. Just over six years ago, Catherine left a fruitful high-tech career to dedicate her life to a great passion of hers: yoga. Catherine has drawn on her love for yoga and wellness to co-create the PranaShanti Yoga Centre as a space in which to promote lasting change. With many years of experience in Yoga Teacher Training Programs, Catherine is the lead trainer for the PranaShanti Hatha Yoga Teacher Training Program.