



# NEWSLETTER

2014

## A GREEN THUMB FOR LABYRINTHS

**W**hen Denis Bolohan casts a handful of seeds across the earth, beauty grows up in the pattern of his choice. Quite often, at least for the past several years, his choice is in the form of a contemporary labyrinth.

Denis recently became a member of the Labyrinth Community Network and sent us photographs of some of his installations. Our interest was piqued. LCN secretary, Virginia Vianna, and I visited his rural home near Cookstown, Ontario.

On an easel just inside the Bolohan entrance door stands a labyrinth inspired by an apple core. It is etched into a slate roofing tile. At his stairwell is a wall hanging of a sea horse, a labyrinth filling its curving shape. These are only two of Denis' labyrinths that will last through the years. Most of his creations are ephemeral.

Denis showed us photos of his temporary labyrinths which have the precision and balance of a crop circle. In one, a Celtic Cross in grass is overlaid upon labyrinth circuits in shorter grass. This summer he created a large-scale labyrinth on



Denis Bolohan with the family cat, Critter.

the lawn of the Dufferin Museum and Archives. It featured a grassy spray of cornflower to complement the museum's cornflower glass collection. Most recently Denis installed a labyrinth in plant material for the International Plowing Match hosted by the Ontario Plowmen's Association in Simcoe County.

When asked why his labyrinths are not made to last, he said, "Because seeds are inexpensive. All I need is a handful of them."

Sounds simple perhaps, but two fine arts degrees back these creations. His artistic temperament dawned early. As a teenager he began drawing symbols that resembled Aztec birds.

Denis' contemporary walking paths too, are strongly defined.

But more than his labyrinths being merely aesthetically pleasing, Denis hopes walkers will be lost for a while and view a different perspective on their lives.

He does have a practical hope as well. Denis welcomes weeders. If you would like to "weed and walk" future projects, Denis can be reached at 705-458-0288.

– JO ANN STEVENSON



The Denis Bolohan Labyrinth for the International Plowing Match in Simcoe County.

## LABYRINTHS AROUND ONTARIO



Tigh Shee Labyrinth, Lancaster Heights. Open to the public by appointment. Original design by owners Betty and Jim Healey. 40ft. diam. Flower beds, gravel path, off-centre granite centre with water feature.



Trinity Park, Cambridge. Public. 5 circuit. 68.5ft. diam. 420 Japanese blood grasses. Path is limestone screening with a stabilizer to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers. Centre rosette design has a boulder in each of its six petals.

### THE WEDDING LABYRINTH

I am a beach magpie, never happier than when wandering along the tideline filling my pockets with smooth pebbles and water-worn shell fragments. Over the years, I have amassed bags and boxes full of my gleanings, so I did not fly into a panic when my son called me a week before his wedding to request a labyrinth that he and his sweetie could walk as part of their ceremony. The room in the 18th century auberge in Old Montreal was spacious enough for a walkable three-circuit labyrinth, and I spent the time preceding the ceremony crawling around on the floor laying out the pattern.

My son and his wife walked the labyrinth hand-in-hand, symbolizing the joining of their life paths - one leading on the way in, the other on the way out. It was a precious moment for me.



Camilla Gryski, left, creating the Wedding Labyrinth.



Camilla's Wedding Labyrinth in Old Montreal.

On their first anniversary, they laid out the labyrinth in a park and walked it again, but since then it has lived in a box with a star on the lid, stored while they live overseas. Lately, it has crossed my mind to lay it out the next time they visit so that my small granddaughter can walk it with us, joining her life path to ours in the same symbolic way.

– CAMILLA GRYSKI

*In the presence of eternity, the mountains are as transient as the clouds.*

- Robert G. Ingersoll

### METROPOLITAN UNITED'S CHANCEL LABYRINTH

My first experience with the labyrinth was in 1998 at Aurora United Church. There was an immediate connection with this ancient tool that promptly developed into an extension of my ministry in the United Church. The labyrinth has a natural synergy with facilitating people to explore the spiritual path, and it has become a valuable tool for the ministry at Metropolitan.

This past year our Student Minister, and also Military Chaplain, upon my suggestion, made use of the labyrinth for his counselling practice. He was quite surprised when a soldier walked the labyrinth and broke down in tears. In conversation, I reminded my student that the labyrinth is a powerful facilitator that can open the locked door of our psyche, and get at the heart of the deep-rooted emotions we have buried for years.

On another occasion, two female friends celebrated their wedding on the labyrinth. In the wedding planning session, I showed them the Chancel Labyrinth and they were immediately drawn to the centre as the perfect place for the wedding ceremony. As the three of us stood at the centre, it felt as if we were in one of those thin places that the Celts speak about: the thin places

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Become a member of the Labyrinth Community Network. Your \$25 contribution will help us to pay for this newsletter, our website, and other expenses necessary to continue the network. We thank you.



Cedar Grove Labyrinth in Thornbury, sponsored by the Blue Mountain Women of Twelve with the intention of creating a space that is welcoming, aesthetically pleasing to the eye and naturally brings community together.



Photo Credit: Virginia Burt

Each winter Virginia Burt ([www.visionscape.ca](http://www.visionscape.ca)) builds a snow labyrinth for walking on moonlit nights. It is created by tramping with high boots, and much laughter.

Meet this transient world with neither grasping nor fear, trust the unfolding of life, and you will attain true serenity.  
- Krishna Dharma



Metropolitan United Church Chancel Labyrinth

between earth and heaven. I invited a woman who had lost her husband to join me on the labyrinth as a way to open the pathway to healing her grief. We walked, and there was a crystal-clear awakening that took place as she began to feel a sense of renewal.

T.S. Elliot describes it: We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

All are invited to Metropolitan United, 56 Queen Street East, Toronto, to walk the Chancel Labyrinth from noon to 3 pm Monday to Friday. Also, on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., from September to June, we host a Time of Taizé Song, Healing, Labyrinth Walking and Meditation.

– REV. DR. JOHN JOSEPH MASTANDREA

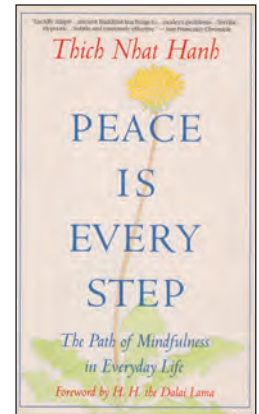


Vivian Weinert's finger labyrinth was made by Gwen Law. The labyrinth was burnt into a 3'x3' wooden, lacquer-treated board. Angels are carved into each corner, with wings at the entry point and a trio of angels in the centre.

### Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life

By Thich Nhat Hanh  
Bantam, 1991

*I like to walk alone on country paths, rice plants and wild grasses on both sides, putting each foot down on the earth in mindfulness, knowing that I walk on the wondrous earth. In such moments existence is a miraculous and mysterious reality.*  
– Thich Nhat Hanh



In the rush of modern life, we tend to lose touch with the peace that is available in each moment. Zen master, spiritual leader, and author Thich Nhat Hanh shows us how to make positive use of the very situations that usually pressure and antagonize us. For him, a ringing telephone can be a signal to call us back to our true selves. Dirty dishes, red lights and traffic jams are spiritual friends on the path to mindfulness – the process of keeping our consciousness alive to our present experience and reality. The most profound satisfactions, the deepest feelings of joy and completeness lie as close at hand as our next aware breath and the smile we can form right now.

Our smile will bring happiness to us and to those around us. Even if we spend a lot of money on gifts for everyone, nothing we could buy could give them as much happiness as the gift of our awareness, our smile. And this precious gift costs nothing.

*Peace is Every Step* is a worthwhile guidebook for the journey of connecting personal, inner peace and peace on earth.

– Reviewed by KATHRYN KNIGHT

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## ON THE PATH DOWNUNDER

**W**e gathered before twilight on the sand in cardies and wooly jumpers and you would have been forgiven for thinking it was autumn. A brave participant took a plunge in the sea not too far from the Iron Pot Lighthouse that stands guard where the Derwent Estuary meets the Tasman Sea. Swim another 2600 km south and you'll arrive in Antarctica. Last January, I was back in my homeland of Tasmania, an island and the sixth state of Australia located south of Melbourne and west of New Zealand. Once known as the Apple Isle, now it's the scenery and a foodie revolution that bring it fame.

On that cool summer evening my parents and friends from the "Walkie Talkies" bush walking club had come to the beach at Opossum Bay to

*Live more and more in the present, which is ever beautiful and stretches way beyond the limits of the past and future.*

- Meher Baba

take a different track. After a short introduction the group made an uncharacteristically quiet queue at the entrance and began following the sandy lines of a labyrinth. Mt. Wellington and its organ pipe cliffs held the space in the north, the Milky Way and Southern Cross constellations stretched above us like a protective dome, and the waves lapped the shore.

Afterwards, forgoing billy tea, we tucked into hot chocolate and bikkies, and had a good chinwag. Participants were interested, reflective, questioning and relaxed. My father and others are now liaising with the local council to construct a labyrinth in their seaside community. The beautiful setting is the brow of a small hill with an uninterrupted 360-degree view of mountains, ocean and farmland.

- VIRGINIA VIANNA



Virginia Vianna's Labyrinth at Opossum Bay, Tasmania

## From the President

The Labyrinth Community Network continues to make improvements that we hope are relevant in your labyrinth lives.

In May we hosted an open walk on World Labyrinth Day as well as the annual Solstice and Equinox walks at Toronto Public Labyrinth.

We have added five new labyrinths to the website directory, and revamped the site to make it even more attractive and user friendly.



Denis Bolohan's Celtic Cross Labyrinth. Tall grasses overlaid upon labyrinth circuits in shorter grass.

We held a labyrinth "spa" day in June at Islington United Church, with keynote speaker, Dr. Vanessa Compton, and hope to make these labyrinth mini-retreats an annual event and to see even more of you next time.

Our two canvas labyrinths were part of programs at Bridgepoint Health Centre, Lenten walks at St. Marks in Scarborough, a fundraiser in Collingwood, and Stouffville Peace Week celebrations.

In other news, the Blue Mountain Women of 12 officially opened their Cedar Grove Labyrinth in Thornbury in June. The Collingwood Labyrinth Committee has a lakeside site in Arboretum Park. They held a raking fest and shortly afterwards, a turtle laid its eggs in what will be the centre. They plan to lay a gravel base for a poured concrete labyrinth before winter.

As a network, our mandate is to help people and organizations working with labyrinths. Thank you to those who serve so ably on our working committee.

Thanks go especially to you, our members, for your vital support.

- JO ANN STEVENSON

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