



NEWSLETTER

2015

THE TORONTO PUBLIC LABYRINTH PLACE OF DREAMS AND REALITIES

I still remember it clearly as if it was yesterday and not 15 years ago. It was 1998 and I had just started working with Toronto Parks on a project looking at the feasibility of restoring the historic, long-ago-buried Taddle Creek. I was walking down the semi-circular hallway of the Parks Department in pre-amalgamation Toronto City Hall, when a parks planning supervisor, Barry Hughes, pulled me aside and asked if I would be willing to meet with a group of ladies sent to him by Parks Director Susan Richardson. Susan had previously met with Jo Ann Stevenson, a leading light in the movement to create a labyrinth in a public park. Susan was intrigued and tasked Barry to see what might be possible. He thought Trinity Square Park might be a good fit for a labyrinth, and on learning that the Taddle used to run under the Square, Barry approached me; he'd also learned that not only was I mapping the Taddle

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but also identifying opportunities in parks that sit atop the creek. In stopping me mid-stream, Barry started what would be a rich journey for me, professionally and personally.

Upon meeting the group, I was galvanized. They loved the idea that the labyrinth would be placed on a previously existing body of water, for labyrinths historically were located near water. I was energized by the sparkle in the eyes of Jo Ann and Anne Tanner, and along with the good energy of the others of the group it seemed a no-brainer that this project was going to happen. I became their conduit to the city administration, and they my inspiration to remain creative and excited as I navigated a system that was undergoing massive change with the amalgamation of 7 municipalities.

I should note that without the visionary thinking of Susan Richardson and senior parks planner Murray Boyce, this project may not have happened. They, along with then councillors Kyle Rae and Olivia Chow, were the champions I needed. By conceiving the project as a pilot to gauge public interest, and raising the needed funds by positioning it as a Millennium Project, the pieces fell into place. A grass labyrinth was decided on as the most feasible, and so, with much love and perseverance, the Trinity Square Park Labyrinth officially opened in the summer of 2000. From the get-go the project was successful with people walking the labyrinth daily.

I now live on the west coast, working on protecting old growth forests. A different life now, but what binds these experiences is engaging communities and their passions – especially in this case, the Labyrinth Community Network.

My mother, as she died of cancer, visited the grass labyrinth and was proud of my work because, although labyrinths were unknown to Portuguese people, she could tell the place had taken on meaning. I hold that close to my heart and will always be grateful for the group of women who came into my life to make their dream – our dream – a healing reality. – EDUARDO SOUSA



The first labyrinth at Trinity Square Park.



The Toronto Public Labyrinth as it is today.

LABYRINTHS AROUND ONTARIO



Healing Circle, Johnstown. Private. 46-foot labyrinth set amid 1000 evergreens, surrounded by a garden sanctuary. Path is woven with over 300 chakra coloured plants.



Robyn's Path4Peace, Owen Sound. Private. 7-circuit Classical design. 45 feet in diameter. Cedar mulch path outlined with cedar post ends.

JOSHUA CREEK HERITAGE ART CENTRE

A lone monarch butterfly accompanied me on my wanderings through the medieval 11-circuit labyrinth tucked away on a precious meadow located at the very edge of built-up suburbia in Oakville, Ontario. I ticked off the plants that I recognized as I wandered: burdock with its burrs so well suited for missiles to be thrown at unsuspecting playful companions; golden rod with its long stalks and seed pods that make excellent wands for wannabe princesses once you shred the leaves; intricate Queen Anne's lace and the essential butterfly food – milkweed. Many other plants, shrubs and even small trees grow in the substantial 'field' of this idyllic pastoral labyrinth. A large quartz crystal greeted my arrival at the six-petalled centre. It was a revelation to find this oasis of ecological integrity so close to home.

A veritable fairy godmother with wisdom and vision has safeguarded twelve acres of sacred countryside from housing development for the well-being of the community. True to her commitment to maintain heritage and create a cultural legacy, Sybil Rampen founded Joshua Creek Heritage Art Centre located on the land her family had farmed since the days of the

United Empire Loyalists. Being there on the doorstep of the GTA, yet taking in the view of fields, gardens, bee hives, apple trees, heritage buildings and art and art studios is like drinking a refreshing glass of spring water after a long walk on a hot day. Walking the 2.5 kilometre meadow labyrinth that was created with the help of Evolving Families Foundation is equally refreshing and nourishing for the heart, mind and spirit.

Joshua Creek Heritage Art Centre, 1086 Burnhamthorpe Road East, Oakville, Ontario, Canada L6H 7B2. www.joshuacreekarts.com

– VIRGINIA VIANNA

You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.

– Swami Satchidananda

LABYRINTH RETREAT DAY - SPRING 2016

There is a beautiful labyrinth retreat being planned for Spring 2016. The Canadian recording artist and Master flute player Debbie Danbrook will be our guest in an experiential day filled with her meditative sound and labyrinth insights. Read about her at www.healingmusic.com and watch our website for details as they are available. www.labyrinthnetwork.ca



Joshua Creek Labyrinth in Oakville.



Debbie Danbrook with her shakuhachi flute.

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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 our work. We thank you.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Picton. Public. 7-circuit Celtic Chalice design. 40 feet in diameter. Grass path marked by embedded limestone. Tree in centre.



Braille Finger Labyrinth at Toronto Public Labyrinth in Trinity Square Park, Toronto.

OSHAWA COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE LABYRINTH

An unofficial ceremony took place quietly, one recent evening, to say goodbye to the Oshawa Community Health Centre Labyrinth. The creators of this grass labyrinth rolled the boulder from the centre to a safe place nearby, planted crocus bulbs and wandered throughout the labyrinth, reminiscing, talking to her, picking weed flowers and giving thanks. Mosquitoes and the dark chased us away too soon.

We had hoped to cut the labyrinth grass in a respectful way but our lawn mower was no match for the dense undergrowth. Later that week, the property maintenance company arrived with their immense equipment and passed twice over the grass and raked too. When we glanced from an upstairs office, we were delighted to see that the labyrinth had not disappeared.

The earth had preserved her pattern.

It is with hope and curiosity that we will watch for signs of our grass labyrinth this spring.

In the words of Warren Lynn: "Rest well, dear labyrinth, as you sleep for a time amidst the dark rich soils of creation."

— LISA LAFLAMME



Oshawa Community Health Centre Labyrinth, after the mowing.

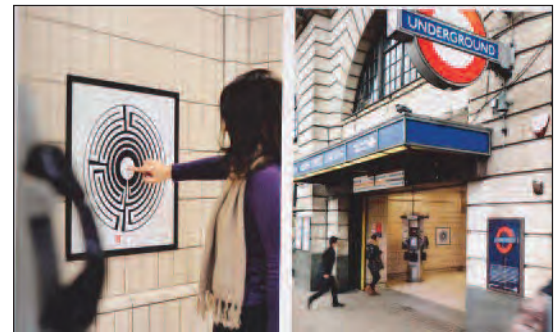
Whatever is flexible and flowing will tend to grow. Whatever is rigid and blocked will wither and die
— Tao Te Ching

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Labyrinth: A Journey Through London's Underground

By Mark Wallinger. Photographs by Thierry Bal. Art Books Publishing.

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of London's Underground, Turner Prize winning artist Mark Wallinger has created a vast, permanent work of public art across the entire network. Mounted on the wall of every single station - 270 of them - is a vitreous enamel finger labyrinth. This wonderful book contains a photograph of each, along with historical information and interesting discussions on the why and how Wallinger chose labyrinths as his subject. — KATHRYN KNIGHT



Baker Street Station



Embankment Station

A TRIBUTE AND A FAREWELL

I was blessed to have met Dr. Carolyn Gratton and Dr. Anne Tanner on the same evening in 1997. Both women were authors and spiritual teachers. Fortunately for myself, and for the Labyrinth Community Network which grew from that meeting, both readily put their shoulders behind creating a public labyrinth in Toronto.

Carolyn died in December of 2014 at the age of 84. Her radiant smile and open nature were exemplary. She participated fully in Catholic lay leadership in Canada and around the world. Carolyn also published *The Art of Spiritual Guidance* and other books for spiritual directors.

Perhaps it was her ecumenical philosophy that caused her to make room in her active life for us at LCN.

Anne Tanner died in April 2015 at the age of 85.

Anne held a Doctor of Ministry degree, was a member of the Spiritual Directors of Ontario, a founding member of the Toronto Dioceses'

*What rich serenity is found,
what courage and release
when wisdom teaches us to
seek the gentle path to peace.*

– Sylvia Dunstan

Bishops' Committee on Prayer and an Associate of the Anglican Sisterhood of St. John the Divine.

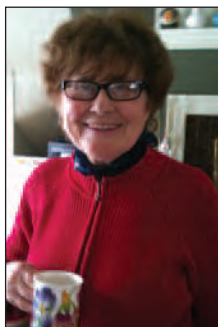
Anne was practical, grounded and a very effective visionary. Already a believer in walking as a prayer modality, she was early to recognize the value of walking the labyrinth. It took a force such as Anne's to help bring it to reality.

In 2000, visitors to Toronto Public Labyrinth would see Anne in knee pads staking out the grass path where it had become trampled. In 2002 Anne suggested we host the Dr. Rev. Lauren Artress in Toronto to train facilitators. She ensured that LCN had a canvas labyrinth and took it often to Church of the Holy Trinity prior to the installation of the permanent Toronto Public Labyrinth.

Her book, *Practical Prayer: Making Space for God in Everyday Life* is gentle and welcoming, as was Anne.

We say goodbye, with thankful hearts and strong foundations.

– JO ANN STEVENSON



Carolyn Gratton



Kathleen Russell, Jo Ann Stevenson and Anne Tanner



Anne Tanner staking out the circuits.

From the President

Something new is emerging...can you sense it?

Recently I celebrated the 20th anniversary of Veriditas in San Francisco. The event gave due recognition to the Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress. Her speech was electrifying. She acknowledged that labyrinths “pepper the planet” – an early Veriditas goal.

Now, she says, that goal is evolving. She sees labyrinths emerging as tools to promote peace and global healing, and she plans to be behind that momentum.

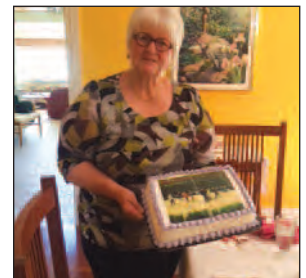
One such initiative is Legacy Labyrinths – a project to help heal individuals, communities and the planet. The first was created in La Falda, Argentina, where SS officers from Hitler's army moved to escape war crime prosecution. This labyrinth is dedicated to welcoming new healing energy. Legacy Labyrinths are linked to each other through ritual and intention as presences of peace.

For the past 18 years since we launched the Labyrinth Community Network, labyrinths seemed to sprout around the province like sunflowers. Now there are labyrinths within reach of most Ontarians. We list all the Ontario labyrinths we know about on our website. They are being used by thousands of people for inspiration, wellness, relaxation, prayer, walking meditation and even a compact exercise track. As a supporter of LCN, you are part of that accomplishment.

Thank you so much.

Global need is rising... and all of us, as labyrinth keepers, are needed - perhaps more than ever.

– JO ANN STEVENSON



Happy 15th Anniversary
Toronto Public Labyrinth,
from Brenda Wivell.

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