

Labyrinth Learning

A 360-Degree Community Service Digital Ecology

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Abstract

Labyrinth Learning – A 360 Degree Community Service Digital Ecology is a Master's Portfolio organized around the Lakehead Labyrinth Project at Lakehead University's campus between 2017-2022. With text, images, video, audio and 360-degree imagery centered around the outdoor Wellness Path Labyrinth built on Lakehead's Thunder Bay campus this 360-degree digital ecology will eventually land as a QR code on a forthcoming interpretative plaque. The text layer of Labyrinth Learning contains a literature synthesis, exploring the history of Labyrinths and how human cultures have learned with them throughout the ages. The 360-degree base images of the Labyrinth shares the story of the Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth outside the Bora Laskin Faculty of Education through interactive educational portals. And to round out the Portfolio, at the core of the 360-degree Digital Ecology, podcast links to the 12-episode pilot of CILU Radio's Labyrinth Learning program are arranged like the hour markers of a clock around the centre of the Labyrinth. Labyrinth Learning is a campus and community radio show I created and hosted which aired every Wednesday and Saturday at 1 pm through the fall of 2022 on 102.7fm. Professors across 11 different disciplines, from Education to English, Indigenous Learning and Anthropology, Psychology to Philosophy, Social Work and Social Justice, Natural Resource Management to History and Health Sciences speak on this show about their learning journeys through the metaphor of the Labyrinth in these hour-long open-form educational conversations. The intent is for both the 360-degree Labyrinth Learning Digital Ecology portal and the CILU radio show to continue beyond the scope of this Master's portfolio.

Introduction

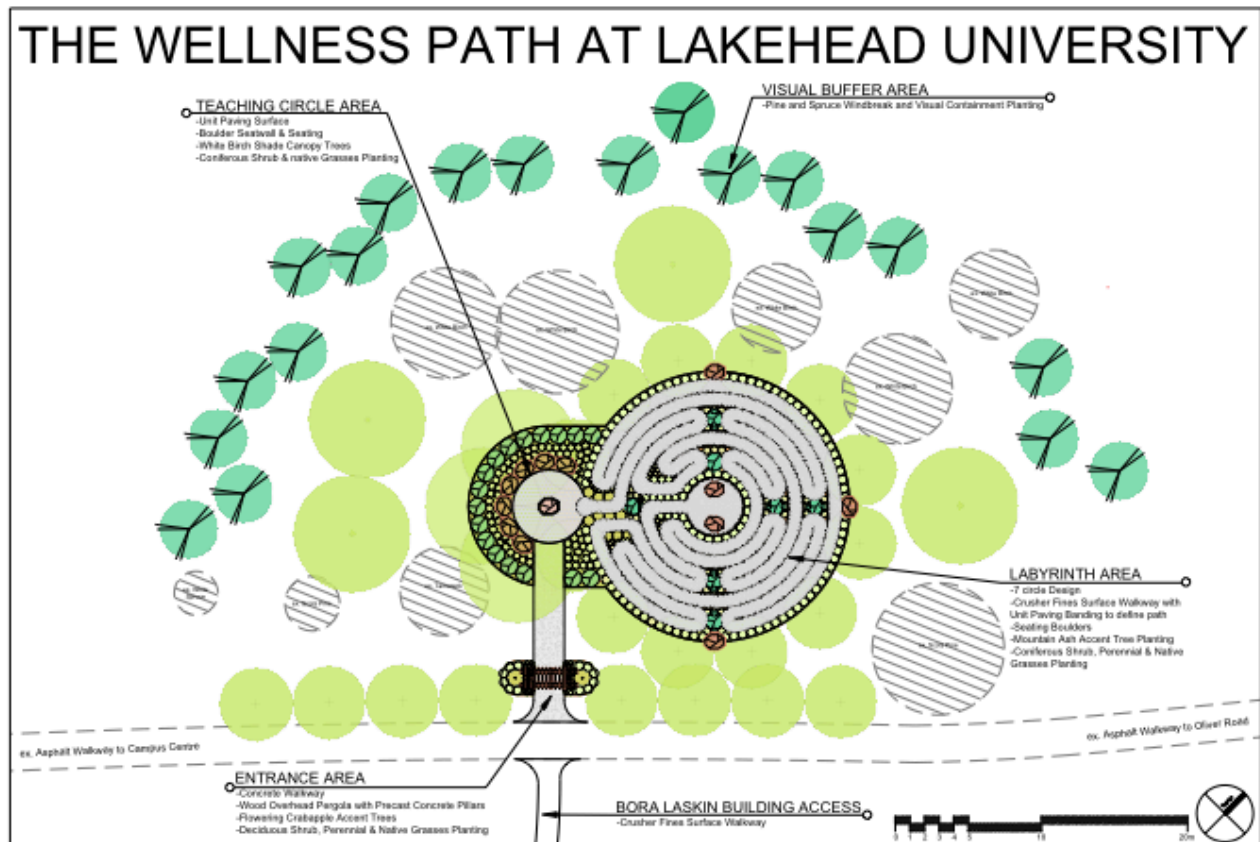


Figure 1. The Wellness Path at Lakehead University, landscape architecture design by Werner Schwar.

Labyrinths have been in conversation with the human mind, body and collective imagination for at least the last 4000 years (Matthews, 1970; Sands, 2001; McCullough, 2005; MacQueen, 2021).

The Labyrinth is not a maze.



Figure 2. Canvas Labyrinth from the Lakehead Labyrinth Project video, Gavin Shields.

Soren Kierkegaard, the founder of Western Existentialism, suggests, "Life [like a Labyrinth] is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced."



Figure 3. Labyrinth Reflection Prompt Card, by Gavin Shields, May 2018.

The single pathway of the Labyrinth is a path to be followed and trusted.

As Labyrinth Historian W. H. Matthews clarifies in his compendium *Mazes and Labyrinths: Their History and Development*, the operating logic behind "mazes and labyrinths may be roughly divided into two types as regards to the principle of their design, namely, into 'unicursal' or 'multicursal' types, or, as some say, into 'non-puzzle' and 'puzzle' types" (p.184).



Figure 4. Print of Labyrinth, by Gavin Shields, March, 2019.

The Labyrinth is unicursal and hence non-puzzle—a reality to be experienced.

Through all its twists and turns, the path transports its traveler from circumference to centre and back out again. This journey involves 360 degrees of revolving inward motion—outside in—and the reverse outward motion—inside out—creating a dialectical movement from interiority to outward expression.

The Labyrinth journey serves as a metaphor for the human experience of life, as traditions have put it, from womb to tomb.



Figure 4. Labyrinth Learning community walk, promotional photo by Meghan Hanbury, March 2018.

Sands (2001) details in *The Healing Labyrinth: Finding Your Path to Inner Peace* that "Our ancestors used the labyrinth shape through the ages and left behind a legacy of labyrinth artifacts that continue to capture our imaginations today. The beauty of this shape lays in its universal appeal, for it, is not attached to any one faith or tradition, so each person who follows its path can draw from it what he or she needs" (p.22).



Figure 5. Snow spiral on site of the Labyrinth, Jill Greenwood, January 2020.

The Labyrinth plays in the dance between movement and stillness—centre and ever-expanding circumference.

As a universal symbol, "The labyrinth became the silent bridge between traditional and untraditional, all the more effective, Artress [often credited as the modern founder of Labyrinth revival] believes, because it is nonverbal" (McCullough, 2005, p.168). This symbolic yet nonverbal pathway is the focus of McCullough's (2005) book *The Unending Mystery: A Journey through Labyrinths and Mazes*, in which he notes, "In spite of all the mysticism and mystery, there is something about a Labyrinth that is playful. It is a game. Children sense this immediately" (p.81).



Figure 6. The Wellness Path Labyrinth, Gavin Shields, October 2022.

The Labyrinth, ever patient and present, is waiting to be explored.

Welcome to Labyrinth Learning.

Literature Review

This literature review explores the history and nature of the Labyrinth, its myths and learning pathways, through three recurrent location-based themes—the Circumference, Centre and Pathway—winding across the past 4,000 years of human-labyrinth interaction. Cross-culturally, the Labyrinth can serve as a gathering ground described by Sellers & Moss (2016) in *Learning with the Labyrinth: Creating Reflective Space in Higher Education*, “The labyrinth is an international image: appearing in many faiths, cultures and communities, it does not belong to any single tradition and can be walked by people of all faiths and none” (p.2). The intent of the Wellness Path Labyrinth on Lakehead University campus reflects the inclusive nature of Labyrinths as it is an accessible outdoor contemplative space open for anyone to use. The aim of this literature synthesis is to support the Wellness Path Labyrinth by learning from and sharing the tradition of the Labyrinth.

The Circumference

The threshold at the circumference of the Labyrinth is a powerful place of entrance. A crossover point (or, as Celtic culture calls it, a thin spot) between the natural world here on earth and the worlds of human imagination. The Labyrinth, as McCullough (2005) proposes in *The Unending Mystery: A Journey Through Labyrinths and Mazes*, is suggestive of “one of our ancestors’ first intellectual and artistic accomplishments, a transformation of one of their earliest marks on the face of the earth: a path leading somewhere else” (p.23). Crossing this circumference threshold signals the decision to step over into the interior journey—entering to

explore within the container of the Labyrinth. Both where a Labyrinth is located in the physical environment and what is inside the Labyrinth's circumference are hypothesized to be based on natural world formations and the cosmos above. Nevertheless, as McCullough (2005) posits, the added twists and turns delineate what is potentially one of the first symbols of human creativity detailing the perils of life's journey.

The Centre

Throughout the ages, stories about the Labyrinth's centre suggest it as a place one goes to face one's fears—as in the Cretan Labyrinth with the Minotaur, where the hero Theseus slew the beast with a double-headed axe. Alternatively, its centre has been described as a place where one might free beauty, as in another popular Greek myth, the Odyssey, in which the whole city of Troy is conceived as a Labyrinth concealing Helen of Troy at its centre. These narratives of the beast or the beauty located at the centre, are sometimes simplified retellings of more nuanced admixtures of the story of the Labyrinth. For instance, Doob (2019), in *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, details how the Rose Labyrinth at Chartres Cathedrals retells the story of Christ as he (on a similar underground journey to Theseus's) harrows hell and is resurrected, receiving nurturance at the Rose centre of the Labyrinth—which is associated with Mother Mary. Whether it is beauty, the beast or some balance of these two encountered at the centre of the Labyrinth, “Each story you tell and each symbol you explore will reveal another layer of myth and history ... nothing needs to be rejected, for each layer, be it Christian, Celtic, or Greek, will yield its own treasures” (Sands, 2001, p.53). Add to this, Native American land based readings of the Labyrinth, Egyptian mass scale construction of Labyrinths, and Scandinavian positioning of

Labyrinths throughout the landscape's transition points and this will still only be scratching the surface of the still point at the Labyrinth's centre.

The Pathway

The physical, emotional and metaphorical layers involved while interacting with Labyrinths feature a form of learning—often unlearning and relearning—rarely found in modern learning institutions or practices. On a personal level, the Labyrinth can be a powerful “spiritual tool,” as Artress (2020) shows in *The Path of the Holy Fool: How the Labyrinth Ignites our Visionary Powers*. Here she shares how the Labyrinth can uncannily portray the twists and turns of the journey through life. Further, our learning pathway has many thresholds and turning points as we traverse the human experience. MacQueen (2021) remarks in *Celebrating the Labyrinth*, “Imagine walking up to a door, opening it, going through and coming out the other side. In the 20th century, anthropologists found it helpful to apply this threshold metaphor to the predictable life crises: birth, coming of age, marriage and death. ... and all of these transitions can be occasions to walk the labyrinth” (p.90). On the communal level, Labyrinths can be a site of cultural transformation and have tended to pop up on the collective scale in times of social transition. Artress (2020) and MacQueen (2021), responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, both point out how one does not have to look far afield to see signs of mass social upheaval—as well as an up-springing of Labyrinths to assist humans through the deeper reordering of these thresholds and transitions.

Additionally, the form and function of Labyrinths signify a seemingly paradoxical symbol of perceptual learning. Doob (2019) details this approach to learning as the “inherent

paradox of the labyrinth: its ability to signify both complex artistic order and chaotic confusion, depending on whether it is viewed from without as a static artifact, a magnificent product of human ingenuity, or experienced from within as bewildering process, a dynamic prison” (p.38). Whether walking the pathway is a bewildering process, a dynamic prison, magnificent product or artifact, the Labyrinth signifies a place calling us within, from circumference to centre and back out again. Walking the pathway of this Labyrinth journey involves circuitous inward travel, what Doob (2019) describes etymologically as “labor intus” (labour within). This inside work—embodied and emotional—can birth ideas out into the world; it is an invitation to contemplation and beyond. The Labyrinth’s interior work is also a call to action inspired by the gravities of the transitions, tipping points and thresholds of these times.

Before Walking the Path

Before travelling further into the Labyrinth, Sands (2001) reminds us, “your intention to use the labyrinth is the starting point of your journey” (p.40). To reiterate the intent of this written journey, the Labyrinth shall be explored thematically from the circumference to the centre—there and back again—through the pathway. Further, West (2000), in *Exploring the Labyrinth*, also asks us to remember, “we must also be willing to hear the truth as we walk into our intention. ... [she] calls the labyrinth a ‘hermetic [interpretative - messenger] tool’” (p.126). This written effort is intended to surface an interpretation of the Labyrinth’s 4000-year history and awareness of the centuries long message of the Labyrinth as realized by experience interacting with the Wellness Path at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

The Circumference

The Labyrinth mirrors many natural forms, such as the time-lapse spin of the starry skies, the concentric ripples after a raindrop hits the water's surface or the growth rings of a tree's core. Mimicking these natural formations, the switchbacks within the Labyrinth's circumference also represent uniquely human marks here on earth. Like notches carved into a vinyl record or laser incisions on a compact disk, the Labyrinth's circuits seem to carry human information—mental material upon matter. McCullough (2005) argues that Labyrinths are “complex, self-contained images ... not found in nature. That the labyrinth is a created and not a natural shape is important” (p.13). Conversely, Sands (2001) points out that the “twists and turns mirror inner body design; the coiling surface of the brain, the Labyrinth of the inner ear, the loops of the small intestine. In effect, if you look at the Labyrinth, you see it as a reflection of your inner landscape” (p.24). Debate aside, Labyrinth-human interaction implies an interplay between natural world formations and the worlds of human creativity. The circumference of the Labyrinth is the membrane boundary between materiality and beliefs. On this borderland, three aspects of the Circumference: Outer Circumference, Inner Circumference and Circumference within Circumference are to be explored.

1.1 - Outer Circumference

Beyond the information inscribed in the self-contained inner circumference of the Labyrinth, the outer physical location is significant and often located at important crossover points in the natural landscape. For instance, Scandinavian Labyrinths were often built by

fishermen before going out on the ocean by stacking rocks on the beach—the natural threshold between shore and sea. Before boarding the boat, their threshold ritual was to walk the Labyrinth. Were the switchbacks and turns of the Labyrinth an extra human touch to ensure their safety at sea and give misfortune the slip? McCullough (2005) believes this to be so, noting that “their twisting paths were used to ward off evil spirits, who—tradition has it—could only travel in straight lines” (p.56). Moreover, the physical alteration of the landscape and investment of human energy into imprinting a Labyrinth into the natural environment must also be considered. As mythologist and scholar Joseph Campbell shares in Sellers & Moss, (2016) “These places are a ‘microcosm of the macrocosm,’ places where people can come to acknowledge and focus on who they really are, and in what, or whom, they place their ultimate trust” (p.38). Another example of the massive amount of creative human intent invested in Labyrinth construction comes from ancient Egyptian culture, where Matthews (1970) in *Mazes and Labyrinths: Their History and Development* writes “Even the pyramids ... were surpassed by the Labyrinth” (p.7). Whether it is on the large scale of the Egyptian multicursal Labyrinth or the smaller scale of Scandinavian Labyrinths, why have humans through the ages expended so much time and resources within the circumference? There is evidence to suggest in many cultures that Labyrinths represent a threshold between heaven and earth. As an example, some scholars believe that the pyramids were designed with a cosmic alignment and as Matthews (1970) notes, the Labyrinth, likely created by these same architects as the pyramids, may share this connection with cosmic constellations. Furthermore, in Celtic history, stone circles and rock carvings, precursors to their turf or stone Labyrinths, are often hypothesized to be cosmic calendars and ceremonial grounds. While this cosmic explanation applies to various examples, Sands (2001) adds that looking at the land below where Labyrinths are built is something to consider. In

particular, these Celtic formations seem to be located along ley lines (earth energy grid lines). Matthews (1970) comments on this ordered scattering, “Very similar rock engravings have been found ... as far north as the Orkneys, and as far south as Devonshire, and also in the south of Ireland. In other parts of Ireland ... engravings have chiefly the shape of a spiral” (p.152). What were all these human ancestors up to carving spirals on rock? Many Labyrinths remain an unresolved mystery from the outside, yet can be further investigated by moving across the outer- and into the inner- circumference of the Labyrinth.

1.2 – Inner Circumference

West (2000) suspects the Labyrinth evolved out of the ever-tightening inner circumferences of the spiral often depicted in the Celtic rock art mentioned above:

The spiral is literally encoded into the universe, it is a map for the growth and transformational processes of life itself. The world around us is spirals in the scalar patterns of a pinecone, the glistening of chambers of a nautilus shell, the vortex of water spinning down a drain. Our bodies are spiral: trace the whorl of hair at the crown of your head, the point of contact with the divine in spiritual traditions the world over. We carry spirals from the winding code of our DNA to the cochlea of our inner ear to the whorls of our fingertips, those spirals whose imprints are uniquely our own. (p.34)

West (2000) observes that the Labyrinth is a shape featured repeatedly in nature and that it likely evolved out of the organic environment’s circular and spiral patterns. West (2000),

relaying Native American cosmology, notes that “The circle has always symbolized wholeness ... the cosmos. Everything is done in a circle, and that is because the power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be round” (p.39). Further, West (2000) conveys that Eastern Cultures and “Cultures throughout time have depicted sacred circles and centres as mandalas. A mandala, the Sanskrit word for ‘circle,’ is a graphic representation of both cosmos and psyche, a circular diagram enclosed in a divine centre, a sacred state of consciousness. Mandalas function as maps inviting the viewers to remember the journey into wholeness and unity” (p.40). This circular cosmological shape, reflected in human psychological terms, recalls an understanding of the Labyrinth through a cosmic lens. West (2000) has more to say about “Circles, centers, spirals: all embody an ancient discipline called sacred geometry, from which derives a great deal of the labyrinth’s proportion and power ... the Labyrinth speaks directly to the proportions that we are all made of” (p.42). One can see clearly that the Labyrinth’s seven or eleven-ringed circuits of circumferences within circumference mirror the cosmos from which the human psyche has evolved.

1.3 – Circumference within Circumference

Echoing Campbell’s discussion of ‘microcosm to the macrocosm’ and the boundary between human beliefs and the physical properties of the universe, Doob (2019) offers a cosmological message from medieval church Labyrinths. The theological interpretation is “that the labyrinth is a sign for God’s art, the magnificent if complex order of the cosmos (the planets are, after all, errants—wandering rather than fixed stars—and their apparent retrograde movements complicate the tidy pattern of concentric circles)” (p.142). The physical location of

Labyrinths built based on observation of the Milky Way's constellations is here added to by the notion of the inner dynamics of Labyrinths following from the movement of the planets in our solar system. Each planet is on its set circumference course, moving forward directly or backward by retrograde. And the earth, to the ancients, is a seemingly still centre—like a spider in the middle of its web—watching as the Labyrinth of the cosmos is mapped by the human psyche and globe across sacred sites here on earth. In this interpretation, the Labyrinth not only reflects information from the luminaries above, but it also presents a connection to the geology of the grounds below. Labyrinths, it is proposed, draw on ley line earth energy. West (2000) notes that “Alex Champion, a former biochemist and present creator of earthwork labyrinths, likens the Labyrinth to a huge tuning fork, vibrating with the energy of sacred geometry ... when we walk the Labyrinth, he [Champion] says, we are contained within, and subject to, its energy field. It's like the Labyrinth is ringing, and your body starts ringing sympathetically once you walk” (p.43). Perhaps the ancients aimed to bring the information from the outer circumference of the heavens to the energy of the globe's inner circumference—macro to microcosm. To modern science, the Labyrinth may also represent a call back to an older way of understanding. It is a navigational technology of old that takes its traveller 360 degrees through the carefully calibrated twists and turns of circumference within circumference. As an ancient tool and technology the revival of interest in cyclic and repeated Labyrinthine logic “might have been aided by modern scientific discoveries, such as electromagnetic waves or coiling strands of DNA which have put back the curves, twists, and turns in the scientific picture” (West, 2000, p.38). However, understanding the Labyrinth is far from a science. Anyone who crosses its path both sees and knows its creation and construction is an art. “In art ... the labyrinth, whatever its moral implications, is intrinsically a thing of pleasure, an image of perfect human and divine

creations” (Doob, 2019, p.144). The stories humans tell about the Labyrinth—and what is at play in interaction at the centre of the Labyrinth—is the territory of the human psyche, an inner cosmos.

The Centre

The centre stands as the still point on the Labyrinth journey, yet what might one expect to find at this centre? Doob (2019), drawing from a literary and theological investigation of Labyrinths through the ages, makes mention of “metaphors that see the labyrinth as a dangerous prison or unfathomable protections for something precious” (p.72). Accordingly, the centre can be viewed both as a place to try to get into and one to escape from. There are countless stories about the Labyrinth from across the globe, which often boil down to surprisingly few metaphors. To illustrate this point Seller & Moss (2016) again make reference to Joseph Campbell who “in his study of myths from around the world ... discovered that the Hero myth is present everywhere, following the same ancient story line, a ‘Monomyth’ retold in infinite variations. Campbell’s thinking is consonant with Jung’s (1964) archetypes, universal symbols that reflect the human experience” (p.171). Doob (2019) posits that the Labyrinth is one such archetype—a symbol of the human journey through life. The most popular narratives about the Labyrinth, which have dominated through the Middle Ages into our modern world, are Greek-Roman or Christian. Arguably, these classical and western interpretations contain the colonial cultural forces of the current trajectory of human history, yet we would do well to understand these narratives, as they have morphed into archetypes, which Campbell and Jung both claim have a universal dimension. The Labyrinth as an archetype speaks directly to our understanding of the

movement between the inner and outward journey through life. Below, stories with the archetypes of The Beauty, The Beast and The Balance encountered at centre illustrate the Labyrinth journey.

2.1 – The Beauty

Starting with Helen of Troy from Homer's *Iliad*, it is important to recap that the Labyrinth form is "closely associated with that most human of creations, the city" (McCullough, 2005, p.5). In fact, one of the first Greek myths associated with the Labyrinth is that of the city of Troy (as a consequence many labyrinths across Europe have since been called Troy Towns). Sands (2001) writes, "The labyrinth is equated with Troy, the walled city guarding the beautiful woman, Helen, at its centre" (p.29). As the legend goes, "the city of Troy was defended by seven walls represented by the seven exterior lines and the entrance made as intricate as possible in order to frustrate attacking forces" (McCullough, 2005, p.94); even ten years of siege with legions of soldiers could not penetrate the labyrinthine fortress of this original Troy Town. So, the story goes, another tactic was employed to get to the centre of the Labyrinth: "The inviolable fortress was eventually penetrated by trickery: the Greeks hid inside a wooden horse, which was dragged by the unsuspecting Trojans inside the city walls. Later they emerged and razed the city to the ground" (Sands, 2001, p.29). The idea of needing to take the twisting and turning path to get to the heart of things, to what is precious and beautiful, is the archetypal image of the journey to the Labyrinth's centre. Additionally, the allegory of the Trojan Horse, the idea of an inside job moving out from the centre rather than trying to attack from the outside, was the key to unlocking the stalemate of the 10-year siege in one fell swoop. Moreover, Sands (2001) makes

the point that not only have Labyrinths across Europe since been termed Tory Towns in honour of this legend, but also the notion of the centre of the Labyrinth protecting something precious has since found its way across many familiar Western fairytales. The Labyrinth archetype is “associated with winning maidens, linking Troy with Helen, the personification of beauty and echoing fairy tales of valiant knights rescuing maidens from tower prisons” (p.31). Matthews (1970) shows how both this beauty to rescue at the centre and the need to move through a circular process from circumference to centre with seven rings of protection arches across Western mythic narratives. Speaking about the Scandinavian Maiden’s Ring Labyrinth, Matthews (1970) shares the story of how “a troll had kidnapped a young girl and kept her hidden in his mountain (at the centre of the labyrinth) and to free her the men of the village had to circle it seven times (walk the seven circuits), much like Joshua’s army circled Jericho seven times, until the troll fell asleep and the girl could be seized and saved” (p.108). A circular, cyclic and non-linear approach to reaching the centre, saving the day, and solving the problem is echoed throughout all these retellings. The Labyrinth may well present the human psyche with a cyclic and centered approach to the challenges of today’s day and age, as it did for the heroes of old.

2.2 – The Beast

Before descending into an encounter with the beast at the centre of the Labyrinth, it is worth mentioning that many cultures across time have had other dimensional and dynamic retellings of what the Labyrinth symbolizes, often with a richer living landscape than in city contexts. For instance, the Tohono O’odham people of what is now Arizona, in their “man in a maze” Labyrinth, which they traditionally wove into baskets, suggest the Labyrinth as not just a

flat two-dimensional form but one works on the vertical axis as well: “The design on the baskets, then, is not a flat surface of the traditional European labyrinths but a topographical rendering of a mountain” (McCullough, 2005, p.149). Hence, reaching the Labyrinth’s centre requires non-linear, cyclical thinking and also spatial bodily awareness. Or, as the next Western myth we turn to (perhaps the most popularly associated with the Labyrinth), the path goes down to the underworld. The Cretan story where Theseus faces the Minotaur in the middle of the Labyrinth is a story that is reminiscent of Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth and another archetype of the human psyche, in which the hero climbs the mountain to the cave with the treasures and needs to face and slay the dragon—much like the Minotaur. In Theseus’s case, the Minotaur is slain with a double-headed axe—to which Matthews (1970) has traced the etymology (linguistic origin and evolution of the meaning of words) of Labyrinth. The idea of being able to cut through the circuits and complexities of Labyrinths or Mazes, for that matter, has frequently, as McCullough (2005) shows, been associated with trying to untie complex knots. This knot metaphor is also echoed in another side myth, in which a male hero cuts directly through the labyrinth-knot-maze, that of “the Gordian knot, which promised that whoever untied it would rule the world. Alexander the Great solved that riddle simply by cutting it with his sword” (p.26). However, Doob (2019) observes, “the myth of Theseus, Ariadne, and the Minotaur became the central story connected with the labyrinth in Europe, and illustrates a new departure in Labyrinth folklore: before, the woman—represented by the beautiful Helen—was waiting to be saved at the heart of an impregnable fortress; now, the woman—in the form of the compassionate Ariadne—holds the cord of life so the man can find his way after his heroic ordeal” (p.32). Doob’s (2019) astute commentary shows how a layer of the narrative other than just penetrating to the core of the seven layers of the Labyrinth was added. Now, not only must the beast be faced in the centre,

but Theseus makes the return journey out of the Labyrinth with the assistance of Ariadne's thread.

Perhaps this Labyrinth story is a precursor to the breadcrumb trail found in Hansel and Gretel's journey through the dark forest. Myths of the Labyrinth are not just about typical male heroic accomplishments, such as defeating the beast at the centre, but also about simply making it home again. The hero must also return, often receiving guidance from the female. Heroes motivated by saving the maiden—finding the beauty or facing the beast at the centre—are lost without being guided and nurtured in the form of a mother figure. For example, the Hopi conception of the Labyrinth pathways depicts an umbilical cord originating from Earth Mother. Sands (2001) explains, “the straight line at the entrance/exit to the labyrinth represents both the umbilical cord and the birth canal” (p.27). Following this birth from Earth, the Labyrinth also re-centres those coming of age to the father's influence. The centre point of the Labyrinth shifts from the mother's matrix to what Campbell's *Monomyth* suggests as the journey out from the mother's sphere of influence and into the father's. In her study of Labyrinth texts and traditions, Doob (2019) elaborates on the need for guidance: “The maze, then, is potentially inextricable, as so many classical and medieval texts insist; survival and escape may well depend not only on the maze-walkers intelligence, memory and experience but also on guidance—Ariadne's thread, instructive principles, signposts, or advice along the way” (p.47). Interestingly, McCullough (2005) points out that “In English, the words for a ball of yarn was *clew*, which over the years modified into *clue*, an aid in solving a mystery” (p.26). Suffice it to say, the journey from the circumference to the centre is not just a one-way trip; once you reach the centre, you cannot just stay there. It is a journey there and back again, which brings us to another story associated with Labyrinths, which is that of the pilgrimage.

2.3 – The Balance

Pilgrimage has been associated with church Labyrinths throughout the Middle Ages as the journey one takes to the holy land could be represented by walking a Labyrinth (Artress, 2020). Because the Labyrinth is a single pathway, Christian theology as Doob (2019) describes it, sought to simplify a confusing moral universe by bowing down to its supernatural builder; as “the maze-walker reaches the center or confronts the Minotaur; it commits one to a terrifyingly unforeseeable course of events during which one is subject to the power of the maze and the will of its builder (p.51). Doob (2019) writes of the Labyrinth as a reliable guide aligned to balancing life’s experience, reporting that otherwise one may be on a lost journey where “excessive data that cannot easily be aligned create a mental maze of the worst sort. In many respects, it is this mental maze of the fallen mind that generates the perceptual handicaps and limited, fragmentary vision that makes the world itself seem labyrinthine and so forcefully create the need for a reliable guide to help ... [its traveller] see where his true journey lies” (Doob, 2019, p.157). This need for guidance is repeatedly reiterated throughout the literature on the Labyrinth and pilgrimages. When traveling to the middle of the Labyrinth, as the literary tradition is often archetypically inclined to do, the twisting journey can feel like a confusing maze. However, taking a bird’s eye or theological view is what the Christian tradition highlights as the difference between:

God’s vision and man’s limited perspective ... With Christ, the true Theseus, as a guide, humankind can trace confusing ambages to discover that the mythically multicursal and

unstable Labyrinth—of life, of the world, of hell—is in fact, unicursal, stable, and extricable, and that its baffling complexity is a necessary and beautiful part of the intelligible concentric-circular design superbly articulated by God, the perfect Artifex, whose creative ingenuity is only faintly imitated by Daedalus [human designer of Theseus’s Cretan Labyrinth] and his descendants. (Doob, 2019, p.133)

The archetypal motif of man’s creations versus God or nature echoes much of what is written elsewhere about the Labyrinth bridging the gap between heaven and earth. Sands (2001) in *The Healing Labyrinth* picks up an interesting thread, a clue to the Labyrinth’s narrative in the Rose Labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France, where the centre depicts a six-petalled rose, and the circumference has four quadrants of 28 cups, likely representing a lunar month. This path of the Rose Labyrinth gives us “the image of the flower and the path, the masculine and feminine traditions are united: pilgrims tread the pathway with Christ, yet their journey is also held and sustained by the feminine, by Mary his mother, Mystic Rose of the petaled center and window above. In this crucible, where masculine and feminine are in balance and where love moves, transformation and healing can take place” (Sands, 2001, p.38). The Labyrinth can be seen as a tool to guide us back from dichotomous viewpoints to balance at the still centre of the Labyrinth. For instance, Sands (2001) explores the theme of female and male orientations re-balancing, and through the story of centring through the Labyrinth: “The Labyrinth balances opposites and brings relief to the deep spiritual drought of our times: its path is the curved expressing of the feminine, the fixed turning points, where movement almost stops, the masculine. Here we experience the two sources working in harmony, which can be deeply satisfying and healing” (p.38). West (2000) traverses similar territory from a theoretical rather than theological

standpoint: “During a labyrinth walk the left and right hemispheres of the brain are balanced, leading to the perfect state for accessing intuition and creativity. We let go of our typical linear and analytical ways of thinking and move into a more creative and intuitive awareness. Energy is freed up for seeking inner guidance for challenging issues” (p.11). In this way, the Labyrinth can be seen as a tool to guide us back from dichotomous viewpoints to balance at the still centre of the Labyrinth.

The Pathway

The single unicursal pathway of the Labyrinth moves back and forth between two points, circumference to centre or centre to circumference. These Labyrinth pathways will now be explored through the themes of: Experience, Commitment & Surrender as well as Learning, Unlearning and Relearning.

3.1 – Experience

In *Learning with the Labyrinth*, Seller & Moss (2016) note how “In his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, originally written in 1946, Victor Frankl told of his experience and survival in Nazi death camps. As a result, Frankl believed that the greatest quest on our life journey is to find purpose and meaning, with experience itself offering one path towards the discovery of meaning” (p.58). The Labyrinth, physically and metaphorically, provides pathways of experience and meaning across all domains of life. A line from a poem called “Choice” in Seller & Moss (2016), which stands out from their accumulation of academic articles about the Labyrinth,

reads: “Listen, says the Labyrinth, there’s no here or there, just the path, one way” (p.70). This notion of a singular, unicursal experiential path does not suggest that there is only one way to do things, but rather that there is only one next step, unfolding experience in the ever-present moment—whatever the experience may be. Here again, the Labyrinth is a “hermetic tool,” a circuitous route—a hermeneutic loop—wherein one discovers, interprets and shares meaning. Many cultures and communities have ritualized thresholds and Rites of Passage either by walking together or by oneself through the Labyrinth. Referring again to Joseph Campbell, Seller & Moss (2016) note that “the need for Rites of Passage may be universal. In the present day, it is still possible to draw on stories from mythology and create relevant and meaningful rituals to facilitate and honour Rites of Passages, through the language of imagery and through story-telling, which through the ages has served as a primary teaching tool” (p.171). Culturally, Rites of Passage provide a way for the community to support and acknowledge a crossing of a threshold, and for the individual to process this coming life transition.

For example, in a post-secondary Hero’s Journey Labyrinth workshop exercise, the authors articulated how:

Every student who walked the Labyrinth found it beneficial, no matter the religious affiliation or personal beliefs. They said the Labyrinth walk had a calming and clarifying effect on them—physical, emotionally and mentally. They saw that they were on a solitary journey, but, paradoxically, never alone. They realized that each of them was at a different point on their path, but they were all going in the same direction: inward, to their centre. Walking the Labyrinth allowed the shedding of things they no longer wanted.” (Sellers & Moss, 2016, p.144)

No matter who is walking, all can approach the Labyrinth knowing they will be held on the pathway between circumference and centre and back out again: “The Labyrinth is a container for life, life in all its glories and grief’s, its heartaches and joys. The Labyrinth welcomes all experiences into its circuits, teaching us to enter more deeply into the experience of life itself” (West, 2000, p.191). Moreover, Sellers & Moss (2016) speak to how the Labyrinth is a simple, yet rich resource to guide all walkers to a more reciprocal experience of both internal and external learning across our lifespan. “The Labyrinth enables us to spend prime time developing that important relationship. At the beginning of life, babies play and discover the wonder and joy of life; they know how to be happy. Each of us carries that secret knowledge waiting to be rediscovered. What seems to get in our way as adults is the way we interpret and manage our time and how we prioritize our activities, often in the driven way; and what so often drives us as adults is anxiety and stress” (p.182). West (2000) expands on this space the Labyrinth can hold and provide its walkers; she comments, “so much of the psychotherapeutic work I do with clients is to support them in reconnecting with the life flowing from their necks down: the life of the heart, the life of the gut, the life of the loins: our passions, fears, loves, all the ways that our souls speak through our bodies. As long as we live from the neck up, we are cut off from our kinesthetic wisdom. Walking the Labyrinth opens us to the passionate life and wisdom we carry, always, in our bodies” (p.14). This bottom-up, embodied sensory approach speaks to the messages of body language, as everyone, wherever in the world they come from, is “familiar with hunches, intuition, an immediate ‘gut’ reaction” (McCullough, 2005, p.176). Beyond simply promoting the relaxation of physical sensations, the Labyrinth, as a tuning fork-like tool, can work with different tones of emotions. West (2000) describes “Working with a particular

emotion or state: gratitude, grief, confusion, fear, forgiveness. You can walk with a particular feeling, bringing it into sacred space for healing; you can investigate the feeling as you walk, asking for guidance in understanding it better” (p.128). Through cross-hemisphere balancing, walking the pathway can help people return to present moment experiences from certain mood states. West (2000) states that she has depression and finds “the movement in the labyrinth balancing, like the tide. I enjoy the ebb and flow toward the center and from one side to the next and back again, constantly looping back; it grounds me in the present moment” (p.53). Offering different experiences in different bodies, whether emotional, physical or beyond, the Labyrinth can hold human beings in a way that cares for and reconnects one with their inner selves.

3.2 – Commitment & Surrender

Doob (2019) writes how “Labyrinths of impenetrability are also found on the idea of the maze as a place in which one cannot get where one wants to go or understand what must be understood; this labyrinthine nuance is reflected in one possible meaning of the common medieval etymology’ labor intus,’ ‘difficulty going in’” (p.80). This notion of the difficulty of going within, equated to the process of labour, is a robust understanding of the process of learning the Labyrinth can unlock within. West (2000) suggests that the key to this inner unlocking is first commitment to the path: “Commitment to a dream opens doors that otherwise might remain shut. Commitment to a dream or a goal just as in commitment to an intimate relationship, allows depths to unfold and synchronicities to occur. Often life begins to move dreamward only after a firm heart commitment has been made” (p.151). Commitment to a dream likely means going through transformations, learning and unlearning. The experience of walking

a life-labyrinth pathway requires trusting the path and having faith in each footfall as the twists and turns of the pathway unfold. Sellers & Moss (2016) detail an example of those who commit to a higher education journey: “First-generation college students are unfamiliar with what it means to be a college student. These are students for whom college attendance was not part of family expectations; they are breaking, rather than continuing, family traditions. College attendance therefore entails a significant and intimidating cultural transition” (p.170). What makes commitment and trust in the Labyrinth’s pathway work is not knowing the path but surrendering to it. West (2000) clarifies the meaning of this surrender. It “does not mean giving up. Rather, surrendering to our pain, and our stories, while walking the Labyrinth means no longer expending useless energy trying to control the outcome of a situation (p. 158). Instead, surrender is a “letting go of resistance to our own pain and to the reality of the situation that brings grief” (p. 158). By surrendering, as West points out, “we open our hearts and souls to the healing power of ... creative ways to meet our life challenge with open hearts and clear eyes” (p.158). Although life’s Labyrinth can be a difficult journey, an open and committed surrender to walking the Labyrinth’s path allows the opportunity to really learn about oneself. Moreover, learning, much like a switchback on the Labyrinth’s pathway, is a process that leads us where we thought we might not go—often requiring us to unlearn and relearn.

3.3 - Learning, Unlearning and Relearning

Sands (2001) charts her own inner healing journey as a dynamic process of learning, unlearning and relearning with the Labyrinth, describing “a pathway to healing your mind and body, for its coils offer you space to relax you mentally and physically, and to meditate on your

pathway through life” (p.85). Doob (2019) and the thinkers and theologians of the Middle Ages describe how, beyond working just from the bottom up with physical sensations, the Labyrinth also works from the top down in terms of perceptual learning wherein the “metaphorical labyrinth whose dangers are intellectual and whose elaborate circuits may lead to enlightenment” (p.71). The Labyrinth is a natural learning place where one becomes aware of the looping unlearning and relearning processes. Doob characterizes the process as “labyrinthine whether or not prior knowledge is involved: one moves in circles, forward and back, seeming to recede but in fact ever approaching by successive approximation the knowledge that is the goal. And this knowledge could not be reached so effectively by a direct route, a shortcut, for the process itself determines whether the product will be understood. The psychology of learning is a labyrinthine dialectical method” (Doob, 2019, p.89). This dialectical experience, between sensation and perception, denotes the physical and metaphorical pathway wherein the walker and learner is led repeatedly in Hermeneutic [interpretational - messenger] Labyrinth Learning.

This Labyrinth Learning, unlearning and relearning is a looping process whereby “The pupil [Labyrinth walker] is led circuitously and repeatedly over the same ground, just as in a labyrinth, so that he learns it well and comes to see the whole pattern, not just its fragments, and by means of questions put in such a way [he] is able to teach himself” (Doob, 2019, p.89). Labyrinth Learning works from the bottom up and the top down, from the inside and from the outside; it is for the mind and heart. West (2000) remarks that in Labyrinth Learning, “the shifting of paradigms from straight lines to circles had a huge impact on me [and perhaps anyone who walks the path]. I let go of all that struggle, creating the Labyrinth helped me get a hold on my pain and stress in a way that was really life giving” (p.159). Further along in her story, West (2000) shares a clear intention for labyrinth work: “I want something a lot deeper this time: I

want healing ... [She defines Healing as] an inner process through which a person becomes whole” (p.168-169). This healing and wholeness is something the Labyrinth’s learning Pathways may well hold as a place with the potential to unwind and unlearn, to remember and relearn, to journey 360 degrees within and without through Labyrinth Learning.

Conclusion

This journey through Labyrinths began at the Circumference, embarking from the macro and the micro worlds of Labyrinth construction and creation based on the cosmos above and earth below at the boundaries between: Outer Circumference, Inner Circumferences and Circumferences within Circumference. Next, it travels to the Centre of the Labyrinth—the eye of the storm—and what may await at the centre is examined through the lens of Monomythic, motifs of the Beauty, the Beast and the Balance. These narratives delve deep and detail how the human psyche makes sense of the inner space at the core of the Labyrinth, where life becomes still and balanced. Finally, the Labyrinth’s Pathway, twisting back and forth between Circumference and Centre illustrates the themes of Experience, Commitment & Surrender, and the cyclic and reiterative processes of ‘labor intus’ which creates moving reflective space of Learning, Unlearning and Relearning encounters. To these ends, the Wellness Path Labyrinth at Lakehead University has become a gathering ground for Labyrinth Learning which welcomes classes and community groups to its cyclical, spiraling container.

Further, the Labyrinth is a tool to assist students, staff, faculty and whoever may walk by in their learning, unlearning and relearning journeys, thereby continuing the 4000-year labyrinth tradition. On the whole, the intention is that this effort can continue supporting contemplative

experiences and community learning. This literature synthesis closes with sharing the invitation to explore the physical site of the Lakehead Wellness path and digital 360-degree Labyrinth Learning website. May it give back to campus and the community in the spirit of a hermeneutic (interpretational - messenger) circle of education

Methods

The first creative project I completed on the Lakehead Labyrinth Project was the creation and crafting of a promotional video for the Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth in 2017 after being invited out to advisor David Greenwood's Labyrinth Learning Community. This effort combined videos from 9 members of the Labyrinth Learning Community and Lakehead University administration into one community voice and can be witnessed either in the link or transcript below:

Lakehead Labyrinth Project

URL: <https://youtu.be/f2ruHcVCij0>



Figure 7 (and all still frames following). From Lakehead Labyrinth Project promotional video by Gavin Shields & David Greenwood, 2018.

Video Transcript

Title: Lakehead Labyrinth Project

0:01

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 1:

“Why would you want to walk to nowhere?”

0:02



Overarching Question 1: What is a Labyrinth?

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 2:

What always surprises me about the Labyrinth is that it surprises you.

0:07

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 3:

It's a new thing for me walking a Labyrinth.

0:09

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 1:

I love walking, you're going on a journey within a very limited space with a specific idea in mind.

0:20

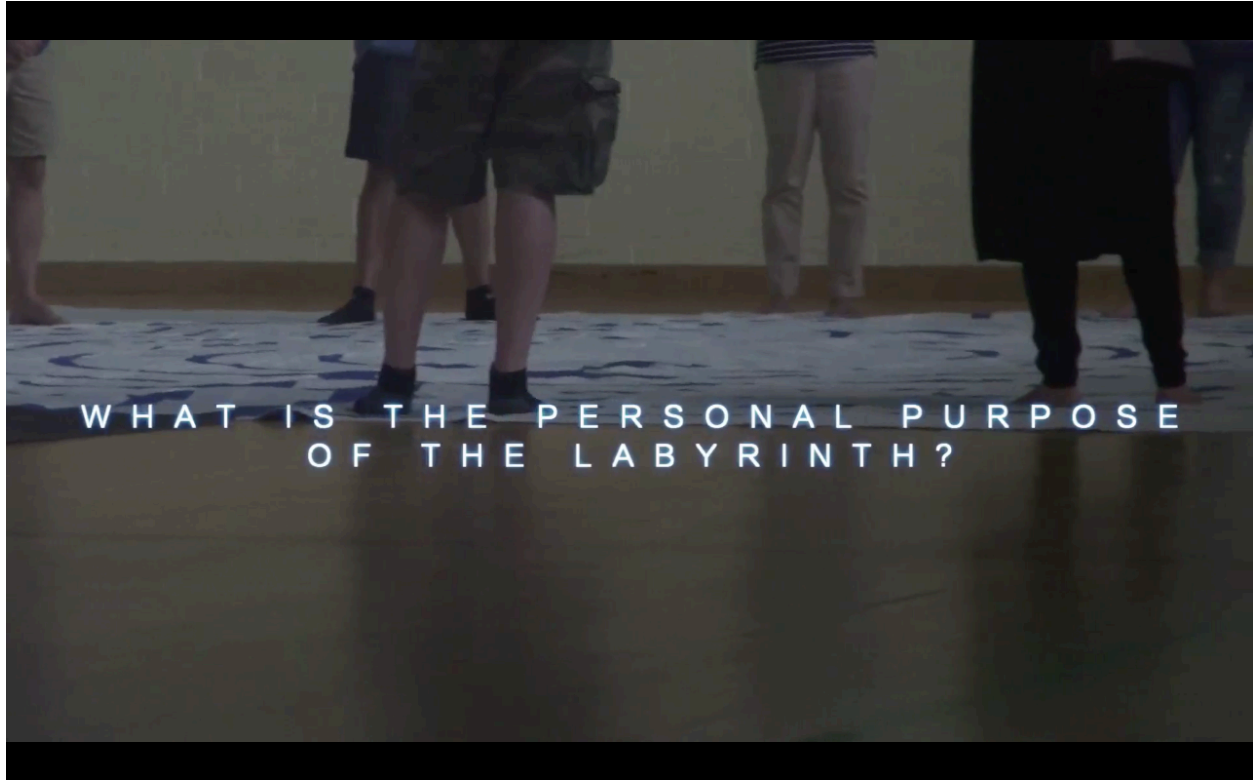


Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 2:

It creates pause, it forces us to stop from the fast-paced lots of things coming in at once the trying to juggle so much to start to be reflective to actually be intentional in our actions and our choices in what we are doing but also that what we're thinking.

0:38

Overarching Question 2: What is the personal purpose of the Labyrinth?



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 4:

The willingness to pause and settle and listen deeply cracks open the question the conundrum the pain whatever it is that might be there that wants resolution.

0:48



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 5:

Disorienting is a good word but not in the sense of like a confusion but more in a sense of knocking me off my hardened way, my trained way of thinking to explore.

1:06

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 3:

When I get stuck writing we always walk any of the writers who write about writing they'll all say the same thing when you're stuck you should walk, walk, walk.

1:14

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 6:

It's a wonderful embodied process that doesn't really require a lot of input from the outside world but it's a lot of internal awareness that's being developed.

1:31



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 2:

I think it opens up new ways of thinking of doing and of being in a place of learning that is really exciting.

1:38

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 3:

How to relate what they've learned to who they are and what their life is calling them to do.

1:44



Overarching Question 3: What is the professional place of the Labyrinth?

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 5:

Is this an opportunity to be brave and do what I've always wanted to do which is to bring this type of intent and connection with my co-workers into the workplace without a bit distracting also from accomplishing professional things.

2:02



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 7:

One of the things that I learned for this whole process of the Labyrinth and the following discussions is that all scholarship is an art as much as it is a science and it's about the question as much as it is about the answers and it's about actually forcing yourself into places where you're completely uncomfortable which is running us completely against the current of the modern academy.

2:22



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 5:

I really think the Labyrinth represents the idea that where tension goes energy flows.
And there was an intention set through the labyrinth that connected the group to be really authentic for the rest of the time.

2:39



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 7:

We almost never do this in universities that University should be the place where you go to have these complicated thoughts and debates and and the burying of the souls and the reflection about where the world goes.



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 1:

I don't know where this is going to lead but I feel that education—
2:55



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 3:

Students need more time to think—
2:57

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 1:
we almost never—
2:59



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 7:

Universities should be the place where you go to have more intensely low-key space right so the intensity is there this is work that will change the world for the better if you do it properly but at the same time there's a whole bunch of tremendously rooted self-awareness I'm one person.

3:16



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 6:

School can be a heavy process and to be in their body to breathe to move and to think—
3:24

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 8:

Learning together with the same group of folks over time has been really deep and
meaningful.

3:30



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 3:

What I imagined that is a collaborator on the earth coming is like a record and imprint of all the people who have walked it.

3:41



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 8:

I can't wait til the Labyrinth goes in the ground it's gonna be incredibly exciting there can be quite a lot of applications.

3:49

Overarching Question 4: What will breaking ground for an outdoor Labyrinth do for LU (Lakehead University)?

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 9:

David's vision of the labyrinth for Lakehead University is amazing.

3:56



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 6:

Well what I see when the labyrinth breaks ground at LU is it's immediately gonna provide a space—

4:02

Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 2:

—for experiential learning for in an institutional setting new ways of learning about the world and being in the world.

4:08



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 9:

Let's make sure that this is available for the internal Lakehead University community but it's also available for the community of Thunder Bay. Because I know that it will be dual purposed and who will eventually be walking Labyrinth.

Overarching Question 5: How will the Labyrinth promote communal Health and Wellbeing?



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 9:

My dream is that people will know that they need some time to reflect when they just want to be outside in the beauty of what we can offer on our campus and if we can get to that point because of the Labyrinth we've hit a home run.

4:44



Labyrinth Learning Community Voice 2:

So I think again it surprises me even to this day of I don't know what I don't know until I walk the Labyrinth

4:57



End of Video.

Also during this time period, with the leadership of graduate student Devon Lee, the Labyrinth Learning Community presented The Labyrinth Project – Exploring Contemplative Practices poster at Lakehead University Research & Innovation week in March of 2018. The base poster image and four slides below outlines the purpose of the Labyrinth as a Contemplative Practice and share some of the early story of the Lakehead Labyrinth Project and Labyrinth Learning Community efforts to build the Wellness Path Labyrinth.



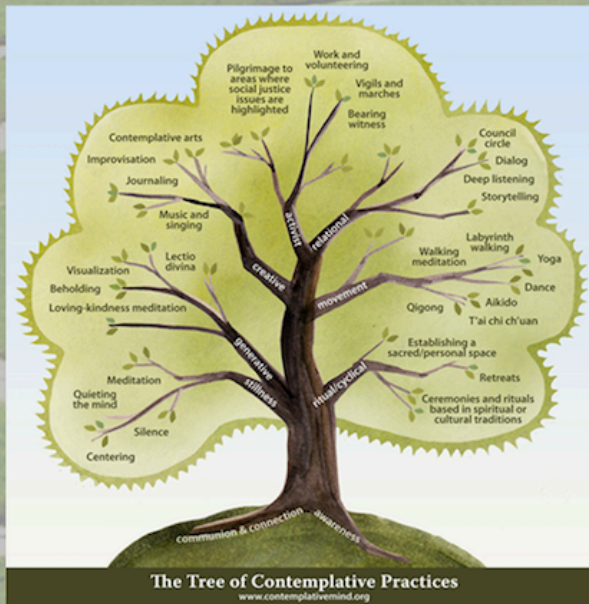
Figure 8 (and still frames following) . Exploring Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: The Labyrinth Project Research and Innovation week March 2018 by Devon Lee & the Labyrinth Learning community.

Vision

The view on which contemporary higher education is constructed is too limited. Its impoverished and largely reductive understanding of the world inevitably leads to partial solutions to the problems we face in such areas as education, health care, agriculture and economics. We need an education that embraces and develops an enlarged view, one that has room in it for the exploration of meaning, purpose and values and how to serve our common human future.

Likewise, the very methods of scholarship and research are limited. For all their power, the conventional methods of scientific research and critical scholarship need to be broadened. The reflective, contemplative and experiential methods developed within the contemplative traditions offer a complimentary set of research methods for exploring the mind and the world. When taken together with conventional methods, an enriched research methodology and pedagogy are available for opening up new pathways for deepening and enlarging perspectives which can lead to real and lasting solutions to the problems we confront.

-Arthur Zajonc, Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE)
<http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/acmhe>



Mindfulness:

- The awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally to things as they are" (Williams, Teasdale, Segal, & Kabat-Zinn, 2007)
- A new way of being in relationship with yourself.

Common Misconceptions about Mindfulness:

- Not meant to test one's ability to concentrate, as the nature of the mind is to wander.
- Not about achieving a different state of mind or cleaning the mind.

The Brain:

- Engaging in these practices activate areas in the brain typically known to be responsible for emotional regulation.
- Encourages a detachment of narrative-focused thought from introspective experience.

Mindfulness, Contemplative Practices, and the Labyrinth:

Today, we can witness a resurgence of interest in the labyrinth as a contemplative space in universities, schools, hospitals, parks, churches, senior centres, and elsewhere. This renewed interest in an ancient form can be viewed as part of the larger mindfulness movement sweeping all sectors of modern society as people seek to find peace, justice, fulfillment, and wellness in their lives.

Research Questions to Explore:

- How do contemplative practices deepen our capacities to bear witness to each other's lived experiences and work together to build more compassionate and just communities?
- How can we employ contemplative approaches to foster deep inquiry and to cultivate personal transformation, as well as social, emotional and inner life competencies necessary for students to face contemporary societal challenges?
- How can forms of leadership and activism be deepened and strengthened by integrating contemplative pedagogies, particularly in social justice work?
- With the evident exponential increase of technology in our lives, what role can contemplative practices play in helping our society develop more harmonious patterns of consumption that prioritize individual and collective wellbeing?

On October 6, 2017, a group of 15 faculty, staff, students, and community members painted, in cobalt blue, a beautiful, 24-foot-diameter canvas labyrinth. The project was led by Lisa Moriarty, a labyrinth designer and consultant from Minneapolis, MN, David Greenwood, Faculty of Education professor, and doctoral students Jocelyn Burkhart and Devon Lee, as part of their graduate assistantships.

Since mid-October, the new labyrinth has been used to convene a series of walking meditations and themed walks for Lakehead University and the wider community. Also in October, those involved in creating the labyrinth formed an interdisciplinary learning community in order to experience the labyrinth together, and to reflect upon what it can teach in diverse contexts of learning, personal growth, and transformation.

The interests at the heart of this learning community are unique for each of its participants, but are perhaps suggested by the question: As a form of contemplative practice, how can the labyrinth help build community and support our personal and professional development in a generative and holistic manner?

At Lakehead, working with the new canvas labyrinth is part of a plan to build a permanent labyrinth on Lakehead's Thunder Bay campus. Once installed the permanent labyrinth will:

The Labyrinth Project:



- support experiential, holistic, and contemplative learning across disciplines,
 - promote mindfulness and wellness,
- enhance the physical and aesthetic environment of the campus,
 - facilitate university, school, and community collaboration,
 - invites non-formal participation through public pedagogy,
- creates an aesthetically unique space for ceremonies and celebrations,
- honour and model diverse ways of learning, knowing, and being, and
 - foster creative engagement with people and place.

Labyrinth Learning Community: Themes from Participant Reflections

Community Aspects

- Spacious physicality of invites communal practice and communal reflection
- Learning together as part of a rich, diverse community
- Growing a community from practicing together over time
- Attending to the wellbeing of both the individual and the collective

New Insights and Diverse Ways of Knowing

- A pilgrimage to heightened experience and awareness
- Inner awareness heightened and welcomed
- Invites listening inwardly and outwardly, physically, emotionally, spiritually

Imagination

- Labyrinth releases the mind from fixed positions
- The mind is free to wander and stimulated by the presence of others' wandering
- Labyrinth consistently gives the gifts of surprise and wonder

A Place for Respite and Renewal

- Respite from the harried pace of the university and modern world
- A quiet pause in a sacred space
- Mental space requires physical and temporal space to flourish in
- Our duty is to create space and time for mental wellbeing

Holistic Learning

- A space for letting go and opening up
- A teaching a learning space
- A place for gathering, growing and reflecting on the whole

"The labyrinth teaches us that if we keep putting one foot in front of the other, we can quiet the mind and find our center. The journey may be difficult, and the lesson is to trust the path: We all need strength for the journey."
- Lauren Artess, from *Walking a Sacred Path*

What is a Labyrinth?

A labyrinth is an ancient, archetypal form found in cultures around the world that usually takes the shape of a circular or spiral path leading from the outside edge into the centre. A labyrinth is a path for walking meditation, contemplative reflection, and holistic wellness-- a symbolic form of pilgrimage, learning, and self-discovery.

A labyrinth has one path, there are no choices to be made, and the path inevitably leads to, and ends at the center, it is a symbol of wholeness offering a clear path. For thousands of years, the labyrinth has helped guide seekers on diverse life-paths.



Chartres Cathedral
France c.1205 CE



Baltic Sea Archipelago Swedish-speaking
fishing communities
Sweden, Middle Ages



The Canterbury Labyrinth
University of Kent



Saffron Waldon, Essex



Central Park, Maple Grove, MN



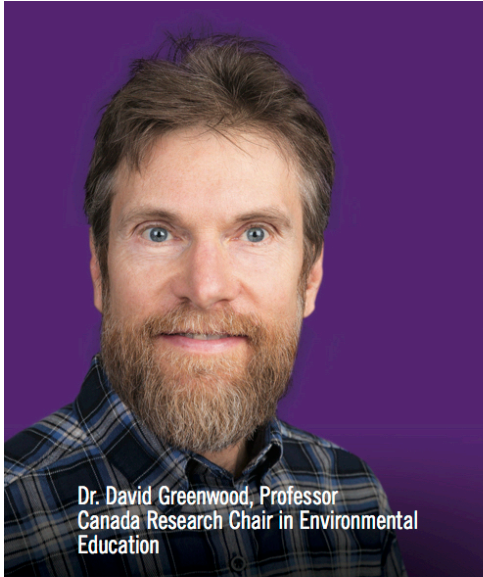
White Bear Unitarian Universalist,
Mahtomedj, MN



Metro State University
St. Paul, Minnesota



Gloria Dei Lutheran
St. Paul, MN



Dr. David Greenwood, Professor
Canada Research Chair in Environmental
Education



THE LABYRINTH PROJECT

**A SPACE FOR REFLECTION,
WELLNESS AND RENEWAL.**

“The Labyrinth, to be located just off the public bike path by the Faculty of Education’s Bora Laskin Building, will be a space for the on-campus and off-campus communities to come together for walking meditation, contemplative reflection and holistic wellness.”

~ DR. DAVID GREENWOOD



UNIVERSITIES WORLDWIDE ARE EMBRACING LABYRINTHS to give students a space for reflection outside the regular classroom where they can gain perspective on the relationship between what they learn and value, and how they actually live.

BENEFITS OF LABYRINTH WALKING CAN INCLUDE:

- + INCREASED SELF-AWARENESS
- + LOWER STRESS LEVELS
- + ENHANCED CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE
- + HELP WITH GRIEF
- + HELP WITH CONFLICT RESOLUTION
- + PHYSICAL EXERCISE
- + LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE
- + DECREASED INCIDENTS OF CHRONIC PAIN

What are LABYRINTHS?

Labyrinths are ancient patterns, thousands of years old, found all over the world. They do not belong to or promote any specific religious or cultural orientation, and thus can serve as a meeting ground for people of any tradition.

“Walking the labyrinth in my graduate program reminded me of parts of myself I had to bring forward if I was to succeed in becoming the person I wanted to be.”

~ LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY STUDENT

Figure 9. The Labyrinth Project Promotional poster by LU external relations.



Figure 10. Ariel image of the site of the Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth.

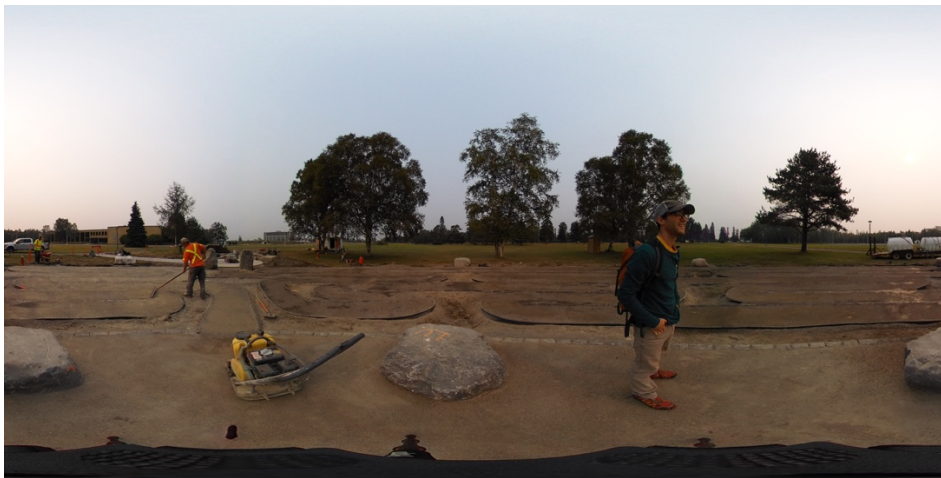


Figure 11. 360-degree image of Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth Construction Aug 4th, 2021

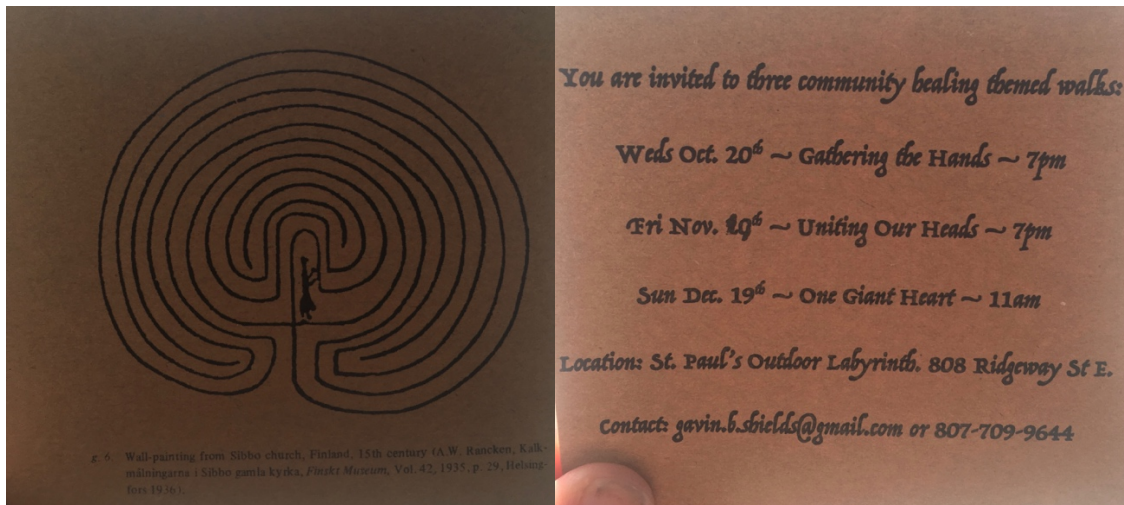


Figure 12. Invitation to community healing themed walks, fall of 2021.

In the fall of 2021 I convened three linked Community Healing Themed facilitated walks inviting seven woman and seven men (image of invite above) to explore Gathering the Hands, Uniting Our Heads into One Giant Heart meeting once each month on the full moon.



Figure 13. Fall Equinox, September 22, 2022 Grand Opening photos and sound instruments by Natasha Peng Roberson.

On the fall equinox of 2022 the grand opening of the Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth an opening ceremony with sound played from the centre of the Labyrinth took place as Labyrinth Learners walked into the sunset.



Figure 14. 3 Screenshots from the entrance to Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth Learning

Portal.



Figure 15. 3 Screenshots from the Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth Learning teaching circle.



Figure 16. 3 Screenshots from the centre of Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth.

The Four Rs/The Four Fold Path

(from The Sacred Path Companion by Lauren Artress)

1. Remembering (Via Positiva)

As you are gathering your thoughts, preparing to begin your walk, remember who and where you are in the present moment. You may think about your role as a parent, grandparent, child or partner. You may think about the place you are in and your place in it. You may note your feelings of joy, grief, loss, worry, expectation or contentment. Whoever you are and whatever you are called to be, this is the moment to remember.

2. Releasing (Via Negativa)

Letting go, quieting, opening, emptying, or shedding. This generally begins at the entrance and ends at the center.

3. Receiving (Via Creativa)

Having emptied, there is spaciousness to receive. Receiving guidance, interior silence, a creative idea, and a sense of peace are only a few experiences that can occur on a labyrinth walk. It is different for everyone.

(over)



Figure 17 (this page and next). Lauran Artress, Sacred Path Companion 4 Rs PDF.



(continued)

4.Resolve (Via Transformativa) It begins when you leave the center and return on the same path back out of the labyrinth. There are many aspects of this:

- You can **Resolve** to take a next step in your life
- Come to a **Resolution** about something bothering you
- Rejuvenation often occurs
- Or a feeling of a **Rebirth** begins
- Or on your way out, you **Reclaim** those responsibilities that you sit down on the way in, but you have new strength to carry them
- Often a feeling of strengthening and integration occurs; symbolically you take back out into the world what you have received.

The Four Rs is only a map; it is not the territory. You can release anywhere on the labyrinth; you can receive anywhere; you can come to a resolution anywhere on the labyrinth. The Four Rs is one way of understanding what can happen on the labyrinth while you are walking. Do not hold these too tightly; during your walk you will understand the flow.

Lakehead Wellness Path

Community Labyrinth Walking Methodology

In Four Movements as described

by David Greenwood & Devon Lee

Compiled by Gavin Shields

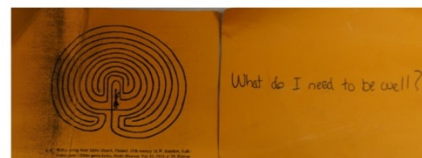


1st Movement: Gather Your Group at the Labyrinth

- "Welcome people to the space and share about Labyrinths and the Lakehead Labyrinth project." – Devon Lee
- The Labyrinth Wellness Path is "a place apart from the rest of campus ... a place of pause, a place of peace and I hope you can feel that as you enter into this circle and look out into the path that awaits you." – David Greenwood
- "The Labyrinth as you can see is a series of spirals leading from the entrance here to the centre.... The labyrinth is one path, so there are no wrong turns and there are no dead ends. So all you need to do is put one foot in front of the other and walk the path." – David Greenwood
- Here everyone is invited to move from the "every day of business to an interior contemplative space and we do that with our whole body." –David Greenwood

2nd Movement: Provide Prompt to Guide Participants

- "Always think about a framing question before a walk. ... we always introduce the question for the walk, but then we hand out individual cards for people" - Devon Lee
- Ensure there is "A gatekeeper at the entrance to the labyrinth ... to hand out individual cards and to stagger entrances to the labyrinth. To have the tactile experience of the card or reread the question as they walk." - Devon Lee
- "Afterwards, we're going to sit together in a circle and have a reflection on this experience. It's an invitation to ponder this question—we worked with the leaders of your group to come up with a question." –David Greenwood
- And "Your going to have an individual experience, all your own. Maybe you'll stop thinking of this question and something else might come out." –David Greenwood



3rd Movement: Walk the Labyrinth Path in Silence

- "We do ask that folks are quiet when they walk and also when they are waiting for others in the group to complete their walk." -Devon Lee
- People are going to walk at different speeds, that is accepted and encouraged. We often just remind people that if you'd like to pass someone that's okay ... if you cross someone on the path, make space for one another." –Devon Lee
- You can stay at the centre when you arrive there ... Depending on the size of the group and the timeframe for the walk we either have people wind their way back out, reverse their path and take the spiral back out or sometime we ask people to exit the labyrinth from from the centre" - Devon Lee Sometimes we also have journaling as part of the process" -Devon Lee

4th Movement: Conclude with a Reflection Circle

- Set up a "Sphere of confidentiality, what's said in the circle stays in the circle allowing people to being their full self and experience." -Devon Lee
- "It is for listening, not responding." - David Greenwood
- do it popcorn style ... no obligation to share or not as you see fit.
- "Share either their reflections from the inquiry card or they're welcome to share their experiences they had on the Labyrinth"-Devon Lee
- "Another good way to conclude is to read a poem for the exit message." - David Greenwood
- "It is different for every group that walks" -Devon Lee



Encourage continuing reflective action...

Figure 18. Community Labyrinth Protocol by David Greenwood, Devon Lee, Gavin Shields.



12min Audio version of this introduction to community Labyrinth walking methodology spoken by David Greenwood & Devon Lee, recorded by Gavin Shields on October 4th, 2022.

URL:<https://www.dropbox.com/s/2faea1vtkswr9mb/David%20Greenwood%20%26%20Devon%20Lee%20-%20Labyrinth%20Group%20Facilitation.MP3?dl=0>



Figure 19. Looking up from the centre of Labyrinth Learning Portal, links to internet resources.



Figure 20. Looking down at centre of the 360 portal, link to Labyrinth Keeper Resource Page.



Figure 21. Location on Thunder Bay Lakehead campus map, top right.



Figure 22. Photo of the Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth right outside the Bora Laskin Faculty of Education. Taken by Gavin Shields, Nov 7th, 2022.

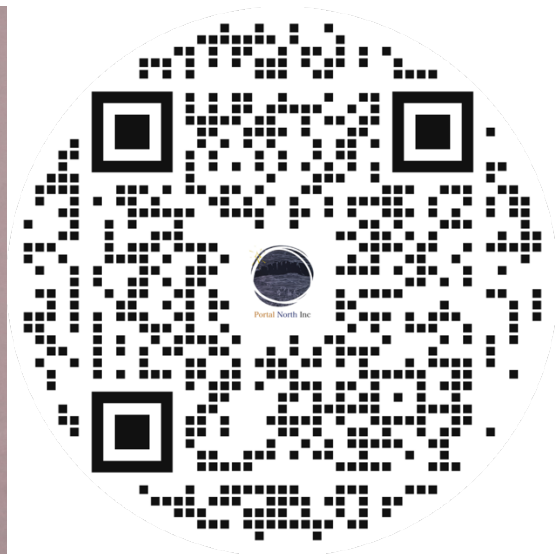
Discussion



Figure 23. CILU Radio Logo.

LU Radio at 102.7fm generously provided a timeslot for Labyrinth Learning on Wednesdays & Saturdays from 1-2pm for campus and community. The Labyrinth Learning Radio show pilot ran through the fall of 2022 and featured conversations with professors from 11 different departments: from Education to English, Indigenous Learning and Anthropology, Psychology to Philosophy, Social Work and Social Justice, as well as Natural Resource Management to History as they explored their labyrinth learning paths.

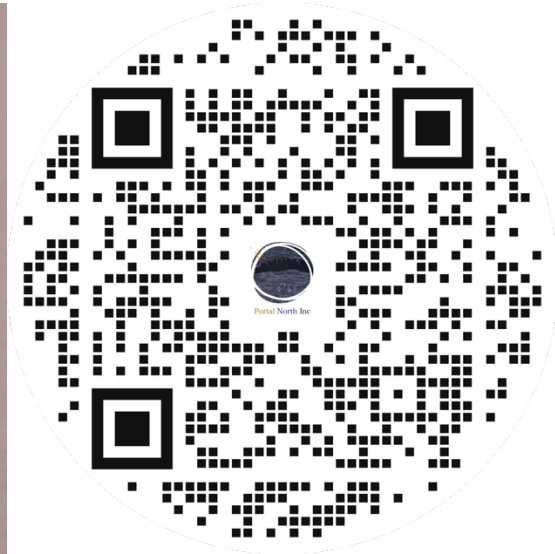
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 1 - Scot Kyle - LU Radio – Sustainable Consciousness



An introduction to the themes and topics of Labyrinth Learning as well as a preview of upcoming conversations on the show with a discussion about **Sustainable Consciousness** and the Labyrinth with Paradigm Shift Cafe CILU radio host Scot Kyle.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/p269rb5lnfrnm5/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%201%20-%20Scot%20Kyle%20-%20LU%20Radio.m4a?dl=0>

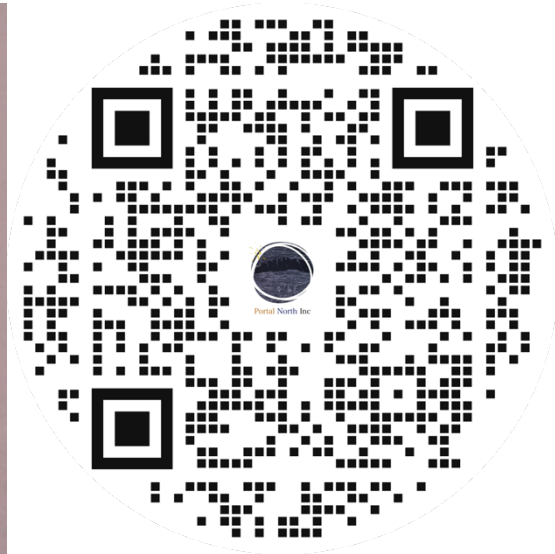
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 2 - David Greenwood – Education – Sustainability from the Inside Out



A Labyrinth Learning conversation with the builder of the Lakehead Wellness Path with Education Professor of David Greenwood about the vision of the Labyrinth and **Sustainability from the Inside Out.**

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/0pwcx7fdlh52cyr/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%202%20-%20David%20Greenwood%20-%20Education.m4a?dl=0>

Labyrinth Learning - Episode 3 - Scott Hamilton - Anthropology – Powerful Place & Where are the Children Buried?

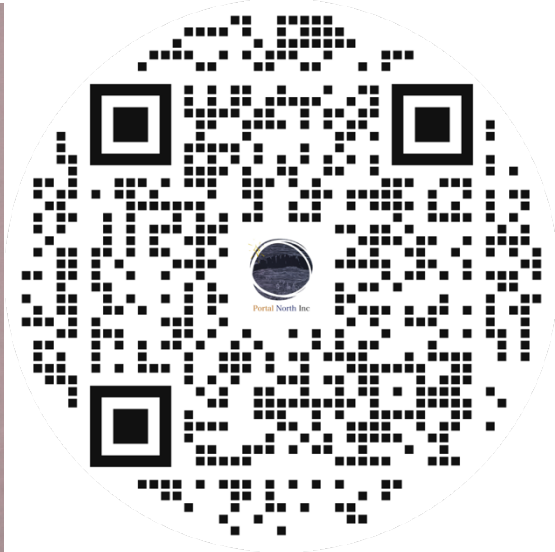


A Labyrinth Learning conversation with Archaeology Professor Scott Hamilton about recently decided CBC reporter Jody Porter's radio documentary **Powerful Place** with Ron Morrisseau at the start of his career and the recent **Where Are the Children Buried?** TRC report.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/sbxdk9gqv9o4tsh/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%203%20-%20Scott%20Hamilton%20-%20Anthropology.m4a?dl=0>

Labyrinth Learning - Episode 4 - Scott Pound – English – Life Writing & Community Service

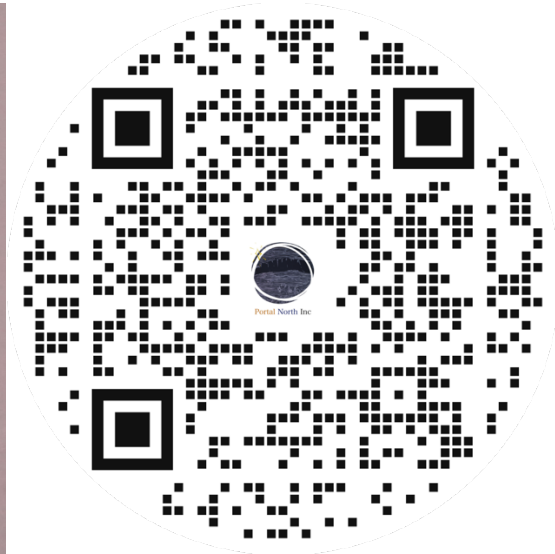
Learning



A Labyrinth Learning conversation with English professor Scott Pound centred around the community service learning course **Life Writing** and hospice care, listening to the elderly and the craft of writing.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/s7h6ieudvsuxw8o/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%204%20-%20Scott%20Pound%20-%20English.m4a?dl=0>

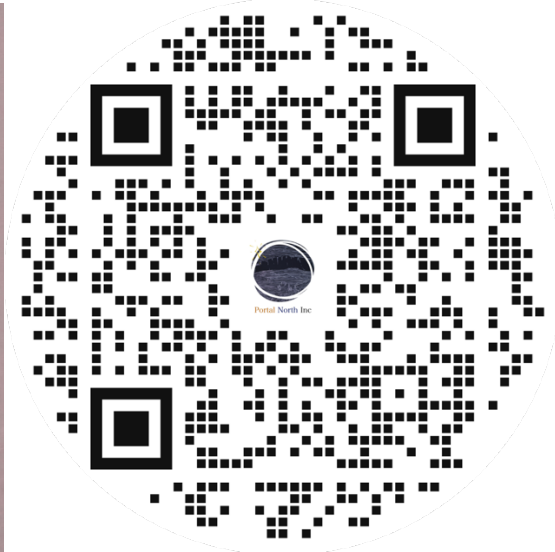
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 5 - Dennis McPherson - Indigenous Learning – Native Canadian World Views



A Labyrinth Learning conversation with professor Dennis McPherson about the creation of the Indigenous Learning department at Lakehead, his walk to the Nation's Capital and **Native Canadian World Views**.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/3wwmy3difmxmxf/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%205%20-%20Dennis%20McPherson%20-%20Indigenous%20Learning.m4a?dl=0>

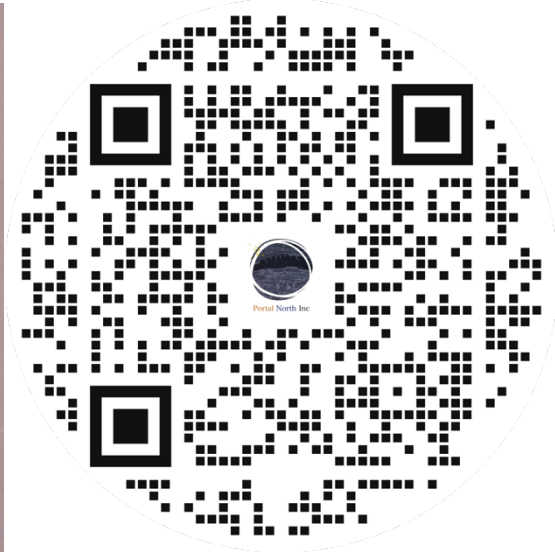
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 6 - Mirella Stroink - Psychology – Complex Adaptive Systems



A Labyrinth Learning conversation with Psychology Professor Mirella Stroink the new Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences about **Complex Adaptive Systems** and the north.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/hqm6bedf5vrgjc/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%206%20-%20Mirella%20Stroink%20-%20Psychology.m4a?dl=0>

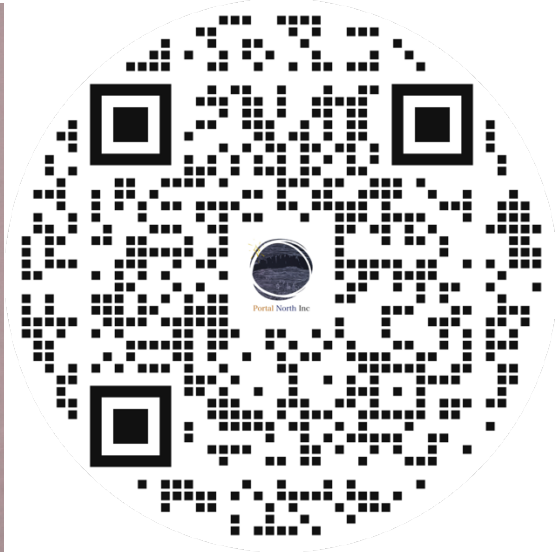
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 7 - Todd Dufresne - Philosophy – Deconstructing Freud & The Democracy of Suffering



A Labyrinth Learning conversation with Philosophy Professor Todd Dufresne about his early work on Freud and deconstruction then his transition to writing about Climate Change and the **Democracy of Suffering**.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/57kszwfpoodycz/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%207%20-%20Todd%20Dufresne%20-%20Philosophy.m4a?dl=0>

Labyrinth Learning - Episode 8 - Joe Wark - Social Work – Wellness, Distress, and Healing.

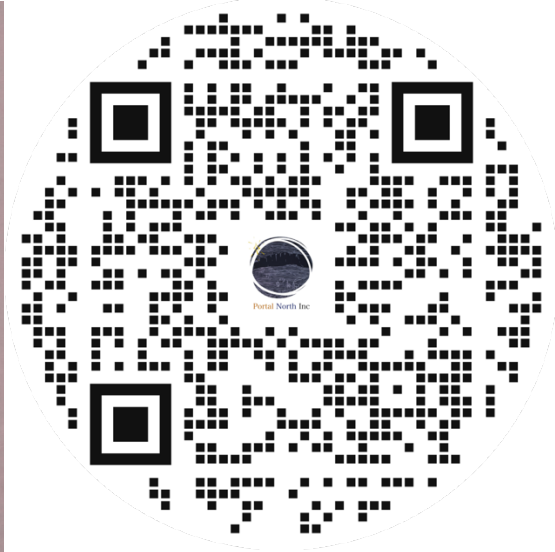


A Labyrinth Learning conversation with Social Work Phd Candidate Joe Wark about growing up along a river, coming back to university at 33 and **Wellness, Distress and Healing**.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/b5qc4i3zljzsb44/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%208%20-%20Joe%20Wark%20-%20Social%20Work.m4a?dl=0>

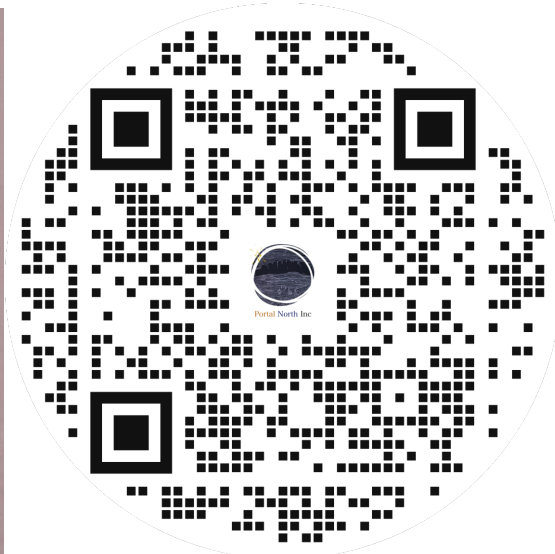
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 9 - Max Haiven - Social Justice – Palm Oil, Reimagining Value & Storytelling

A Labyrinth Learning conversation with Social Justice Professor Max Haiven about Palm Oil, colonization, what we **Value and the Imagination**. As well as a discussion about **trauma, storytelling and social transformation**.



<https://www.dropbox.com/s/nwzkw62bel01ku/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%209%20-%20Max%20Haiven%20-%20Social%20Justice.m4a?dl=0>

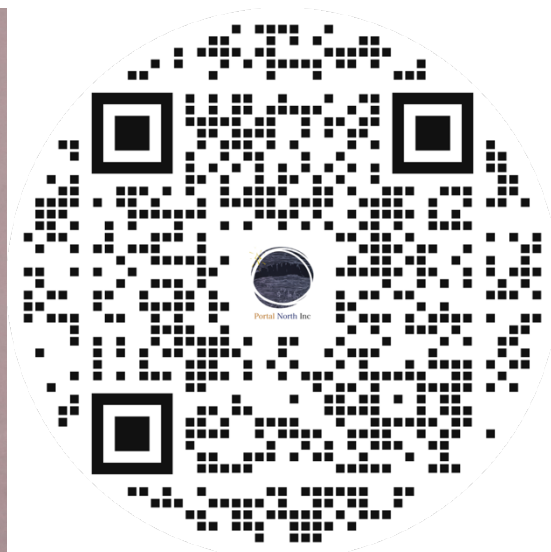
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 10 - Dan Dukhart - Natural Resource Management – Listening to the Land, Learning from Community



A Labyrinth Learning conversation with Natural Resources Management Phd Dan Dukhart about **listening to the land, learning from community, working in partnership at Keewaytinook Okimakanak Tribal Council Lands, Treaties and Resources department and lithium** extraction in the far north.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/wdn22b5cac5rx4i/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%2010%20-%20Dan%20Dukhart%20-%20Natural%20Resource%20Managment.m4a?dl=0>

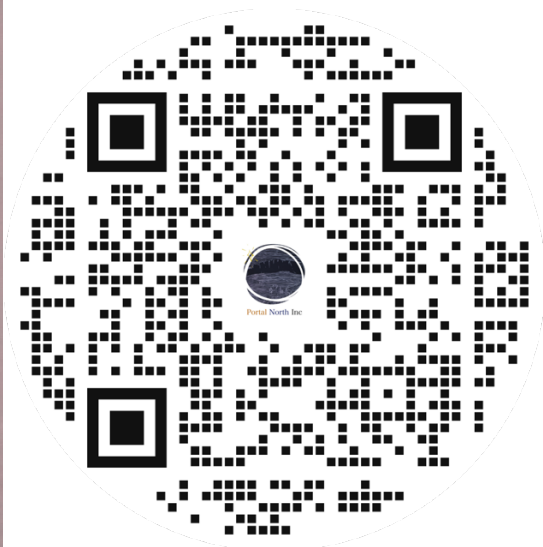
Labyrinth Learning - Episode 11 - Steve Jobbitt – History – The Universality of History, Part of a Greater Body



A Labyrinth Learning conversation with History Professor Steve Jobbitt about the universality of History, the waves of history, the layers of teaching and learning, Ukrainian dance, performance and being part of a greater body of love.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/x1u42a4y1ogy0gc/Labyrinth%20Learning%20-%20Episode%2011%20-%20Steve%20Jobbitt%20-%20History.m4a?dl=0>

Labyrinth Learning - Episode 12 – Lindsay Galway – Health Sciences – Watershed, Waterways & Intergenerational Justice and Sustainability.



The last of the pilot Labyrinth Learning conversations with Lindsay Galway Canadian Research Chair in Socio-Ecological on her work with the Lake Superior Living Labs Network. From working at a watershed, to the truth of the waterways that run outside and within us, this episode talks about suitability stories, intergenerational justice and climate emotions. (also featured on this episode is an introduction to group Labyrinth facilitation to conclude the three month 12 episode pilot).

Conclusion



Figure 24. 360 Labyrinth Learning Community Service Digital Ecology Core Sample Image.

The 360 Core Sample image above taken on Nov. 7th, 2022 carries with it the hope and community service prayer that the Lakehead Wellness Path Labyrinth will prove a powerful process and purposeful container to carry the footsteps, voices, personal reflection and collective actions of whoever crosses its path. May we walk in peace amidst the storms of live, external and internal.

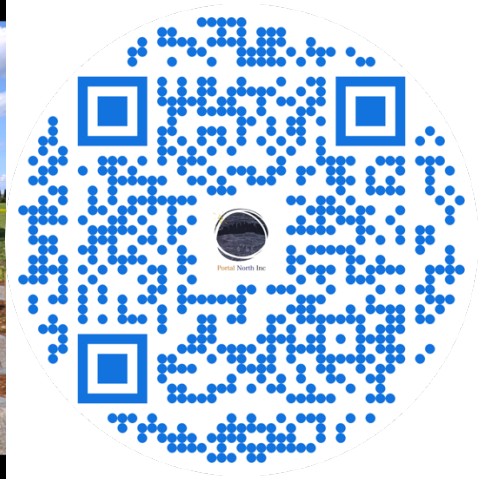


Figure 25. Scot Kyle holding a red pine cone in the centre of the Labyrinth after recording of the first Labyrinth Learning LU Radio episode July, 21st 2022.

“All right Gavin, like I was saying when I was waiting for you to arrive here at the Labyrinth on the campus of Lakehead University I was sitting under this older tree— we've got a number of new plants being added to the Labyrinth space but we do have some older spruce and there's a tamarack and a birch tree and we've got a red pine. I was sitting in the shade of the red pine waiting for you to arrive and of course this cone fell out of the tree with some needles attached to it separated off and and did what cones do. It wasn't one of those apple moments hitting me on the head but it was similar, and then you know you pick it up and you just you marvel at the beauty of this of this red pine cone. But if you look at it from right from the cone top and it's got those wonderful multi repeated patterns that you see on flower petals and cones but also it occurred to me that it was very much like an aerial view of the Labyrinth. So all these little sort of cusps of the cone are just perfectly interrelated and the heat is bringing them out and opening them up and releasing the seed or seeds. So at the center, just like at the center of the Labyrinth who knows what this Labyrinth is going to seed and what the space is going to create. And I just wanted to share that you know— the green life and the the old creating the new and so on— just these beautiful spaces of you know shapes of nature, the architecture of nature itself which is even for an artist artists love this because they can look at that and they can try to copy that but they never just quite get it. But the architecture of this pine cone itself is just its own marvelous moment isn't it.”

URL https://youtu.be/UO7SJiZ_ZTI

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