

The Brandon University  
Department of Religion  
Labyrinth of Peace Project

by Angela Conrad  
©copyright 2003, Brandon University

## Introduction

August 10th of 2002 marked the grand opening of the Labyrinth of Peace situated in the Assiniboine River Corridor near the Discovery Centre in Brandon, Manitoba. The completion of the project marked the culmination of nearly two years of work by five students of the Department of Religion of Brandon University, along with the Westbran Development Corporation. Alison Marshall, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion, directed the project in collaboration with John Everitt, Professor, in the Department of Geography.

Dr. Marshall conceived the idea for the Labyrinth of Peace project after a trip to New Harmony, Indiana, and a visit to a maze built as a memorial to the Harmonists who lived there during 1814-1824. Marshall decided on a labyrinth (a structure with winding pathways leading to the centre) rather than a maze (a structure with more confusing pathways, some of which lead to dead ends) because the labyrinth has been commonly used in religious pilgrimages throughout history. This Labyrinth has been designed to raise awareness of the many religions, cultures, and communities that coexist within Brandon and the surrounding area, and the symbols each religion or culture uses to represent itself. Initial funding for the project came from the Brandon University Community Outreach Service. Later funding came from the President's and

Vice-President's offices at Brandon University, as well as community groups, businesses, and individuals from Brandon and across Canada. Those who contributed over \$200 to the project include: Westbran Employment Development Centre, Riverbank Inc., The Spiritual Assembly of Baha'is of Brandon Inc., The Canadian Wheat Board, Zenith Paving, Wheat City Concrete Products Ltd., Hubert G. Mayes, Allen & Bollack Excavating Ltd., The Green Spot, Stiles Masonry, Memories Chapel, Windsor Plywood, Canyon Contracting, and Past Reflections Stained Glass.

The early stage of the project involved Department of Religion students Heather Dixon, Joseph Trivers, and Christie Henry who were responsible for the preliminary designs of the labyrinth and the religious symbols, marketing, and preparatory research of religious communities in the area. During the later stages of the project, Angela Conrad and Cathy Thomas helped with fundraising. Conrad was also involved in the final stage of the project, undertaking over a year of research on the background of religious groups in Brandon. To conduct this research, Conrad interviewed many groups and individuals in order to preserve the "voices" of the various informants from the community groups. Many names and identifying places were withheld to protect the interviewees' right to privacy, though consent, both written and oral, was requested and granted in all cases. The following overview was written by Conrad as a result of this research, with the editorial assistance of Joan Garbutt. All of the religious groups were given the opportunity to write their own entries, and individuals from the Baha'i, Jewish, and Islamic communities have opted to submit their own synopsis.

The Labyrinth of Peace is designed to represent many paths to the divine. We move from the outer paths, where we have our own individual cultures and religions, and come together within the City of Brandon. In this agricultural city, each culture contributes to the larger whole.

## Sikhism

The Labyrinth features the Sikh symbol, the Khanda, composed of the double-edged sword in the centre, surrounded by the circle (chakra), with the kirpan on both sides. It represents union with God, and the importance of divine knowledge, action, and devotion while living peacefully.

The Sikh community in Brandon has been very helpful in providing the genealogical history of Sikhs living within the city limits. At the outset of research, investigation at the S.J. McKee Archives at Brandon University revealed no written records of the Sikh community, despite its existence in Brandon. Contact with a local Sikh gentleman, however, led to an invitation to visit his home. He offered stacks of paper with data recorded in an elderly man's longhand that outlined the histories of twelve different Sikh families who immigrated to Brandon between the early 1900s and 2000. The fact that such data exists is a reminder of how much pride people take in their own cultural and religious history. The following cultural and religious information is derived from these personal records, as well as an unpublished interview with a Sikh family in the spring of 2002. Informants requested that their names and professions be withheld.

In the initial interview with the Sikh family, the husband explained that "Sikhism is a very open-minded religion, which attempts to respect all faiths." For a Sikh, the whole world is a united family under one God (Sidhu, 1999). The Sikh worldview that all people around the globe are part of one family is reflected in the Brandon community where Sikhs live in harmony with the many different religious and socio-economic groups in the area. In attempting to clarify the idea of the world as one family, the man referred to the personal records of the elderly Sikh gentleman's genealogy.

According to this account, the first Sikh man to come to Brandon arrived in the early 1900s. He was an eye surgeon, and was the only Sikh in the area until 1961. Between 1970 and 2000, twelve families moved to Brandon. All of the families brought professionals to Brandon, including doctors, lawyers, veterinarians and teachers. The Sikh community, though small, has made an enormous contribution to Brandon's social, professional, economic, and spiritual welfare.

Today, there are approximately seven Sikh families in Brandon, with thirty members in total. Though there is no Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) in Brandon, the members get together once a month in each other's homes for prayer and "community worship." Often this includes readings from the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, as well as joining together around a table of food. The get-togethers create a feeling of cohesion among members of the Sikh community, providing a connection between the faith here, and its roots overseas.

Sikhs believe that God was revealed to Guru Nanak as the indwelling spirit that continually creates and sustains the universe. Guru Nanak was the first Guru in a line of ten Gurus and founded the religion in fifteenth-century Punjab. His message is simple: there is one God, who is God of the Universe and all Mankind. After Guru Nanak, ten other Gurus followed, with the line ending with Guru Gobind Singh.

Regardless of where Sikhism is practised, the goal is the same: union with the soul of God. In the same interview, the female head of the household explained that through the performance of duties to family and society, one can gain salvation and become one with God. She referred to a quote by Sikh Justice Choor Singh, who states that salvation also requires "doing honest labour, sharing food with others, meditation, charity, cleanliness, selfless service, and egolessness." By focusing on the main attributes of God, one will inculcate the virtues of God within oneself. Elaborating on this point, she stated: "If an individual wants to be one with God, and works hard, and possesses the attributes spoken by Justice Choor Singh, then one must emulate those attributes and incorporate them into one's own life. For me, it is my duty to be a good

wife, to work hard, to meditate about my life, to be giving, clean, and put others before myself. My husband's job is to be a good husband, to work hard, to meditate about his life, to be giving, clean and put others before himself. When one does this, one brings the divine into one's own life, and the divine is in everything."

Sikhism is a way of incorporating God into every aspect of one's life. Many Sikhs (though not all) practise the Five K's: kesh (unshorn long hair), kangha (the comb), kara (iron bangle), kacha (shorts), and kirpan (sword). In Brandon, wearing the traditional Five K's is not always practical and these practices have been adapted accordingly. For instance, one would not want to be caught wearing kacha (shorts) in the cold winter months, nor would one carry a kirpan (sword) to the grocery store. Several Sikh members in Brandon practise kesh, wearing a turban to cover their long hair, which is perceived to symbolize personal sovereignty and responsibility to God and towards one's own community. The importance of responsibility to God and community is reflected in the three-pronged path of jnan (knowledge), bhakti (devotion), and karma (action) that Sikhs integrate into all daily tasks, inviting God into one's life at every moment of the day. As a result, there is no one auspicious day set aside. None of the Sikhs in Brandon choose to follow all of the practices, but they do opt for one or two to be devoted to for life. This is an excellent example of the manner in which religion adapts to different cultures. The Sikh family interviewed wished to emphasize that just because they choose only one or two items to be devoted to for life, for practical purposes, it does not mean that they are any less devoted to their religion. In the final minutes of the interview, the family said that they felt blessed to be part of the community of Brandon where they feel safe and welcome to practise their culture and religion within the larger community. The Sikh faith is one example of a path to the divine as emphasized by the Labyrinth of Peace design.

#### Baha'i Faith

The symbol of the Nine Pointed Star used in the Labyrinth of Peace reflects the Baha'i faith's high regard for world harmony, peace, and equality. Baha'is strive to "make humanity into one global family and the earth into one homeland" (Brandon Baha'i).

The Baha'i Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. Its founder, Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), is regarded by Baha'is as the most recent in the line of Messengers of God, stretching back beyond recorded time and including Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Mohamed. The central theme of Baha'u'llah's Message is that humanity is one single race and that the time has come for its unification in one global society. God, Baha'u'llah said, has set in motion forces that are breaking down barriers of race, class, creed, and nation, and that this will give birth to a universal civilization. A worldwide community of 5 million Baha'is (as of 2000) representing most of the nations, races and cultures on Earth is working to give Baha'u'llah's teachings practical effect.

Baha'u'llah's Teachings, which are both spiritual and social, are revealed in over one hundred volumes, and redefine the very concept of religion and relationships: among human beings, between human beings and the natural world, between individuals and society, and between members of society and its institutions. He affirms that the loving Creator has fashioned the universe with the "clay of love" and placed within every heart the essence of Divine light and beauty. "Noble have I created thee" is the Divine assurance, "rise then unto that for which thou wast created." He said that "mankind is created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization and it is the creative power of the Revelation of God which unlocks the spiritual, moral, and intellectual capacities latent in human nature." He refers to His Laws and Teachings as the "choice wine" that is the "breath of life unto all created things", the "lamps of God's loving providence and the keys to His mercy." His Teachings call for

the transformation of the inner life of every human being "that the citadels of men's hearts should be subdued through the hosts of a noble character and praiseworthy deeds." Humanity, the highest point of creation, contains within itself the capacity to reflect all the Divine attributes and the soul, He says, is "a sign of God, a heavenly gem, whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel." Since Divine perfections are without limit, so development of the rational soul is eternal. The acquisition of spiritual qualities such as humility, kindness, patience, compassion, honesty, and generosity prepare the soul for its journey to the light of its Creator.

The Baha'i Faith was introduced to Canada at the turn of 1900 and gradually spread throughout the country with over 1,355 localities where Baha'is reside. In 1949, the governing council of Canada was incorporated by a special Act of Parliament. In 1952, Florence Mayberry from California, while touring across Canada stopped at the Prince Edward Hotel in Brandon. There she gave a talk on the Baha'i Faith to a large gathering and it was recorded in the Brandon newspaper. In 1953, Mr. and Mrs. Max Armstrong came to Brandon and stayed for a year and in 1955, a young lady, Vickie Ojal, came and resided here for six months. In 1965, a Baha'i doctor and his family took up residence here and the following year another couple joined them. They started devotional meetings that gradually attracted local people who became Baha'is. In 1970, the number of adult believers rose to ten. When there are nine or more adult believers in a locality, a governing council known as the Local Spiritual Assembly is elected as there is no clergy or leader in the Faith. The first Local Spiritual Assembly was elected and incorporated in the same year and the Brandon Assembly is one of the 340 Assemblies in Canada. Since then the Baha'i population has been growing and many have moved for periods of time to other parts of the world and within Canada in their commitment to bring into effect Baha'u'llah's Teachings of a global program for moral, spiritual, and social progress. Among these are the oneness of mankind, equality of men and women, elimination of all forms of prejudice, social justice, and universal education.

In Brandon, the Baha'is have regular devotional meetings, study circles, children, youth, and adult classes. Every Baha'i month (19 days) they gather for a Feast that consists of a devotional part, an administrative and consultative part, and a social part. In addition, there are summer and winter schools, observance of special days and celebrations like the new-year, which is March 21, after a month of Fasting. Annual elections take place on April 21 across the Baha'i world at the local and national levels, in observance of Baha'u'llah's declaration as the Promised One of all ages. It is to these "bodies" and the international seat of its world's governing council that Baha'is look to for guidance. The Baha'is of Brandon can be contacted by telephone at (204) 726-5122 or by mail at P.O. Box 21073 WEPO, Brandon, Manitoba R7B 3W8. There is also a website for the Baha'is: [www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org).

#### Daoism

Daoism, a religion of China, is represented by the symbol of the hexagram tai from the Classic of Changes (I-Ching/Yijing). It means peace and indicates harmony between earth (the three broken lines) and heaven (the three unbroken lines).

Two interviews were conducted in February of 2002 to gather information about Daoism in the City of Brandon. The first informant was a university student, massage therapist, T'ai Chi teacher and practitioner. The second informant was a member of the International T'ai Chi society in the Brandon area. The following information has been gleaned from these two interviews.

There are no Daoist temples, Daoist priests, or Daoist ritual masters in the City of Brandon and most of the practice that may be classified as Daoist takes the form of Qigong or T'ai Chi. Exceptions include those who go to a

Naturopath for Chinese medicine or acupuncture and a varying number of Daoist international students who come to Brandon University each year from Taiwan or China.

In 1970, a T'ai Chi master came from China bringing T'ai Chi to Ontario, and shortly after that one of his students moved to Brandon. The present-day Brandon Daoist T'ai Chi group with international ties was born eleven years ago and has over one hundred members. It is estimated that there are over five hundred people within the City of Brandon who follow some form of Daoism, whether it be acupuncture, Qigong, T'ai Chi or traditions based on the following Daoist writings. Some practise Daoism for the health benefits, others do it for the martial arts practice, while still others observe for spiritual reasons.

Daoism owes its origins to works attributed to Chinese writers, Laozi and Zhuangzi (though the authorship of these works is a matter of debate). From these writings derived exercises that enabled one to manipulate what is called qi, or vital energy, and allows energy to be circulated throughout the body. Many styles of T'ai Chi and Qigong that move this qi are practised in Brandon such as Wu, Chen, Yang, xing yi, and Bagua Zhang.

One of these martial art styles, Bagua Zhang, or the eight trigram method, is a form of standing meditation where one walks in a circle in order to cultivate qi. The eight trigrams are important in Daoism because they represent yin (broken) and yang (unbroken) lines of Heaven and Earth in the Classic of Changes (Yijing). When two trigrams combine, they form a hexagram, an image of six broken and unbroken lines, representing the oscillating flow of qi. If one looks at the yin/yang symbol, he or she will see the flow of this qi in a wave-like pattern.

Some Brandonites practise Qigong everyday, while others do it three times a week. Generally, a session lasts an hour or so, though many people practise for five to six hours a day. The idea is to move as slowly as possible through 108 sets of exercises to bring stillness into movement and movement into stillness. The T'ai Chi group members note that Qigong is a very meditative, individual practice.

## Islam

The faith of Islam is represented by the Crescent and Star. The Crescent is the early phase of the moon and represents progress. The star signifies illumination with the light of knowledge. Islam by definition means submission and has the extended meaning of peace.

Amjad Malik, part of the Islamic community of Brandon, contributed this section of the report, describing the faith of Islam and the history of the community within Brandon. As of 2002, there were approximately seventy-five practising Muslims in Brandon.

Islam is not a new religion. It is the same message and guidance that Allah (God) revealed to all His prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, David, Moses, and Jesus (Peace Be Upon Them). But the message revealed to the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is comprehensive, complete and final. The Quran is the last revealed scripture of Allah and the basic source of Islamic teaching and law. Hadith is the teaching, saying, and action of the prophet Muhammad (PBUM). The Muslims believe in One God (Allah), all messengers of Allah without discrimination among them, all the scriptures and revelations of Allah, the angel, the Day of Judgment, life after death, the timeless knowledge of Allah and His power to plan and execute His plans, and that nothing can happen against His Will. The five pillars of Islam are:

Shahada (declaration of faith), Prayers (five times a day), Fasting (during Ramadan), Zakah (charity-giving of 2.5% of annual savings), and Hajj (pilgrimage to Holy Mecca).

By 1970, the Islamic community in Brandon consisted of five Muslim families. One family came from Pakistan, while the rest were from India. Mr. Haroon Siddiqui and his wife Shella were reported to be the first Muslim family to come to Brandon. Mr. Siddiqui first took a job at the Brandon Sun as a staff reporter and eventually was promoted to the position of Chief Editor. His wife Shella was a teacher at Vincent Massey High School. The family left Brandon for Toronto where Mr. Siddiqui is currently reported to be working with the Toronto Star as an editorial editor. They had two other relatives in Brandon who all came from the state of Hyderabad, India, and left the city in the mid 1970s. One of these relatives was an insurance agent at Imperial Life Insurance in Brandon. All of the families were very active in the community and would get together at least once every weekend. As new immigrants to Canada, they wished to meet and maintain periodic contacts with one another in order to give and receive emotional and moral support. They enjoyed sharing meals of hot and spicy foods cooked in Indian or Pakistani style.

A wedding ceremony took place at the home of Dr. Siddiqui on the North Hill of Brandon. Dr. Siddiqui was a psychiatrist at the Brandon Mental Health Centre. Mrs. Siddiqui was a generous hostess and mother of their three children. Local Muslims attended the wedding, which was of a typical style or Nikkah. The bridegroom came from Pakistan and was sponsored by his wife, who was already living in Canada. The couple lived in Brandon until they moved to Winnipeg in 1977. Dr. and Mrs. Siddiqui moved to Winnipeg in the late 1970s. During the period of 1977 to 2001, a few Muslim families came to Brandon, but their stay was of a short duration.

Presently, about fourteen Muslim families reside in Brandon. They come from various countries including Libya, Somalia, India, Pakistan, Turkey, Algeria, Afghanistan, Iran, Bosnia, Tunisia, Singapore, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom. Brandon Muslims have also enjoyed the company of other Muslims from around Westman. Dr. and Mrs. Asif Khan came from the United Kingdom and lived in Glenboro for about five years, until December 2001 when Dr. Khan found a new practice in Kitchener, Ontario. The late Dr. Shareef Said and his Scottish Muslim wife, Margaret, from the UK lived at Rapid City for about fourteen years. They moved to Morris in the mid 1980s. Dr. Said recently died in Winnipeg after a heart attack. His wife and two children survive him.

A few Canadian or mixed Canadian Muslim couples also reside in the city. The Brandon Muslims celebrate all the major religious festivals together as a large group at least twice a year. The newly-built mosque at 123 Rosser Avenue East in Brandon is a place for Muslims to interact with each other.

## Judaism

The Jewish belief in peace and harmony is reflected in the symbol which integrates chai (life and good luck) with the Star of David, a traditional symbol of the Jewish peoples. "Judaism may be characterized as a religion of deed, a Ôway' of action by which people attempt to respond to God's teachings and principles." (Bruce Sarbit). The following entry was written by Bruce Sarbit, a member of the Jewish community in the City of Brandon.

Most Jews who made Brandon their home had initially been pushed into exile by anti-semitism such as what spurred the horrific pogroms of Russia. Large numbers of Jews in the late 1800s and early 1900s sought refuge in Canada's offers of large tracts of prime farming land. It was not long before many decided that they were ill-equipped for the harsh conditions of prairie farming life, or they saw business opportunities in the larger centres. For such reasons, they found their way to communities such as Brandon.

By the late 1910s, the community of Jewish people in Brandon was close to 300 people and large enough to move the synagogue from the living room of a house to its own building. The synagogue served the community until the early

1970s by which time the number of Jewish residents had diminished to such a great extent that it was no longer possible to justify having one. The community has subsequently remained so small that in the last twenty years there have been no major religious services other than a couple of weddings, several funerals, and a Bar-Mitzvah. The community maintains a small cemetery and, occasionally, people gather for parties at Hannukah and Purim. For purposes that require a synagogue, most Brandon Jews commute to Winnipeg.

□

View of the Brandon Synagogue from the upstairs section reserved for women. At the bottom of the picture is the "Bimah," on which the Torah scrolls were unrolled for reading. In the middle is the ark in which the Torah scrolls were kept.

Brandon has been the starting place for Jewish people who have gone on to success in numerous fields. The Bronfman family of Seagram's fame, Dr. Saul Cohen, one of the scientists responsible for the "pill," and Sol Robinovitch, a major composer, are just a few of the interesting Jewish people to have emerged from Brandon.

Most Jews who have lived in smaller communities, such as Brandon, appreciate the importance of learning to live well among people of different faiths, many of whom are ill-informed, some of whom hold negative biases, about Jews and Judaism. While the potential for negative experiences has always been present, so too has it been possible in Brandon for Jews and non-Jews to understand each other and to live in peaceful coexistence.

#### Native

Sweet Grass in a Smudge Bowl is the symbol chosen to represent Native Religion. Smudging is a ritual of purification performed before any ceremony or sacred rite. According to Native religious beliefs, human beings should strive to live each day in balance and harmony with themselves and other parts of creation.

The Indigenous People's Centre at Brandon University, Native Elders of the community of Brandon, as well as Native organizations all contributed information through personal interviews and discussion groups. Other sources were artifacts and school registries located in the S.J. McKee Archives at Brandon University and the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Gathering information about Native Peoples and their beliefs has been a difficult undertaking, due to the complex history of the people in the region. Often, the records consulted had been compiled by white people, while the oral history presented by the elders conflicted with these accounts. For clarity, both accounts have been included. The particular information for this section is based upon a general history of the four main groups of Native Peoples in the Brandon area today: Metis, Cree, Ojibwa, and Sioux. The beliefs discussed are beliefs that are shared among all groups. The major doctrinal differences are mentioned, but detailed discussions of clan-specific rituals have not been included.

It is difficult to determine the number of people in Brandon who subscribe to Native Beliefs, as Native People in southwest Manitoba either still continue to be faithful to these beliefs, or they have adopted other faiths, such as Christianity, and still continue to hold Native Beliefs that are inherently part of their culture.

According to the Birtle Residential School Registry, which dates from the 1830s to the early 1900s, Natives were termed "Catholic," or "Protestant," or "Heathen" up until 1900. None of these terms reflected the way Native people defined themselves, or their beliefs and practices. Moreover, the label

"Heathen" was a way of categorizing all beliefs that did not fit into the other groups. At the turn of the last century, the handwriting in the registry changed, indicating that a different person began keeping the records. This new person used the terms "Catholic," "Protestant," and "Pagan," instead of the word "Heathen." As before, none of these terms had anything to do with the Native beliefs and practices. One possible reason for the use of these terms may have been because Native People wanted to be perceived as no different from the white people and because they wanted to be treated better by the white people who ran the schools. It is just as likely that the Natives who identified themselves as Protestant or Catholic did not speak English and that the individual who compiled the records assigned them to these categories. Another possibility is that the words, Catholic or Protestant, could have been the only English words the Native families knew. When asked whether they were Catholic or Protestant, they would have answered based upon the English words they had heard before. As for the term "Pagan," it denotes Earth-based religion, and encompasses a wide range of beliefs and practices that have historically been negatively portrayed as wild, uncivilized and aberrant. But the terms pagan and heathen were not exclusively used to refer to those who held Native beliefs, as the Government of Canada commonly used them to identify those individuals who had no religion.

The elders of the Brandon area community believe that the history of Native Beliefs goes as far back as there were Natives in the area. However, an exact time period as to when the Native people came to America is a matter of historical debate (Conrad and Finkel, 1998: 29). The Native people say that they have always been here, since the beginning of time, and this is reflected in many Native folk tales and myths (Conrad and Finkel, 1998: 29). Other historians believe that Native people came across on the land bridge from Siberia more than 10,000 years ago and made their way across Canada by following animal herds.

In the early eighteenth century, it is said that there were only three clans in the area: Blackfoot, Peigan, and Blood (Conrad and Finkel, 1998: 29). In the census of 1901, when Natives were asked to give their religion, some could have answered "Peigan," which they used to self-identify their Native group. However, the white government officials interpreted the term "Peigan" to be synonymous with "pagan." According to several elders in the community, by the late nineteenth century, the Native demography was Cree, Ojibwa, Sioux, and Metis. The previous groups are said to have merged these four umbrella terms for the many clans. The Cree people came from York Factory in Northern Manitoba and the Ojibwa came from Ontario near the Great Lakes region. The Sioux came to Manitoba when they were pushed out of the Canadian Shield and Northern USA in the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.

Though the four main Native groups have very different cultural practices, they share the belief that all things have a spirit: rocks, trees, lakes, etc. Nature is always honoured and respected and the cycles and rhythms of the Earth are followed carefully. Because of this reverence for nature, when humans take anything from the Earth or disturb it in any way, the Great Creator must be honoured. For example, when a new building is built, a sod-turning ceremony will take place to bless the Earth for allowing the building of the structure. One Cree Elder notes: "In the summer of 2002, a sod-turning ceremony took place before the construction of the new Health Studies building at Brandon University."

The Creator does not have a concrete form, but it resides in all things and must be worshipped and honoured through several sacred rites. These rites include the Sweat Lodge, the Vision Quest, and the Ghost Keeping (The Indians of Canada, 1904). Other ceremonies such as the Sun Dance are specific to one culture. One universal Native practice is the Smudge Bowl (the symbol used in the Labyrinth). Here, Sweet Grass is burned in the bowl and then the smoke is



used to cleanse and purify oneself. This is done at the beginning of every ceremony or sacred rite.

The Metis people also need to be mentioned here, as their beliefs differ slightly from the Cree, Ojibwa, and Sioux. According to a Metis Elder in the community, the Metis adopted the Catholic Faith at Brandon House, the name of this area before it was named Brandon. However, many of the Native Beliefs were kept and incorporated into their Christian Faith. The same Elder states: "For example, a Metis person will celebrate Easter and yet cleanse himself or herself with the Sweet Grass on that same occasion. Most often, this is not done in a traditional church, but in a place sacred to the Native People."

A group of Cree Elders who are part of the Elders program at Brandon University also wished to express their specific beliefs. The following paragraph was written by these Elders during a discussion group:

"The name of the Cree faith and language is called Mino Matsowin. The words mean to live a good life and striving, in a good way each day to fulfill the obligations and responsibilities inherent in being part of creation. Human beings should respect the sacredness and interdependence of all parts of creation. Being the last in order of creation, humans are dependent on all the other orders—sun, earth, water, air, plants, and animals—for existence. Humans should respect and be thankful for the gift of life and for the sacrifice of other creations to make life possible. Human beings should strive to live each day in balance and harmony with themselves and other parts of creation."

#### Hinduism

The symbol aum (om) which is used in the Labyrinth of Peace is the closest verbal expression of Brahman, the universal essence of the soul. This symbol is often chanted during puja (worship), and is visually represented on many objects.

The following information regarding Hinduism came from several sources. A number of Hindu women shared details about their puja prayer and a traditional Hindu wedding in order to provide an experiential context to the research. One young woman said during a telephone conversation, "Hinduism is a religion one must experience to know it because it is both our religion and our culture. These two cannot be separated." In the paragraphs that follow, the experiences with the Hindu rituals as well as interviews and information from several books belonging to Hindu individuals are related.

Hinduism came to Brandon in the early 1900s, around the same time as Buddhism, when immigrants came to work on the Canadian railroad. Today, there are approximately seventy-eight Hindu families who live in the Brandon area.

Hinduism is a very complex, inclusive religion that dates back to the Indus Valley in 1500 BCE. Informants point out that this makes it the oldest religion in the world. In the ancient beliefs, there is Brahman, the essence of the universe; however, there are thousands of gods and goddesses who are manifestations or avatars of Brahman. Each family or individual may choose a god or goddess to worship. In addition, many people worship a village deity and a personal deity. Thus, it is not uncommon to see various statues of deities in a temple or in a home. In Brandon, the most common gods and goddesses to be found in people's homes include Krishna, Rama, Sarasvati, and Laksmi.

The Hindu scriptures are not compiled in one book. Instead, there are two types of scriptures shruti (that which is remembered) and smriti (that which is heard). These two types of scriptures are divided into thousands of books, containing different things such as hymns, spells, and stories about the deities. Owing to the fact that two popular avatars in Brandon are Rama and

Krishna, many Hindu Brandonites choose to read the Ramayana and the Bhagavad-Gita, each being stories of their respective avatars.

Yoga and meditation are prominent aspects of Hinduism, as practices are believed to enable individuals to become one with the universal soul (Atman). When a person is meditating, you will often hear him or her chant "AUM/OM," which is said to be the closest sound one can make to verbalize the expression of Brahman. A Hindu's goal is to do his or her duty in society in order to get a better rebirth or to be able to be liberated from this world and enter moksa, a state of bliss and nothingness. Through doing one's duty to one's caste, to one's family, and to one's community, a Hindu person is said to develop karma. One's rebirth and chance for liberation from the realm of samsara depends on this amount of good or bad karma one has accumulated at the end of one's life.

Puja is another important aspect of Hinduism, referring to the manner in which relationships with deities are established. Food offerings, songs, and prayers are all considered puja and are practised by most people at home. Puja takes place once a month in Brandon when the Hindu Community gathers in different homes to worship avatars such as Krishna and Rama.

### Buddhism

The Labyrinth of Peace features Buddhism's Dharma Wheel and its eight points symbolize the various types of living (Eightfold Path) that lead to a peaceful existence in the world. The Buddha, reputed to have lived in India during the 5th century BCE, is an example of individual peace and the end to suffering through enlightenment.

The information presented in this section is a collection of materials that pertain to the beliefs and practices of the Buddhist community and the history of Buddhism in Brandon and the immediate surrounding area.

The Rinpoches of the Japanese Manitoba Buddhist Temple have compiled several books and records, indicating Buddhist movements across Canada. Brandon does not have a temple; however, exchange students with ties to Buddhism overseas hold their own rituals in fields in the surrounding area, or worship at home here in Brandon. One man took the liberty to e-mail information about Japanese Buddhism, while another young Korean woman shared her experiences with Buddhism both in Brandon and in Korea. Others sent books, pamphlets, and web addresses that were of great assistance in completing the research. The origin of other forms of Buddhism besides Japanese were found in the census conducted in 1901, which was the only census to record the name of people's faith.

The origin of many groups that form the Manitoba Buddhist community can be traced back to the evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the internment camps following the Second World War. During this time, over one thousand Japanese Canadians arrived in Manitoba with the promise from the Canadian Government to keep their families together (Adachi, 1976). In 1946, a Manitoba Buddhist Temple based upon Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism was built in Winnipeg. Other Buddhists from China, Japan, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Singapore, the Philippines, and Korea tell of deep roots in the area, having established a presence in Southwest Manitoba between 1896 and 1911. One of the first of these Buddhist groups began worshipping together as early as 1905. When the 1901 census was consulted, it was found that there were seven Buddhist families in Brandon with Chinese origins, who were identified as "laundrymen." The data suggests that these seven families shared one or two laundromats in the downtown Brandon area. They also resided together, as was common for Asian families. In addition, many Chinese families welcomed those Chinese who were far away from home into their homes and families.

It is quite possible that the 1901 census did not include the Buddhist men who worked on the railroad, as these men had itinerant life-styles and had no permanent homes. The Buddhist railroad workers who called Brandon home for brief periods of time could have been counted in other districts as they moved

across Canada. Although only seven families were mentioned within the census of 1901, there may have been significantly more residing in the area once the railway had been completed.

Buddhism is a very private religion based on individual practice. The major teaching of the faith is to release oneself from suffering and take refuge in the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma (truth), and the Sangha (community). The Buddha himself, known as Siddhartha Gautama, was a living example of the individual pursuit of peace and release from Samsara (this world) through enlightenment. By following the doctrine of the Eight-Fold Path and taking refuge in the Three Jewels, an ordinary person could strive for enlightenment or for a better rebirth.

According to Buddhist teachings, meditation and yoga play a large role in helping to restore a sense of peace and harmony into one's life. Buddhists in Brandon practise meditation and yoga in their own homes, on a private level. Sometimes, they may get together to meditate in a field, but as one informant stresses, Buddhism is a very individual practice that helps with one's karma. According to sources, meditation and yoga enable the practitioner to cultivate and counteract the effects of bad karma. Karma is both good and bad and accumulates with every action, intention, or thought, and the amount of karma, good or bad, determines one's rebirth in one of five or six realms at the end of one's own life.

Those who identify themselves as Buddhist often believe in other religions as well. In Manitoba, there are Quaker-Buddhists, Mennonite-Buddhists, and Unitarian-Buddhists. Buddhism is also known for its pacifism and promotion of world peace.

The main type of Buddhism found in the Brandon area, Jodo-Shinshu, uses the Larger Scripture of Infinite Life, the Smaller Scripture of Infinite Life, and the Meditation Scripture of Infinite Life. Others follow a variety of texts and teachings from the Mahayana and Tibetan Canons.

## Earth Religions

The Three Goddess symbol, chosen for the Labyrinth of Peace, uses the waxing, full and waning moons to illustrate the three stages of a woman's life. Wiccans believe all living things possess a soul, and therefore all have the right to live.

Members of the Blue Hills Coven as well as representatives from the Manitoba Pagan Society were interviewed about belief systems and below these beliefs and the history of the faith in Brandon are discussed. All history for Earth Religions, particularly Pagan and Wiccan, is oral. The information presented here is based upon their belief system as outlined in these interviews. No documented history exists, though pagans state that Earth Religions have been prominent in the area since people came to reside in Brandon in the 1800s.

The term "Earth Religions" is an umbrella term that encompasses many Earth-based religions. These include Druidic, Dianic, Pagan, Wiccan, Neo-Pagan, and several Native faiths. Terms such as Earth Religion, Pagan, and Wiccan are often interchanged. Basically, as one informant who practises Wicca states: "People who practise Earth Religions can worship a Goddess and a God, or just a Goddess." She goes on to say that "one's beliefs are a very personal thing. It does not matter which Goddess you worship, as long as you adhere to the major Pagan rule of 'Do what you will, harm none.'"

There are other characteristics common to all Earth Religions. The first of these is the belief that everything has a soul, is alive, and has a right to live. Secondly, the goddess is always associated with the moon; if there is a god, he is associated with the sun. "The Triple Goddess Figure is also very important," states the second Earth Religion informant. She explains that the

Triple Goddess Figure encompasses the waxing, full, and waning phases of the moon:

This is the most important symbol for all Pagans because it outlines the three stages of a woman's life; that of the maiden, mother, and crone. The full moon is especially important because it represents pregnancy. Lots of goddesses that we worship are pregnant. But this doesn't mean that women are more [important] than men. Both genders are seen as parallel opposites. It is the idea of creation that is being worshipped [through the Triple Goddess Figure].

People who practice the Earth Religions also have individual gifts, such as healing, knowledge of herbs and medicines (often referred to as shamanism), reading tarot cards, palms, tea leaves, or other aspects of "seeing." Other paths within the Earth Religions include high priestesses who offer guidance to others. Common tools used to manipulate this energy are earth, air, fire, and water. Often, group rituals engage in manipulating or harvesting good energy with rituals such as the casting circle with the cone of power. One informant is currently studying to become a high priestess who can work with energy in this manner. Another function of a high priestess is to be able to hold hand-fasting ceremonies. Hand-fasting ceremonies are alternatives to the regular form of Christian weddings. One Pagan says, "In a hand-fasting ceremony, people are married under the eyes of the universe. Nothing is signed. It is an oath of honesty." This type of marriage is not recognized under the Government of Manitoba, but it is in the eyes of all Pagans.

There is no auspicious day set aside weekly for Pagan worship or ritual. However, Pagans do follow the cycles of the moon. Solstices and full moons serve as auspicious evenings and Halloween serves as the Pagan new year. Often these rituals will take place in various natural settings including, but not limited to, the fields near the Discovery Centre, the Brandon Hills, and members' back yards. Everyone is welcome to attend these celebrations of life and there are usually over two hundred people in the Brandon area who participate in these gatherings. Often three or four generations of women come to celebrate together.

Finally, with regards to peace, the informants would like to stress that:

No Earth Religion worships evil or casts evil spells. We could not, due to the Three-Fold Rule of 'What goes around comes around.' This rule specifically means if you do evil, it will come back three times worse, possibly ten. Brandon Pagans are peaceful people who celebrate life and follow the creed 'Do what you will, harm none.' Everything is bigger than you realize, keep an open mind.

### Christianity

The symbol chosen for Christianity is the Cross, a representation of Jesus whom Christians accept as Christ (the Messiah) and the Son of God. They believe that Jesus died on the cross to deliver all people from their sins, and emphasize love, peace, service, and forgiveness. They recognize the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The following data regarding Christianity has been compiled from interviews with members of various Anglican, Mennonite, and Catholic churches in the Brandon area. Many interviews draw on archival material kept in the respective church archives and are augmented by historical research on congregations. Materials included in this section are those that pertain to general Christian beliefs and practices in Brandon and the surrounding area.

In the late 1600s, Europeans came to settle in Canada, bringing with them their Catholic and Protestant beliefs. By the 1820s, those beliefs made their way into the area of what is now Southwest Manitoba, when a settlement of about

thirty-five people of mixed European and Native ancestry developed along the Assiniboine River. These Metis people were of the Catholic faith and they settled at a place on the Assiniboine called Brandon House, which is now called the City of Brandon (Conrad and Finkel, 1998: 306). As early as 1818, Catholic and Protestant missionaries were sent over from Europe to develop their own settlements in the west.

By the late 1800s, Sir Clifford Sifton, an energetic Manitoba politician further promoted immigration to the area. Sifton, the Minister of Internal Affairs under Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, was able to provide incentives for people to move to the west. With the promise of 160 acres of good farmland, Mennonites, Hutterites, and Doukhobors sought religious freedom and left Russia and the Ukraine, emigrating in what was known as the first wave immigration (Francis, 2000: 68-9). Other Europeans came too, leaving their cramped quarters and over-populated cities to seek freedom and opportunity.

The Brandon area in particular grew from small rural communities on its outskirts. Three of the main churches established were St. Augustine's of Canterbury, the Baptist Church, and St. Paul's United (now Central United) Church. In the 1880s, Christians from the farms on the outskirts of Brandon began to travel to surrounding rural places of worship on Sunday mornings. As the city grew, many of the rural churches merged to form larger churches in the city. St. Paul's eventually amalgamated with a Methodist Church in Kemnay and a Presbyterian Church west of Brandon to become Central United Church in 1969. Similarly, Mennonites who traveled to rural churches in Oak Lake and Justice relocated to Brandon Mennonite Mission in 1954, and in 1959 Grace Mennonite Church was built. It was during the late 1950s to early 1970s that churches in Brandon became more abundant, a movement that brought worship from rural to urban centres and helped to keep people residing within the city.

Brandon has a predominantly Christian demographic, though these Christians are divided into more than twenty-five different congregations. The two main branches of Christianity are Protestantism and Catholicism. The individual Christian churches each have their own mission statement; however, there are some goals and beliefs common to all. Christians follow Jesus Christ, whom they believe is the Son of God. To them, Jesus died on the cross to deliver all people from their sins. He was declared the Son of God through His resurrection from the dead, which is celebrated as Easter.

With regards to peace, each church has some aspect of peace in its mission statement. For example, Central United Church states, ". . . to foster a respect for our differences in many areas (age, cultural and national heritage, racial origins, social and political perspectives) while seeking also to express our unity in Jesus Christ." In another division of Christianity, Grace Mennonite Church proclaims the same idea with their vision ". . . to build a healing community by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow in grace and peace and be a light of hope to the world around us." (<http://www.mts.net/~centralu/future.htm>).

The account of Jesus' life can be found in the New Testament of the Bible, though Christians hold the original Old Testament of Jewish origin as true as well. Thus Christians believe in the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They seek to proclaim God's message of love and forgiveness and build a community of peace and generosity.

## Bibliography

1901 Census.

Adachi, Ken. *The Enemy that Never Was*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., 1976.

Birtle School Registry.

"Central United Church". < <http://www.mts.net/~centralu/future.htm> > (May 23, 2002).

Conrad, Margaret, Alvin Finkel with Cornelius Jaenen. History of the Canadian Peoples: Beginnings to 1867. Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd, 1998.

Francis, Douglas R, Richard Jones and Donald B. Smith. Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation. Toronto: Harcourt Canada Ltd, 2000.

The Indians of Canada. Portfolio V, Number 4. Manitoba: Imperial Oil Limited, 1904.

Indigenous People's Centre.

Informant 1. "Earth Religions in Brandon". Unpublished Interview by Angela Conrad. January 24, 2002.

Informant 2. "Earth Religions in Brandon". Unpublished Interview by Angela Conrad. January 24, 2002.

Informant 3. "Re: Buddhist Research". 29 May, 2002. Personal e-mail. (29 May, 2002).

Informant 4. "Buddhism in Brandon and Seoul". Unpublished Interview by Angela Conrad. February 10, 2002.

Informant 5. "Medicine Wheel". Unpublished Interview by Angela Conrad. March 12, 2002.

Informant 6. "Hinduism in Brandon". Presentation, Grace Mennonite Church. Brandon, MB. 12, May, 2002.

Informant 7. "Sikhism in Brandon". Unpublished Interview by Angela Conrad. May 14, 2002.

Informant 7. Genealogy Letter to Author. May 14, 2002.

Informant 8. "Daoism in Brandon" Unpublished Interview by Angela Conrad. May 16, 2002.

Informant 9. "Tai-Chi". Unpublished Telephone Interview by Angela Conrad. May 17, 2002.

Informant 10. "Christianity in Brandon". Unpublished Interview by Angela Conrad. May 19, 2002.

Informant 11. "Catholicism in Brandon". Unpublished Telephone Interview by Angela Conrad. May 26, 2002.

Informant 12. "Metis Beliefs in Brandon". Unpublished Telephone Interview by Angela Conrad. May 26, 2002.

Kowcz-Baran, Anna Maria. History of Ukrainian Catholic Churches in Canada, Ukrainian Catholic Churches of Winnipeg Archeparchy. Vol 4., 1991.

O'Sullivan, P.J. Steps Not Leaps: St. Augustine of Canterbury Parish, Brandon Manitoba 1881-1981. Brandon: P.J. O'Sullivan, K.C.S.G., 1981.

Sidhu, G.S. Introduction to Sikhism. Kent: Sidhu Publication Group, 1999.