

## Case Study

### Connect with the value of a new concept.

client: Victoria Community Labyrinth Society  
project: brochure and PowerPoint



*“Identity creates connection.”*

How do you help people to feel connected to the value of a new and unfamiliar concept? This is a challenge faced by high tech companies and other leading-edge organizations, such as The Victoria Community Labyrinth Society (VCLS).

The VCLS is building the world’s first handicapped-accessible labyrinth. If you’re thinking, “What’s a labyrinth?” then you see the problem. (For an answer to that question, see the brochure I wrote for them, below.)

In talking with the leaders of the VCLS, I observed that their project was about more than the labyrinth itself. It was about how we identify and define ourselves as a community. I used this key insight to design the group’s communications. By showing how the project is aligned with the shared values and pride of the Victoria community, we helped people to connect with the VCLS vision, despite the newness of their concept. In addition, clear, concise descriptions and an engaging short story made it easy to understand the value of a labyrinth.

## Results

The brochure and PowerPoint helped people to immediately identify with the project and become excited participants. The VCLS has passed the first stage of government approval for securing provincial lands to site the labyrinth. In May 2007, leaders from VCLS met with Rick Hansen and were awarded a grant from the Hansen Foundation. Many local professionals and businesses are donating goods and services as the project gathers momentum.

*This is exciting! You are a treasure! I’m sitting here with tears in my eyes. It is beautiful!  
I felt myself being there, using this [PowerPoint], talking, loving it. Thank you.  
Aryana Rayne, Victoria Community Labyrinth Society*

## What good is a labyrinth?

Doctor Frank Jones steps off the elevator and briskly walks out of the hospital. His mind races with thoughts of the surgery he will shortly perform. He crosses the lawn to a circular path of stones fifteen meters across. Frank takes a deep breath and gently releases it. Then he lets his feet begin to follow the familiar path, slowly. He tries to relax his mind. He keeps his gaze down on the path as it leads his feet on a spiralling journey towards the centre. With each slow step his mind gradually grows quieter. And quieter. When he arrives at the centre, he notices that time seems to have been suspended. He turns around and lets the path lead him back out. When he emerges from the labyrinth a few minutes later, his mind feels calm and balanced. He feels ready.

*The goal is not the centre of the labyrinth.  
The goal is the centre of oneself.*

The Victoria Community Labyrinth Society is a project of the Tactile Colour Communication Society, a registered charity which serves visually impaired people. The group has no religious affiliation.

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*Vision is the art of seeing  
what is invisible to others.*

Jonathan Swift

# Opening the Circle



## Victoria to receive world's first equal-access labyrinth

For centuries, people have walked the winding path known as a labyrinth to attain mental clarity and calm. Recent medical research has confirmed these benefits. As labyrinths have regained their popularity, several have been built in Victoria.

Victoria is a city that leads the world in accessible services and now a non-profit society is creating a labyrinth that can be enjoyed by all residents and visitors, including those with disabilities who cannot use existing labyrinths. According to expert Robert Ferré of St. Louis, it will be the first of its kind in the world.

## Ancient paths in a modern world

Labyrinths were part of ancient cultures across Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, some dating back over 3,000 years. As people seek calm in our hectic world, labyrinths are regaining their popularity.

Modern medical research has shown that walking a labyrinth balances the left and right hemispheres of the brain. People have experienced improved mental clarity and memory, calmness in dealing with grief and pain, and a deeper connection with their inner resources. Children say they “just feel better” after walking a labyrinth.

*“The labyrinth is an archetype of transformation.  
Its transcendent nature knows no boundaries,  
crossing time and cultures with ease.”*  
Kimberly Lowelle Seward, Ph.D.

Unlike a maze, a labyrinth has just one path, which winds into the centre and back out again. Walking this path takes us on a journey to our own centre.

Labyrinths are now used for their positive effects by universities, hospitals and prisons. They are also used for individual meditation and community events such as seasonal celebrations and weddings.

Notable labyrinths include:

- ∞ Johns Hopkins Geriatrics Center
- ∞ Edinburgh University
- ∞ Chartres Cathedral
- ∞ Battery Park, New York City

Victoria labyrinths include:

- ∞ Irving Park
- ∞ Victoria General Hospital
- ∞ Christ Church Cathedral
- ∞ University of Victoria

## Well-being for individuals and our community

Labyrinths are growing in popularity, but few are wheelchair-accessible, and none are accessible to people with vision loss.

*Moving around without concern for hazards is a luxury for me.  
With a handrail, I can be in the now. Walking a labyrinth and  
being able to just enjoy the journey will be wonderful.*  
Linda B., Victoria

Just as a labyrinth can help to integrate an individual in mind, body and soul, so the Victoria Community Labyrinth will help to integrate all members of our community, and our many visitors. Projects like this one generate feelings of inclusion and pride for everyone.

## How to make an equal-access labyrinth

The Victoria Community Labyrinth Society (VCLS) is integrating the psychological perspective of labyrinth design, the ecological perspective of sustainable landscaping, and the equal-access perspective of the “Seven Principles of Universal Design.” The labyrinth will feature handrails, paving and other components to make it accessible for all.

The project is attracting the participation of local professionals and volunteers. Landscape designers are conferring on beautiful, low-maintenance landscaping. An architect, legal advisor, copywriter, and building materials specialist have offered their assistance. While an enthusiastic team of volunteers moves the project forward, Victoria business leaders are offering support and resources. The labyrinth design is being guided by Aryana Rayne of Victoria, Robert Ferré, and Jeff Seward of England.

## Your Participation

The VCLS is seeking community participation to

- ∞ raise the funding and resources to complete the project
- ∞ find a location in a park or other land open to the community
- ∞ invite us to talk to your business, school, or group
- ∞ contribute your time and enthusiasm to the project