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## Local Authors Read for LIGHT

The Learning Institute for Growth, Healing and Transformation, in collaboration with the Winnipeg International Writers Festival, made its first public appearance with the **Young Spirits** reading event at the Cornish Library on September 20. Three Manitoba authors, Sheldon Oberman, Carol Matas and Joe McLellan read selections from recent works to a receptive audience ranging in age from 3 to 70+.

First, Sheldon Oberman told stories from his new book, *Island of the Minotaur: Greek Myths of the Ancient Minoans*. Then Carol Matas read



a couple of chapters from her new book, *Gotcha!* Finally, Joe McLellan told stories from his *Nanabosho* series: *Nanabosho Grants a Wish* and *Nanabosho and the Cranberries*. He also told a new story about a young girl's connection to a special goose and her role as a spirit guide.



Each author read for about 45 minutes, which left time for audience members to ask questions. In

response, the authors talked about where their ideas come from, which of their stories they liked the best, and what plans they have to write new stories. Children and adults alike were captivated by each author's presentation.

### Symbolic Meaning of the Logo

The symbol represents four stages reflecting the soul's journey to enlightenment:

**White background** – The Void, Emptiness, Source of All

**Oval** – Womb, Ovum or Egg, Creative Birth

**Lotus** – Natural World, Form and Manifestation, Development of Life

**Rays of Light** – Enlightenment, Human Fulfillment, Return to the Source



## History of LIGHT

The genesis of the **Learning Institute for Growth, Healing and Transformation** (LIGHT) can be traced back many years to an idea that sparked and grew in the mind and heart of Winnipeg medical researcher and statistician Douglas Staley. Douglas envisioned the birth of an organization dedicated to the challenging task of fostering spiritual growth in individuals, the community and the wider world. It was not until 2002, however, that the time and circumstances were ripe for Douglas to actualize his vision in the world.

In November 2002 Douglas found two like-minded people—sisters Caroline Baltus and Judy Slivinski who lived just five houses away on Dorchester Avenue—with whom he began a series of meetings around the idea of starting an organization with a spiritual and educational mission. A number of almost magical meetings took place between the three, during which the initial idea for LIGHT blossomed. One afternoon, while sitting around Judy's dining room table talking about their goals and vision for the organization, the name "*Learning Institute for*

*Growth, Healing and Transformation*" emerged. Not only did this name resonate deeply with the group, but it had the synchronicity of a perfect acronym - **LIGHT!**

The next few months were filled with brainstorming sessions and contacts with other Winnipeggers interested in spirituality, learning, education and community life.

Through these discussions and consultations, the basic

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## Young Spirits Project

The **Young Spirits** project is a two-year pilot project which will see LIGHT donate between 300 and 400 books for children and youth to the 20 libraries in the greater Winnipeg area. The books will feature spiritual content and themes in the broadest sense, intended to promote greater inter-faith and cross-cultural understanding and a more peaceful community. The gift will include books by international, national and local children's authors, including Sheldon Oberman, Carol Matas and Joe McLellan.

The books represent part of the rich human heritage of fairy tales, fables, myths and teaching stories drawn from the many varied cultures of the world. Research has shown that these stories and tales act as templates or pat-

terns which mirror psychological processes and ways of human thinking/feeling which children can easily identify and relate to. For instance, some stories have themes which show how fears can be faced and overcome with knowledge and understanding, while other books feature the acceptance of others who may be different in behaviour or appearance. The books all carry the potential seed of promoting greater self-awareness, sensitivity, compassion and cross-cultural understanding among young people.

LIGHT extends an invitation to anyone who is interested in children's books with spiritual content to suggest possible titles for inclusion in the proposed donation of children's books to the Winnipeg Library system beginning in February 2004.

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## Upcoming Events

The internationally renowned teacher and medium Dr. Marilyn Rossner of Montreal's Spiritual Science Fellowship/IIIHS will be giving a public lecture on the "**Heaven and Earth Connection**," on Saturday October 18, 7:00 p.m.

She will be also be giving a workshop on **Mediumship** on Wednesday October 22, 7:00 p.m.

For further information on these events, contact our office.



Dr. Marilyn Rossner

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## History of LIGHT *(continued from page 1)*

structure, goals and purpose of LIGHT took shape.

Douglas suffered an emotional challenge in the middle of this process when his father William Staley passed away in December 2002. William had lived a full and engaged life to the age of 90. A donation from his estate provided the initial financial support to establish the organization. By his constant influence during his life and his legacy in death, William has been responsible for the actualization of LIGHT.

Early in 2003, Douglas set about to recruit board members, and within weeks Caroline Baltus, Manny Matas, Rosemary Miguez, Jane Casey and Ernie Strauss had agreed to serve as directors. Each brings unique experience and expertise to the board. Each has helped create an organization that reflects the original vision, goals and purpose of LIGHT. At their inaugural meeting in March 2003, the Board considered various potential projects for the first year, and quickly started working on four.

Grown women and men may learn from very little children, for the hearts of little children are pure and, therefore, the Great Spirit may show them many things which older people miss.

- Black Elk

Judy Slivinski was hired as a consultant to the organization, and later was appointed its Executive Director. With a background in law and in cultural management, Judy has proven invaluable in leading LIGHT through the labyrinth of technical and legal concerns inherent in setting up a not-for-profit charitable organization.

A lot has been accomplished by and on behalf of LIGHT in a very short period of time. The directors are proud of their achievements so far, and they look forward to serving the community and to welcoming other individuals and groups to join with LIGHT in making our community and shared world a better place.

## LIGHT's Labyrinth Workshop

LIGHT sponsored a one-day workshop on the Labyrinth, which took place on Monday, October 13 at Riverview Community Centre.

The workshop was facilitated by Rick McCorrister, a United Church minister originally from Winnipeg, and currently living in rural Saskatchewan. Rick has wide experience with designing and building labyrinths, as well as helping people understand their experience of walking the labyrinth.

In the morning portion of the workshop, Rick presented the history of the labyrinth, what it is, where it comes from, how it has been used, current uses, and different designs of labyrinths. This was followed by an introduction to how to walk the labyrinth. Then, everyone did a basic labyrinth walk; participants had a wide variety of experiences coming out of this walk—there was a formal and informal debriefing period, before,

## The Labyrinth Project

We are all on the path... exactly where we need to be. The labyrinth is a model of that path.

The labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The labyrinth represents the journey to our own centre and back again into the world. Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tools, places where people can walk to gain mental and spiritual centering and healing. And they are proliferating all over the world; about a third of the 1,500 labyrinths in North America were built in the last year.

One of LIGHT's current projects is the Labyrinth project. The first phase of this project was a labyrinth workshop (see above), which was intended to familiarize as many LIGHT members and friends as possible with the labyrinth - as well as to establish a base of volunteers who may be interested in future phases of the project.

during and after lunch.

The afternoon portion began with the myth of the Minotaur and its relationship to the labyrinth. After that, Rick talked about various options for labyrinth walks - i.e., trust walk, chakra walk, finger labyrinths, and so on. Participants then formed into pairs and did a trust walk through the labyrinth, in which one member of each pair was blindfolded; this was followed by another debriefing session.

In closing, Rick discussed the issues to consider in building a labyrinth: size, type, materials and maintenance. The workshop concluded with an invitation from Doug Staley to participate in LIGHT's project of building a labyrinth in Winnipeg.



But the real aim of the Labyrinth project is to create an outdoor labyrinth in a public location somewhere in Winnipeg. At present there are several indoor labyrinths in churches around Winnipeg, but no outdoor ones. We at LIGHT think that people in Winnipeg should be able to go and walk a labyrinth at any time of their choosing, without having to make special arrangements to access it.

We have commenced negotiations with the municipal and provincial governments with the intention of securing a small plot of land on which to build our labyrinth. Once we have a piece of land dedicated to the labyrinth, there will be much work to do: designing the labyrinth, obtaining the landscaping materials, and then the actual construction. We hope to complete this process by the summer of 2004.

We think this would be a valuable addition to the urban landscape - don't you?

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## Bring More LIGHT into Your Life

LIGHT has taken on a number of activities which are intended to promote positive change and spiritual growth in our community. In the coming months, we hope to touch as many people as possible with our work.

One of the ways you can help support LIGHT's mission is to give us a few hours of your time as a volunteer. You can join us in preparing mailouts, helping out at workshops and special events, distributing materials, and contributing to this newsletter. Contact us at 287-2087, Extension 3.

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few.

- Shunryu Suzuki



**L I G H T**

**LEARNING INSTITUTE FOR  
GROWTH, HEALING AND  
TRANSFORMATION**

980 Dorchester Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3M 0S1

**Phone:** (204) 287-2087

**Fax:** (204) 452-8090

**E-mail:** info@lightinc.org



**Executive Director:**  
Judy Slivinski

## Profile

The Learning Institute for Growth, Healing and Transformation (**LIGHT**) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to fostering positive growth and change in individuals and communities. It was founded in 2002 by Winnipeg philanthropist Douglas Staley in memory of his late father William Staley.

**LIGHT** promotes awareness of the range of spiritual traditions and teachings in our world through its own efforts and in partnership with other community organizations.

**LIGHT** is apolitical, non-sectarian and not affiliated with any one religion or creed. Supporters of **LIGHT** believe that a more peaceful, unified planet is possible through greater inter-faith and cross-cultural understanding.

**LIGHT** encourages the study of spiritual practices and the integration of spirituality into all human activity.

## Meet our Board of Directors

Front row (left to right): Douglas Staley (Founding Director), Jane Casey, Ernie Strauss  
Back row (left to right): Caroline Baltus, Manuel (Manny) Matas, Rosemary Miguez



### Douglas Staley

Douglas is a medical researcher and statistician with a Master's degree in Psychology, currently employed at St. Boniface General Hospital. For many years he has studied and participated in a wide range of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions.

### Jane Casey

Jane is a writing instructor with the Inner City Social Work Program. Her Master's thesis was on the poetry of Margaret Avison. Since her work on Avison, Jane has spent the last 20 years exploring Christian, Sufi and Buddhist traditions.

### Ernie Strauss

Ernie has been involved with many different spiritual traditions and practices over the past 30 years, including Jewish, Sufi, Taoist and Buddhist. He has an M.A. in Philosophy of Science from University of Toronto, and works in Winnipeg as a technical writer.

### Caroline Baltus

An active co-parent of a four-year-old, Caroline is a medical research coordinator and geriatric clinician with a Bachelor of Nursing from the University of Manitoba. She has explored new and ancient spiritual traditions from around the globe, and the use of mythology, astrology and tarot to facilitate personal growth.

### Manuel (Manny) Matas

Manny is a psychiatrist in private practice in Winnipeg. He received his Diploma in Psychiatry from McGill University. Eclectic interests include holistic health and healing, as well as integration of mind, body and spirit.

### Rosemary Miguez

Rosemary is a Volunteer/Client Services Coordinator at Kali-Shiva AIDS Services. She holds a degree in Women's Studies and History. Her spiritual path is Aboriginal, and she is involved in women's Moon Ceremonies.