

HUMAN INTEREST

A Centre for Harmony

BY ROBERT WHITE

If you build it, they will come! Michael Stodola has certainly done his part in creating a space for people to freely come and experience harmony with nature and with their own soul. Stodola has created what he calls the Devic Centre for Environmental Harmony on his acreage west of Pike Lake. While many people go into natural surroundings to help them unwind and others go to retreats that offer programming, visitors to the Devic Centre find a 'free space' that has been consciously designed to help them appreciate what is harmonious and uplifting. Beyond that general description words fail, because in his careful and attentive approach to this special place, Stodola has integrated concepts that break out of the materialistic straight jacket that has defined modern culture.

It all began eight years ago when Stodola was a successful business owner in Saskatoon. He says "I came to work one day and felt it (the business) was no longer mine. Over the course of six months I sold my two businesses, house, boat, trailer and two cars. My wife Gisele had talked about living on an acreage so we looked at a few and this was the fourth property we looked at. We really didn't know what was here. It was covered with snow."

Thus began a life-changing personal journey that has resulted in a beautiful oasis of peace and beauty. It is a place, where to put a new spin on the maxim of the TV generation, 'the medium is the message.' That is to say, the place offers an experience of a natural setting and more importantly someone learning to consciously cooperate with nature and the energies of nature and sharing tools and ideas that can possibly help others to do the same. These include labyrinths and medicine wheels and other 'sacred spaces' created to nurture psychological and spiritual development. For most cultures, self-

discovery has taken place in intimate relationship with nature. Temples and sacred sites and ceremonies provided a place and an atmosphere that nurtured self-development and heightened awareness. In the modern era, the human need for that intimacy and expansion of awareness remains but the prevailing world view blocks the experience of nature as a living force. Nature has become in effect dead matter which can be manipulated for human ends. In his own journey, Stodola discovered many time-tested tools for working with the energies of nature and has applied them in developing the property. Thus, has arisen the mission of the Devic Centre, to provide a place of sanctuary where people can come and open to an enlarged vision of their own potential.

The thing that strikes the first time visitor is the love and care and attention that has gone into the place and the generosity of the hosts. They genuinely want the Centre to be a place where visitors will be able to slow down and open to feeling the uplifting qualities they aim to nurture.

A main feature of the property is a large, Cretan style, 7-circuit labyrinth. The 85-foot stone labyrinth offers a place for walking meditation and reflection and like several other features on the site is always open to the public at no charge. There is also a small medicine wheel, shaded sitting areas and walking paths through the native prairie and bush. A fire pit near the medicine wheel is available for use as well. The most recent users were a local church group who came for an outing. Unless booked, a 900 square foot meeting hall is left open for visitors to sit and meditate. If



Michael Stodola and his wife Gisele, work at creating a space where nature is nurturing.

arranged in advance, visitors can also have dessert served on a deck overlooking the front yard.

The most unusual features are several geometric shapes in various places throughout the property. Stodola explains that these shapes can be understood as "focal points for energy." Since his dramatic move here eight years ago, Stodola has opened himself to the study of energy healing, sacred geometry and variations on the popular concept of feng shui, the ancient Chinese design philosophy. He is very articulate but humble in describing his understanding of these subtle energetic concepts and how these have influenced his development of

the property. "We have no answers," he emphasizes. "We don't tell you how to find a balance with nature. We only aim to provide a place of sanctuary where people can learn and grow."

As Stodola sees it, the emerging understanding, now validated by science is that the visible universe is a manifestation of energy. These energies have been given various names or symbols in different cultures. His studies and experience have led him to the conclusion that forms like labyrinths and various types of triangular geometric objects help concentrate energy. "They act like a tuning fork does. They resonate to a frequency and can help individuals to tune into energy." He adds, "the stressors of modern life, machinery, living and working in buildings

which are not harmonious, the pressures of busyness all contribute to dissonance, a resonance that is not harmonic. Yet underneath, as we all intuitively sense in nature, there is a perfect pattern of creation. Sometimes people need a way to reactivate the innate potential for harmony and perfection within them. The uplifting energies of forms designed to enhance harmony and balance act like booster cables, reactivating energy."

The designs of sacred space in ancient cultures affirm the concepts of which Stodola speaks yet these ideas remain intangible and a bit "out there" for most people. Stodola portrays no insecurity or fear in discussing or living with these concepts. Simply arriving to the peaceful ambience of the

place and Stodola's matter of fact orientation is convincing evidence that a new level of harmony with nature is possible. If it takes, as he suggests, personal transformation and awareness of a higher purpose within then the Devic Centre offers some tools and ideas and models a work in progress. It is a gift of a loving heart and surely as it is more widely known more and more will come.

The Devic Center is located 35 minutes South West of Saskatoon. It is open free of charge seven days a week including weekends. Advanced notice is always appreciated but not necessary. Call (306) 955-4332 or Toll Free at 1-866-955-4332. The website www.ablecrystals.com offers an overview of the Centre and a map of how to get there.