

Lakeside Gems hosts Metaphysical Gathering



By Bill Kilpatrick

It was an emotional weekend for Linda Bast and Chris Fouts, the owners and operators of Lakeside Gems Rock Shop, who hosted their second Metaphysical Gathering over the weekend of July 7-9. The gathering brought together mystics, psychic readers, energy workers, crystal healers and ghost hunters as well as a number of different vendors who were selling everything from teas, crystals and minerals, to books on the metaphysical and homemade jewelry. The events included a mineral collecting field trip, a ghost walk and talk, spiritual readings, tarot readings, Reiki, reflexology, and numerous other short talks on topics ranging from intuitive animal communication to crystal healing. What made this gathering so special is that it was the first gathering to happen since the rebuilding of Lakeside Gems, which only began last fall and was completed this spring. The purpose of the gathering, as Bast explains, is two-fold, "First, we want to celebrate the Metaphysical, and second, we want to relaunch the partnerships between Lakeside Gems and the Metaphysical Ministry of Canada which includes readings, workshops, and classes as well as reflexology and other services."

In 2013, Bast and Rita Marie Assinck, a Reverend with the Metaphysical Ministry of Canada, who is also the governing official of the Bancroft Centre for Awakening Spiritual Growth founded in 2007, held the first Metaphysical Gathering at the current location. It was so successful that they planned on doing it annually, but sadly fate intervened. In 2014 there was a devastating fire that destroyed Lakeside gems and, in the process, not only was Bast injured, but the fire ended many of the partnerships that shared the space as well. Then, the same year, Assinck had a medical procedure which put a halt to the gatherings. "Standing on this spot one year ago all this was dream," said Fouts emotionally, "one year ago this was all just plans on a map, but so much has come together and we look at it now and it's so nice to have this here and we can all come together."

What is metaphysics?

Rev. Assinck, began her spiritual journey as a Catholic, but found that organized religion could not answer many of the questions that she had regarding the divine, life, and spirituality. In her search for spirituality she attended multiple churches including the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada, but for her she felt there was too much structure and judgement in these institutions and she never really felt like they provided what she was looking for. She did not find a place that she felt she fit in until she discovered the University of Metaphysics in Sedona Arizona. "It really resonated [with me] said Assinck, "I took their ministry course and was ordained."

While metaphysics and spirituality can mean many things to different people, for Assinck, "Metaphysics means I can open any door

that feels right for me. I can embrace all religions, all aspects of nature, all aspects of spirit and all aspects of life. I can teach people that spirit does exist. That we never die. That just our body leaves us, not our soul. That we are a continuation of God, the Universe, the Creator. As an ordained Minister Assinck wanted to ensure that people were able to pursue spirituality in anyway that suited them as long as that path did not cause harm to others. She did not like the message of mainstream religions that told people they had to be different than they were, 'I didn't ever want to have to say to somebody, 'This is how you have to behave' or 'you need to change now.' That's what never fit with me,' explained Assinck, adding 'I wanted people to embrace their own spirituality, whatever that may be and feel good about it.'

Rev. Assinck welcomes people of all walks of life who want to find 'divine purpose and spiritual fulfilment' and in doing so Assinck strives to 'foster inclusivity and diversity' within their membership. 'That's all I really ever wanted,' said Assinck, 'was a safe place for people to be able to come, cry, get angry, whatever the case may be and know that they are safe [and] they are not judged.' The Metaphysical Ministry has ordained over 200 ministers since its founding in 2016 and as Assinck points out, 'We are a full ministry. We do pastoral care, we teach how to do ceremony of life, how to work in hospice, and how to talk to people.' Public engagement is very important for Assinck and for this reason they teach a course on theology, 'because people need to understand where other people are coming from. You are not going to talk to a non-Christian in a Christian manner or a Christian in a non-Christian manner because they won't understand you.' This communication style is meant to foster openness and reassure people that they are in a safe place.

Not only does the Metaphysical Ministry teach a course on theology to encourage public engagement, but Assinck holds a zoom meeting every Wednesday night at 7 p.m., which, according to the Bancroft Spiritual Centre's webpage, provides a 'safe, inclusive space for light conversation, meditation and prayer,' that's open to anyone. The conversations and prayers are often led by a participant who leads a discussion on a topic that they find interesting. While Assinck is not ready to do in person meetings yet she will be coming back to Lakeside Gems in the fall to do her meditation classes and readings and will provide other metaphysical educational opportunities.

For those who would like more information or to join in the Wednesday evening discussion group you can visit the Metaphysical Ministry of Canada webpage at www.bancroftspiritualcentre.com or visit their Facebook page entitled The Metaphysical Ministry of Canada.