

## White Pine Writers launch new book Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends



**By Nate Smelle**

On the afternoon of July 3, the White Pine Writers group launched their latest book, *Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends* at the Hastings Highlands Public Library in Maynooth. Timed perfectly with the 50th anniversary of amethyst being named Ontario's official mineral, the event marked the debut of a uniquely engaging book that celebrates Bancroft's rich geological heritage.

Kathryn Wishlow, one of the book's principal contributors, said she is thrilled with the enthusiastic response to the release of the book already. "It's selling like hotcakes," she said. "Even the retailers are happy with the presentation... It's like a guide. It's family friendly, and it has a lot of facts, but it has also the myths and the legends. So it's interesting with good photographs and it promotes Bancroft, the Gemboree, the Sodalite Mine, Lakeside Gems everything rocky."

The inspiration for *Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends* was deeply personal for Wishlow. She got the idea for the book after giving her stepsister a piece of amethyst her birthstone as a Pisces that had once belonged to their mother. When her sister, a retired teacher, later discovered the stone's official status in Ontario and its 50th anniversary, Wishlow said a spark was lit. "I thought, 'Oh my God, we should write a little book about it being in the Mineral Capital of Canada.'"

Wishlow said that idea then blossomed into a group effort within White Pine Writers. Wishlow focused on the storytelling, myths, and legends. Fellow writer Vic A. Bodnar, with his background in geology, took on the factual content. Steve Scally lent his editorial precision, while Marsha Pace brought it all together through her expert formatting and design skills. Additional contributions came from Heather Brown, who added content on rockhounding locations and collectors' supplies, enhancing the book's practical value.

According to Wishlow, *Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends*, is much more than an interesting guidebook for rockhounds; it is also an educational tool, a collector's companion, and a charming souvenir all in one. Priced at \$19.95, it's a perfect keepsake for tourists who may not want to carry a hefty rock home but still want a tangible memory of Bancroft and Ontario's mineral wealth.

Bancroft itself is central to the narrative, said Wishlow. Known as the Mineral Capital of Canada and nestled in a unique part of the Canadian Shield, the town's history is woven throughout the book. From early village days to its role in Ontario's geology scene, she said Bancroft's story is told in a condensed, engaging way that avoids overwhelming readers while still delivering meaningful context. The release of the book is also well timed with the 60th year of the Bancroft Rockhound Gemboree, explained Wishlow.

Historical depth also runs through the book, including Wishlow's own discovery about her grandmother's amethyst jewelry. 'My grandmother was a Suffragette?you know, one of those women who chained herself to fences,' Wishlow said. 'She had all this amethyst jewelry with white enamel and sea pearls. I thought it was because she was a Pisces, but the more I looked into it, the more I discovered in talking to other women that are in their 90s, I realized that this was a silent protest started in the 1800s by women whose husbands didn't approve of them having the vote. They wanted the vote, and how you let other women know was by wearing a piece of amethyst jewellery with white and gold filigree.'

Wishlow said it is these kinds of anecdotes that give the book its distinct narrative flavour, blending personal stories with cultural history.

The group also reached out to institutions like the Royal Ontario Museum, which Wishlow said was very interested in the project. She said the ROM even provided high-quality photographs of rare amethyst specimens.

Importantly, Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends serves a practical purpose, said Wishlow. Noting that it includes a rockhounding guide for families, a mineral collector's checklist, a resource list, and a bibliography, she said it has been designed for durability, 'to last many page flippings and maybe dirty fingers.' There's even a section that helps identify crystal shapes, she said, making it an invaluable tool for seasoned geologists and young rock enthusiasts alike.

'We may be known as the Mineral Capital of Canada, but to some people, that's just words,' said Wishlow. 'I thought, 'You know what, this might be our chance to really put Bancroft's name on the map,' because we had a lot to do with what was eventually to become the official mineral of Ontario.'

The launch was held at the Hastings Highlands Public Library in Maynooth, a venue that Wishlow specifically praised for its accessibility and ongoing support. 'A huge thank you to Wendy Keating and her staff,' she said. Acknowledging how supportive the Hastings Highlands Library has always been of the White Pine Writers, Wishlow said 'the staff went above and beyond to make the event wonderful.'

In the end, Wishlow said Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends is a celebration of the community's heritage, and a call to explore the natural wonders of North Hastings. And with interest already growing from Thunder Bay and other mineral-rich regions, it's clear the book's message will resonate far beyond Bancroft.

Amethyst: Facts, Myths & Legends is available for purchase at Ashlie's Book Store in Bancroft, Indigo in Belleville, Bancroft B&B, and Lakeside Gems. It will also be available at the Bancroft Rockhound Gemboree, and online at: [www.whitepinewriters.ca](http://www.whitepinewriters.ca).