



Staff photos by Gregory Rec

It took Françoise Paradis about three weeks to construct this labyrinth in her back yard in Buxton. The labyrinth is modeled after the Chartres Labyrinth, which was built in the 13th century in Chartres Cathedral in France.

On The Right

PATH

- Françoise Paradis craved a peaceful, contemplative place, so she built a Labyrinth on her Buxton land.

By Jen Fish
Staff Writer



Paradis says she left spaces in the labyrinth for people to contribute rocks like this one etched with the word "Peace."

BUXTON -- In today's busy world, it seems there aren't many places left where one can escape the pressures of everyday life.

Nestled in the backwoods of Buxton, down a dusty, country road, Françoise Paradis has built what she hopes will become an oasis for people seeking spirituality, inner peace and insight into their lives.

With the help of family and friends, Paradis has constructed a stone labyrinth in her back yard. The labyrinth, a spiral-shaped path, is an ancient form that has recently become a popular tool for meditation and spiritual healing.

Paradis, 54, is a psychologist who has held a longtime fascination with labyrinths. A labyrinth, she said, can be a valuable therapeutic tool because it encourages its user to focus on healing and reflection without any distractions.

A lifelong Mainer, Paradis moved to Buxton from Presque Isle in June. Since then, she has spent the summer transforming her land into a spiritual retreat.

“This land just called for (a labyrinth),” she said. Paradis’ labyrinth is modeled after the Chartres Labyrinth, which was permanently inlaid into the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France in the 13th century.

Building the labyrinth, Paradis said, was a wonderful experience.

“I really fell in love with the stones, they’re just beautiful,” she said. Outside the labyrinth, Paradis has planted a small orchard with peach, pear and cherry trees, and an herb garden.

In a labyrinth, there are no dead ends like a maze. Twelve circles of stones form one path that lead to the center.

“It’s not meant to challenge you at the intellectual level,” she said of the labyrinth. “What it’s meant to do is provide a relaxed, safe environment in which to meditate.”

To use the labyrinth, she said, one simply follows the path. Before entering, she said, it can be useful to state an intention, such as “I am using this labyrinth to help find an answer to why I feel depressed,” but it’s not required.

Paradis said she often uses the labyrinth herself.

“It’s very quieting and I can get clarity on whatever I’m thinking about,” she said. “It helps me to focus on what I need to do.”

Paradis said she hopes to eventually use her home as a spiritual retreat for her clients and other groups.

Labyrinths, she said, have gained recent notoriety as tools for meditation. In the last Winter Olympics, a “Peace Labyrinth” was built, and there are also several churches in Maine that have labyrinths, although Paradis’ is non-denominational.

On September 11, Paradis’ labyrinth was one of hundreds around the world that hosted a “Global Labyrinth Walk” to honor the victims and survivors of the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C.

On that terrible day, Paradis was at a conference in Santa Fe, NM, and scheduled to walk a labyrinth there.

“I was really, really affected (by September 11),” she said. “I just thought my life was going to change.”

Of course, she said, her life did change and she is now working to become part of the community in Buxton.

“People have been very welcoming,” she said. “This is very exciting for me.”

The labyrinth is open to the public and people can call Paradis at 929-5454 to make an appointment. There is no cost to walk the labyrinth.