

Six More Weeks of Winter?

Did the groundhog see his shadow? I think to myself as I sit drinking coffee, looking out the window, watching the snow fall. It appears so. However, (not surprisingly) even the groundhogs don't agree. CBC news reported that Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie Sam was the first to emerge – he didn't see his shadow (which would mean spring was on its way); Ontario's Wiarton Willie, announced six more weeks of winter. Mixed reviews from Manitoba Merv, Winnipeg Wyn, and Alberta Balzac Billy, while Vancouver's Van Island Violet was simply too busy sleeping to notice. With all the snow this year, it's a good thing the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC) has so many activities throughout these months – who has time for the winter doldrums?

On January 20th I participated in the Women's March in Grand Forks, marking the anniversary of the historic Women's March on Washington in 2017, advocating human rights and other issues and protesting President Donald Trump's offensive comments.

On January 28th we held our 5th annual Spiritual Meeting at the Brilliant Cultural Centre and the Grand Forks USCC Community Centre. The topic was exploring the meaning of the psalm “Духоборец Тот” (What is a Doukhobor?) We will be including a summary of the discussions in an upcoming issue of ISKRA.

On February 9th I look forward to attending the International Talent Showcase at the Brilliant Cultural Centre. This event is co-sponsored by the Castlegar Refugee Project, Selkirk College and the USCC, as a way to share our diverse cultural practices with one another. The third International Culture Festival will also take place on Monday, February 12th from 1:30-4:30 at the Castlegar Community Complex.

February 14th is Valentine's Day and marketed as the “Day of Love”. However, it is also a good day to think about our love of all living things and about how we may express that love everyday. To my family and friends, I would like to say thank you for being in my life – “I Love You”.

On March 2nd, we invite everyone to attend the Gospel Chapel in Grand Forks and the Pentacostal New Life Assembly in Castlegar for the annual World Day of Prayer. This year, the writing country is Suriname: “All of God's Creation is Very Good”. It is always a heart touching event.

This is a big year for ISKRA; we are commemorating our 75th anniversary! Please join us in celebration by sharing your thoughts about and memories of ISKRA with us, be it a – letter to the editor, a cherished photo, or a favourite/ inspirational article from a previous issue. In upcoming issues, we will try to highlight these special moments throughout the last seventy-five years. Looking forward, we also want to try to focus more on the positive happenings in the world, inspired by a Facebook Post: Positive Things that happened in 2017.

For me it's often a juggling act trying to navigate through my work days, trying to take the past, the present and the future of Doukhoborism into consideration. Life can be very distracting and at times it is difficult to know the truth and to maintain my faith...

I am thankful for the many activities and opportunities that support our Doukhobor way of life. What is a Doukhobor? We ask as if we don't inherently know the answer. For those of us who were fortunate enough to grow up in a Doukhobor community, knowing our Doukhobor grandparents, and experiencing their “Toil and Peaceful” way of life, I think the answer is simple – someone who tries to live a good life and continues to try and help others as much as they can!

The many activities (I've only named a few) and the many wonderful volunteers who dedicate their time to our organization as well as support and participate in other charitable activities in the Kootenay/Boundary area and beyond are a testament to the “life of a Doukhobor.”

But there is always more to do. Recently, another Facebook post about mental illness reminded me we don't have to look far to find someone struggling – often times, it is one of our family members or friends needing help. It is estimated that 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental health illness throughout their lifetime (*mindourmind.ca*). We can all lend a hand and do something to help promote mental health in our communities.

I admit at times, I myself live like an ostrich, burying my head in the sand, in an attempt to cope with my stresses. So much that I convince myself that I don't have time for this and that... I recently ran into a friend, also busy, who said “There IS time.” She is right! So, I will try to be more mindful, more compassionate, more sympathetic, more caring, more helpful...

