Green Christmas



By Nate Smelle

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME TO look back on the year and our lives and reflect upon the positive side of things. It is a time to forgive those who have been naughty, and a time to celebrate those who have been nice. As the big day gets closer the days get shorter and the nights get longer. Inevitably we end up spending more time together inside in the warmth.

By questioning what we want and what we need, we learn about each other and we learn about ourselves. Many of the Christmas carols, holiday movies and TV specials that have become synonymous with celebrating the Yuletide compel us to contemplate such questions.

Every year many of us watch and sing these lessons on the true meaning of Christmas and the spirit animating the holiday season. We discover valuable information about ourselves when we sit down and soak in the tale of a mean spirited Grinch feebly attempting to steal the holiday away from a small unsuspecting town; or of a reindeer and an elf who are marginalized for being themselves.

This spirit of the holiday season encourages us to come to terms with the past and the present, so we can have a better future. It invites us to give kindness, share compassion and generously care for others.

Through the gesture of giving presents to one another we symbolically honour this spirit. While things and stuff wrapped in pretty boxes and ribbon are nice I prefer the gift of presence. When I think of my best holiday memories I think of the experiences not the things I unwrapped. Gazing back upon my history of Christmases they would have been much more festive, and a lot more eco-friendly if I would have realized that the value of time is greater than the value of materials as a child.

There are plenty of ways to celebrate a green Christmas whether there is snow on the ground or not. One way is to simply give eco-friendly gifts. A donation given to a not-for-profit organization on behalf of a friend or family member is a good way to show

them that you care on a couple of levels. Another way to honour the spirit of the holidays is to get more creative with the gifts we give and how we give them. Every year Canadians spend millions of dollars on gift wrap alone, when every week they receive an ample supply of paper suitable for wrapping gifts in their weekly newspaper. The thin cardboard boxes used to package tea bags are also a good source of card stock to make your own festive Christmas cards. Sure these reusable resources may not be as flashy or festive as their ready-made alternatives available for purchase, but with a little imagination these materials?otherwise destined for the landfill?can add to the character and quality of the gift.

Just as important as the gift you give and how you give it is where it came from. Was the gift bought in Bancroft, North Hastings, somewhere else in Ontario or online? Where was it manufactured Bancroft, Ontario, Canada or China? The closer the answer of these two questions is to where you live the better the gift.

Still the best gift we can give is our time.