

Hope

by SHERALYN ROMAN

I watched a Christmas movie the other night, the first one I've seen all season and one that I had never heard of. No matter as the overall theme of positivity; of the Christmas spirit and of hope, were each as well represented in this film as they have been consistently, in every other Christmas classic ever produced.

It was timely 'intervention' for me. The steady and relentless progression of the Omicron variant, its impact on our community, our country and on my own friends and family 'has become overwhelming and the reminder to have hope was a necessary one.

Hope is what keeps us going. I would venture to claim that it is indeed part of our core essence as human beings to have hope. As the movie (based on the book, 'A Boy Called Christmas' by Matt Haig) exclaims, 'We all need hope. A spark of magic to keep us going.' Without hope there would be nothing to look forward to, potentially leading to a downward negative spiral from which some folks find it difficult to emerge.

Without hope, those of us who have already lived through one holiday season without family and friends, and perhaps even without enough food, clothing or shelter, would never willingly have embraced another entire year of challenge and change, knowing the outcome was a SECOND holiday alone and/or possibly worse off than we were this time last year. Hope is a religion of sorts. Like faith, hope requires us to believe in 'an impossibility?', one that the book and the movie claim 'is only a possibility that you don't understand yet.' So humans cling to hope, much as they might cling to a particular faith tradition, to provide them with solace that there are better things to come 'whether in this world or the next.

Right now, a little dose of hope would go a long way. I hope the leaders of the world, our country and our province will 'wise up' and help to bring an end to this relentless global pandemic. I hope that they will do so by enacting restrictions that make sense, not restrictions that suit big business. I hope they will rapidly expand the ability to TEST for COVID with fast and free access to both PCR and Rapid Antigen testing and that they will continue to expand our ability to vaccinate and boost our way out of this crisis by utilizing reliable, stable and fully-functioning web portals, 1-800 numbers and by driving GO-VAX busses to seniors buildings and retirement residences and long-term care homes where folks won't need technological wizardry simply to book a booster. I cling to hope that the world will wake up to the realization that this nightmare will never end unless we make vaccines available to everyone, in every corner of the globe and I remain steadfastly hopeful that education and science will one day wield more influence than Facebook and Twitter comments from tin foil hat wearing conspiracy theorists do.

Without hope, we face the prospect of a third holiday season without friends and family; those who matter, or who should matter, most to us. Without hope, we will continue to flounder under a Ford government that's floundering in its attempts to provide consistent, coherent advice on vaccines, rapid tests, capacity limits or indeed, on almost anything at all.

Without hope 'the poor WILL get poorer, those experiencing homelessness will likely increase, domestic violence will remain hidden behind Covid sealed front doors and small businesses, once considered the backbone of any small-town economy, will be shuttered 'quite possibly forever.

I for one cannot face a world without hope. Call me the eternal optimist but I have to hope the human spirit cannot be so easily broken by a tiny spike protein only visible under a microscope. I remain hopeful that the good people who donate, volunteer, follow protocols and public health advice, who show up for work every day in our overburdened health care systems, that each of these things will somehow eventually vanquish this invisible foe. I have to have hope that the seemingly increasing impossibility of this being true 'is only a possibility that (we) don't understand yet.'

In the meantime, if you need me I'll be doing some other things A Boy Called Christmas references. That is, in the spirit of hope I'll: 'eat more gingerbread, chocolate, jam and cake'. Give someone a present. Like a toy or a book, or a kind word or a big hug. Laugh,

even if there is nothing to laugh about?. (and) think of a happy memory. Or a happy future.?

Quotes from the movie, A Boy Called Christmas with Matt Haig and ** and the book, A Boy Called Christmas by Matt Haig. Also, an extract from How to Be Jolly: The Father Christmas Guide to Happiness.