

Listening for renewal

by BROCK WEIR

Despite the mud and soggy ground, families took advantage of the sun Mother Nature graced us with to take full advantage of the Easter Weekend that is now behind us.

It was, for many, a time to truly get back out there, take in the fresh air, absorb the sun, and, if you were amongst those celebrating the observance, maybe even collect a few colourful or chocolatey eggs left out in the spirit of Easter.

Spring may have got off to a bit of a slow start this year, but with this week's forecasted warm weather, it is well and truly here. Over the past few weeks, families of many faiths, backgrounds, and individual traditions, have had many reasons to celebrate the dawn of a new season, and now the feeling of renewal is all around us.

The birds are singing, the birds are chirping, and, I don't know about the rest of you, but with those two potent factors, along with the extended daylight hours, I'm not only feeling renewed, but re-engaged with the world around me re-energized to take it on.

In the Christian calendar, Easter is, of course, a time to mark the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, with Maundy Thursday, which fell on April 6 this year, serving as the poignant prelude to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

This year, however, Maundy Thursday coincided with another significant event ? the start of the one-month countdown to the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla at Westminster Abbey on Saturday, May 6.

While the accession of a new monarch is tied with mourning its predecessor, the start of a new reign, such as that on September 8, 2022, is also a time of renewal, with fresh perspectives, new ways of engagement, and different approaches writ large are brought to the table by the now-heavy head that wears the crown.

This new reign is no exception ? and to underscore this point, featured in the formal Coronation invitation is the image of The Green Man, a powerful symbol of nature and included in this depiction is a bower of wildflowers flowing out of its mouth to form a beautiful herbaceous border to frame one of the most coveted cards of the year.

Yet, as much as the feeling of renewal is in the air, excitement for next month's big event in this country is, in my opinion, unfortunately muted.

That is not to say, however, that nothing is planned or that things aren't in the works.

Once again in the spirit of renewal, and reflecting the King's passion for environmental stewardship, Federal government buildings, including Parliament Hill, as well as other notable landmarks like the Horseshoe Falls and CN Tower will be bathed in green light to mark the occasion.

In addition to a Canadian delegation being sent to London to attend the big day, here at home a ceremony in Ottawa, the details of which remained scant at press time this week, will include speeches, artistic performances and special unveilings.

?Dignitaries from the Table of Precedence of Canada, including members of the King's Privy Council for Canada, eminent Canadians, and individuals with ties to causes dear to His Majesty will be in attendance,? said the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage a few weeks ago.

But, even closer to home, few events, again at the time of this writing, have been announced in our communities to mark such a historic event ? a shame, as what the King stands for, as he's underscored multiple times as Prince of Wales, are causes close to our

hearts as well.

If only we take the time to listen.

On Thursday, when the month-long countdown to the Coronation began, I revisited some of the speeches our new Head of State has made in Canada, and what struck me was his commitment to the simple act of offering a listening ear.

It may not sound like such a herculean effort on the surface, but it's all too valuable in this day and age ? both globally and here at home where we're still grappling with the realities of the Truth & Reconciliation process, even if Truth & Reconciliation isn't currently dominating the news cycle.

?Time and again, I have seen what makes this country truly great: her people and what they stand for ? outward-looking, big-hearted, and embodying Canada's inherently global values,? said the then-Prince of Wales in Newfoundland and Labrador last May, underscoring the themes of people and service (to family, community and country) that was the hallmark of his mother's Platinum Jubilee celebration in 2022. ?If I may say so, this goes to the heart of what makes Canada so special and what my family and I have long admired so greatly about this country. It is seen in acts of kindness every day, in communities big and small, from coast to coast to coast, on the part of healthcare workers and first responders, teachers, community leaders, military personnel and veterans. It is demonstrated by the many Canadians who have opened their homes to those seeking refuge from conflicts around the world. It is made manifest by Canada's determination to be a force for good in our world.

?As we look to our collective future, as one people sharing one planet, we must find new ways to come to terms with the darker and more difficult aspects of the past; acknowledging, reconciling and striving to do better. It's a process that starts with listening. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to discuss [with Governor General Mary Simon, the first Indigenous person to hold the office] the vital process of reconciliation in this country ? not a one-off act, of course, but ongoing commitment to healing, respect and understanding. I know that our visit here this week comes at an important moment with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples across Canada, committing to reflect honestly and openly about the past and to forge a new relationship for the future.

?We (he and the then-Duchess of Cornwall) look forward to listening to you and learning about the future you're working to build. As so often in the history of this country and her people, Canadians have embarked on a journey that demands commitment and courage. My wife and I could hardly be more privileged to travel part of this journey with you.?

While the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla has not captured world's attention to the same extent as Elizabeth II's Coronation did in 1953, at least not yet, I am optimistic and looking forward to seeing the Crown renewed, re-engaged, re-energized and determined to be a part of our national conversation.

The least we can do is prick up our ears and listen to the start of a new chapter of our shared history.