

Baha'i community celebrates 200th anniversary

By Anne Treadwell of Ayr

Through the kind invitation of a Baha'i friend, Jaellayna Palmer, I attended the celebration last Saturday of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, in Tehran, Persia (now Iran).

I was one of about 80 people of all ages enjoying this birthday party held at the North Dumfries Community Complex on Saturday, October 21st.

During the "meet and greet" time at the beginning of the evening, when I felt warmly welcomed to the event. I chatted with a woman who had been born and grew up in Iran, lived for a while in India, and eventually emigrated to Canada. She told me that for many years no governments or organizations other than the United Nations had been helpful to Baha'is who were fleeing persecution in Iran – and she still feels a deep sense of gratitude to the UN for this.

I asked why the Baha'is were persecuted, and my new acquaintance explained that the major reason was the conflict of Baha'u'llah's teaching that he was the Manifestation of God for this age, with the teaching of Islam that Mohammed was the final Manifestation, or Prophet – and also the Baha'i emphasis on world unity and peace between nations.

In light of the large roomful of



LOCAL BAHAI CELEBRATE 200TH ANNIVERSARY – Back row, from left, Maryam Ahrari, Haleh Mahmoodi, Venus Razzaghi, Edwin Sanbat, Ed VandenDool, Judy Weaver, David Weaver, Pedram Maieknejad, Nabil Ahrari, Adib Ahrari, and Farid Vejdani. Middle row, from left, Fereshteh Rashidi, Gita Rashidi, Pariya Vejdani, Tuba Mumtazi, Ramona Vejdani, Arlene Pennington, Jaellayna Palmer, John Palmer, and Marioucher Rashidi. Front row, from left, Sahara Bagheri, Rayyan Vejdani, Kian Kamali, Soha Ahrari, Saba Vejdani, Arya Kamali, Shahram Ahrari, Absent from photo, Samieh Bagheri.

people present at this celebration, I wondered how many Baha'i live in our area?

There are 20 in North Dumfries, it seems – though there are about 500 adult members in Waterloo Region as a whole. They are a diverse group of people, and their faith is one of the fastest growing religions in the world.

During the evening there were brief presentations by local Baha'i representatives, a video illustrating the many names of God and the rich meanings of those names, a skit by a youth group, a presentation by a young musical duo, and a folksy singer (Ed Vanderdool) who entertained in a relaxing style. He and all the presenters were Baha'i, bearing impressive testimony to their faith in the family of humankind

– and welcoming visitors as part of that family.

The evening culminated in the serving of delicious refreshments – and more food for the spirit, as people met and mingled!

If you would like more information about Baha'i and their faith, go to the website www.northdumfries-bahais.org, www.bahai.org, or www.ca.bahai.org.

Thank you to everyone who joined us in the joyous celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah!

With special appreciation to the following for attending our gathering on 21 October:

- * Mayor: Sue Foxton
- * Member of Provincial Parliament: Mrs. Kathryn McGarry
- * Member of Parliament: Mr. Bryan May

The Baha'is of North Dumfries