



UAF news and information

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– By Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

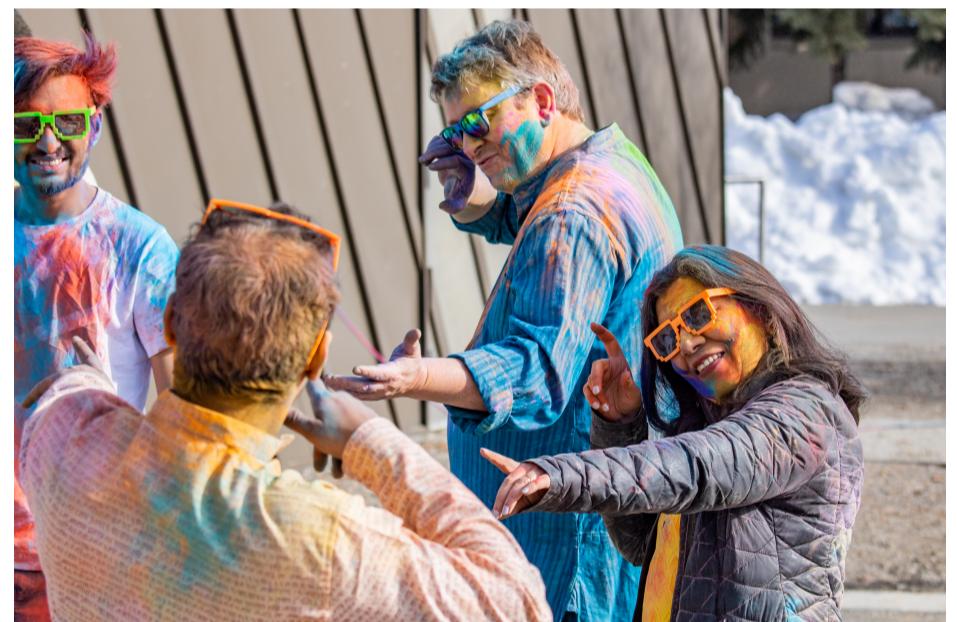
During a daily phone conversation with my mother, who lives in India, she remarked, "It is hot like in summers. It feels like spring is long gone." I looked out of my window, and snowflakes were coming down. In Alaska, seasons have a whole different meaning. Here, I can still talk about the idea of welcoming spring for a long time!

Last month, students of the UAF Namaste India club organized a free-for-all event to celebrate Holi – the exuberant festival of colors that marks the beginning of spring in India. A group of 50 or so students, faculty, staff and community members of all ages came together on a Saturday morning to be a part of this joyous festival that celebrates the diversity of our communities. The very act of being together, sharing food and stories, singing, dancing and playing with colors forged connections that are at the heart of seeding and nurturing a sense of belonging. As I participated, I forgot about my recent worries, my pending to-do list and just lived the moment.

The kaleidoscope of colors was a reminder of happiness, love and new beginnings. On the topic of new beginnings, Holi sends one more powerful message – to let go and let be. Let go of grudges, let go of animosity, let go of rivalry. Reflect, reach out, forgive, mend, heal, and mark a new beginning. These messages are echoed in our ancient scriptures, in anecdotes we hear from our elders, and even in contemporary Bollywood music. For many reasons, letting go is not easy. It may take us away from our joy or pain, our conflict or peace, our positive or negative narratives. We relate to these feelings, and letting go shakes what we identify with.

And yet, I have heard many stories of how letting go changed lives. People who found it difficult to talk to each other for a long time garnered the strength on the day of Holi to take the first step to reconcile. Reconciliation is a mindful journey that can lead to greater individual peace and collective harmony amongst very diverse people and communities. I often remind myself and those around me that [UAF has six strategic goals](#), and one is to embrace and grow a culture of respect, diversity, inclusion and caring. I hope we can all participate in many more community-based celebrations that provide us opportunities to expand our social circles, share and learn, care and be cared for, and in turn, build a sense of belonging and collective well-being.

Friday Focus is written by a different member of UAF's leadership team every week.



UAF photo by Marina Santos

Provost Prakash (right) and her husband Rudi Gens (middle) dancing with students and community members during the UAF Holi 2024 celebrations.



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