

A MESSAGE FROM NWAC'S CEO

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WELCOME TO THE 15TH EDITION OF KCI-NIWESQ, THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA.

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAY SEASON, AS WE SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE BEAUTIFUL INDIGENOUS DECORATIONS WE ARE ENJOYING THIS MONTH AT NWAC'S SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC INNOVATION CENTRE IN GATINEAU, QUEBEC, WHICH OPENED LAST SPRING. AS THE CENTRE IS A HUB FOR INDIGENOUS ART, IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT WE HAVE DECKED IT OUT, NOT WITH BALLS OF HOLLY BUT WITH THE BEAUTIFUL ARTISAN CRAFTWORK OF INDIGENOUS

For some, the holiday season is about Christmas. But Indigenous Peoples were marking the winter solstice long before European contact. It is a time of year when long nights and winter temperatures call for warmth and light and communion with family and friends.

Within these pages, Clan Mother Janie Hill says winter reminds us to slow down and practise quiet reflection. She suggests that we take a cue from the bears and turtles who are resting and rejuvenating in preparation for the year ahead.

We also talk to Blair Stonechild, a professor of Indigenous Studies at First Nations University of Canada and author of two books about Indigenous spirituality. He tells us that Indigenous people who have moved away from the Christian church to embrace the customs of their ancestors can still find much joy in the holiday season.

You will hear from Diane Montreuil, a Knowledge Keeper and leader of the Art & Culture Society for the Métis Nation of Canada. She tells us about the way her family members celebrated Christmas and New Year, with Métis traditions even though they did not directly acknowledge their ancestry.

Inuksuk Mackay, one of the two sisters who make up the singing duo PIQSIQ, explains their throat singing on the Christmas album *Quviasugvik: In Search of Harmony*. Throat singing was once prohibited by the Christian church. But it has made a resurgence, and

incorporating it into old Christian standards was a way to honour the season that felt honest and true.

Two Indigenous artisans, Catherine Byrne and Alicia Asp-Chief, tell us that making Christmas ornaments—which are being sold in NWAC's Artisanelle boutique—helps put them in a holiday mood.

So, thank you once again for opening the pages that follow. Thank you for reading the 15th edition of *Kci-Niwesq*. Please drop us a line and let us know what you think at reception@nwac.ca.

MIIGWETCH.