

A special Christmas



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By Nate Smelle

Everybody knows that without his reindeer, Santa Claus would not be able to deliver his presents to children all over the world on Christmas Eve. As an essential ingredient in the equation producing a merry Christmas, these magical creatures - which in North America are known as caribou - hold a special place in every child's heart. Living in a time when children of elementary school age can more readily identify corporate logos than they can species of birds or wildlife, somehow these same subjects can list the names of each of Santa's team of caribou.

Soon after stumbling upon a campaign online labeled #SaveTheNorthPole, I found myself watching a short children's Christmas special on YouTube called, Help Santa Save the North Pole: A Christmas Video. In the video, Santa, noticing that the North Pole is melting, begins working with an elf to make his workshop more environmentally friendly.

Step by step, Santa and the elf make changes to their workplace and way of life, intended to help save the North Pole from the climate crisis. They switch the workshop to run on renewable energy produced from the wind and sun, while continuing to practice energy conservation by switching off the lights and any electronics when they aren't in use. As part of their efforts to redesign the way they live and operate the workshop in harmony with the natural world, they also begin reducing the amount of plastic and packaging they use. Santa and the elf also urge the other elves and children around the world to help them in their campaign to protect the North Pole from global heating by making eco-friendly life changes themselves, and encouraging their parents to do the same. As the elf says to Santa, "If we all work together, we make a difference we can measure."

Now in the green Christmas spirit courtesy of the film, I began rewatching many of my favourite Christmas specials as a child. Seeing Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer for the first time with my new set of eye, and hearing with my new ears, it dawned on me how forward-thinking this special was when it was released in 1964 - only four years before Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated for being Black and demanding justice and equality.

Taking into consideration that Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer appears on our screens repeatedly every holiday season, I am guessing nearly everyone reading this column has seen the iconic children's program. Thinking of how timely the message delivered by Help Santa Save the North Pole: A Christmas Video is, and how well-suited it is for all ages, I noticed for the first time how Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer also encourages watchers to change their way of living and interacting with others for the betterment of society.

By confronting issues such as discrimination, bullying and workers' rights amid this heated time of racial injustice, Rudloff the Red-Nosed Reindeer urges people to accept one another for who we are, and treat others how we want to be treated.

With more time to think and less opportunities to shop this holiday season thanks to the province-wide lockdown, I plan to spend some time testing out my new eyes and ears on the Christmas classics that will inevitably be playing in the background. It will certainly be a quieter Christmas season this year. However, in this moment of peace we have the opportunity to test out some of the life lessons these Christmas specials offer us each year. An opportunity to help Santa Save the North Pole, for instance.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!