

## Reasons to celebrate



By Nate Smelle

WITH THE JACK-O-LANTERN rotting on the front porch and the first snow of the season coming down I switched on the radio to see how much snow I could expect on this wintery Halloween morning. Waiting for the weather report I became mesmerized by the swaying of the trees surrounding my house.

The freshly snow-covered limbs of the giant spruce trees to my west and south reminded me of the screeching Banshee in the horror film I had watched the night before.

Snow-white branches stretching out in all directions like ghostly fingers I could not take my eyes away from its hypnotic dancing. Dialing in the radio station a little better to see if I could find some music to match the tree's performance I could hear the sound of a bell ringing through the static. As I fine-tuned the channel to decipher its origin suddenly there it was...biting my ears like the first blackfly of spring the first Christmas jingle of the season.

Pausing for a moment out of respect for Santa Claus, Jesus and the Christmas spirit I re-focused my attention from the tree to the speakers.

I felt myself being consumed by the overwhelming urge to spend money.

Pondering the age-old question we all ask ourselves before pouring out the contents of our wallets into some lucky soul's cash register, I asked myself who has been naughty and who has been nice?

Although Halloween was still happening, I could not stop thinking about Christmas.

It wasn't really all that surprising as I thought about my distraction a little deeper. A few week's earlier I had been killing time browsing the Halloween costumes and decor at a local department store when I noticed last year's Christmas leftovers had been strategically blended into the same display. It didn't bother me though. I love the holidays. Who doesn't? Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Halloween, Earth Day, the Day of the Dead or Thanksgiving you are still celebrating. In my books that is what it is all about - the celebration!

When we celebrate we make time for friends, family and everything we care about. When we celebrate we show each other what truly matters to us.

Shedding the status-quo for a moment to embrace one another in the name of this unconditional love that we express on such special occasions, is how we define ourselves and what we value.

For many Indigenous people around the world the first snowfall of the season is reason to celebrate. In honour of this definitive moment of seasonal transformation I always do my best to recognize this shift. Since moving here I began celebrating this phenomenon with an all-day hike. A tradition my canine companions have always enjoyed with me. Honouring this tradition on my own this year, now that my friends Pal and Dudley have moved on to their next destination, I filled my pockets with provisions for the day and hit the trail before I could check in on the weather. As I crawled my way through the thick forest I could hear the four

legs of a creature rapidly heading my way. Sitting still for a moment to ready myself for its arrival, I prepared my camera as the creature approached. Hoping to catch the animal unaware of my presence before it ran away or tried to eat me. I snapped the shutter feverishly, until suddenly it appeared. No, it wasn't the Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown, it was two of my two oldest friends from the neighbourhood, a pair of pooches named Patches and Abigail that live down the road. Now with these two joining the expedition there was even more reason to celebrate.