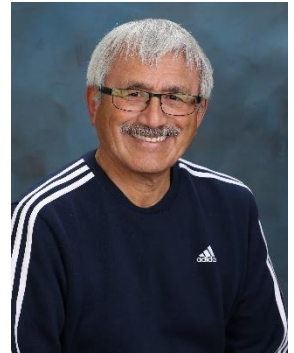


NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Bryce Mercredi
Christmas Trees



Before the advent of artificial Christmas trees, we had to go out in the bush to get our trees. Generally around the 20th of December we would head out with a saw, sled and a .410 shotgun. Dad carried the shotgun in case we saw some ptarmigan.

We would head out in the early morning when it was light enough to see, about 10:00 am. The days were very short and we had to be home before dark, about 3:30. The temperature quite often would be in the minus 25-minus 30 degrees C. We didn't have a car so we walked, pulling our sled.

Sometimes we would see some ptarmigan which Dad shot, for our dinner.

The trees were stunted and ragged looking and as a result we had to cut down two trees. We tied them down to the sled and headed home to a bowl of warm soup. The trees were brought in to thaw out, then the best looking tree was chosen. To fill the gaps, branches were cut off the second tree, holes were drilled in the "good" tree and the cut branches pushed into the holes until the tree had an even appearance. The tree was very thirsty and we had to keep it watered.

The tree was decorated with lights and tinsel and glass baubles. Sometimes the lower baubles would fall down, but not break and at night we would hear the baubles rolling on the floor. The mice were pushing the baubles on the floor which had no carpet. The house we lived in had a root cellar but no cement basement, therefore there were mice in the house.



Instead of a basement we had a root cellar where we stored our root vegetables and canned fruit and berries. We cut down two trees until I was about twelve years old, when dad bought an artificial tree. Dad said that we should leave the trees to grow as they grew so slow in the frigid climate. We never cut another tree again.