

# *NI'NOXSOLA*

Elders in Residence Program  
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Sheila Buchanan  
Christmas



My Christmas was not like any. Our only family ritual was to attend midnight mass. It did not matter how old or young you were. You were expected to attend with the family. If you fell asleep, you were awakened and had to walk the two miles home after mass. We did not complain, we did what was expected of us.

There was no Christmas tree or presents. It was not a day for celebration for our family. It was just another day. One reason was because we were too poor for all those things. Secondly our celebration was reserved for New Year's Day.

On New Years day people came from all over to enjoy a meal at our table and eat grandma's favorite lupocheen. It was a spice type of pudding which was steamed for hours, then baked in the oven for a few hours. She would commence the process early New years eve so it would be ready for the next day. Everyone commented on her lupocheen and said it was the best they ever tasted. My aunts have all tried to duplicate her recipe but failed.

We did not miss the presents or the Christmas tree because that was the way we were raised and had never experienced a turkey dinner or presents. In fact, I do not think I tasted turkey until I got married and my mother-in-law cooked a big Christmas family dinner. I loved it the first time I tasted it. I still enjoy turkey with dressing today.

I began to celebrate Christmas after I got married and had children of my own. I made sure we had a real Christmas tree, and the children would love to decorate it. There were no fancy electric lights on it, only plain Christmas balls, tinsel and some garland. It did look very festive. We made sure Santa came to our house and left presents for our kids. They were always anxious to get up early and open their gifts that were left there by him. I wanted my kids to experience things I was not able to. It was a joy to watch them get excited about the gifts they got. They

never complained and were happy with their new toys. There were no electronics or fancy toys in those days, amazingly simple things like tonka toys and dolls for my girl. The kids bought one gift for each parent. It would be one gift from all of them. We were never extravagant in any way. Money was still tight in those days. We always made the best of any holiday or birthday to satisfy our children so they would experience things we were not able to when we were growing up.

Christmas is very commercialized these days, not like in the past. It was not as detailed or celebrated to the extent it is now. It's nice to get together with family and enjoy a turkey dinner. Presents are not important, family gatherings are.

That was my Christmas and I do not regret any of it. My grandparents did what they thought was right and didn't go overboard with trying to shower us with gifts.

Sheila Buchanan (Kookum)

