

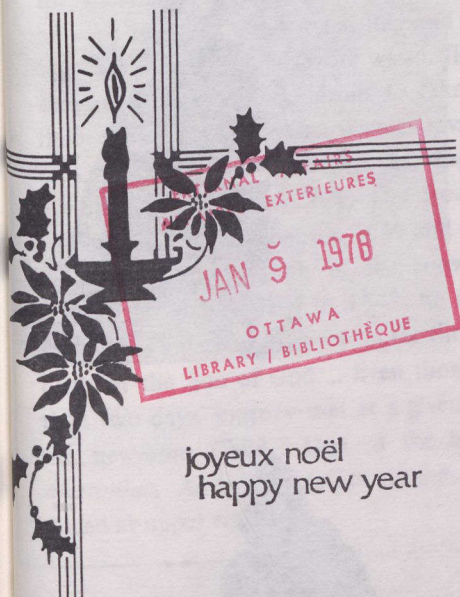
# Canada Weekly

RE



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## Snowed under — but merry nonetheless

Despite the fun poked at Canada's winter weather in the following article by colleague Tom Donoghue of the Visits Section, Canadians wouldn't be without their snow — especially at Christmas.

Christmas in Canada means snow, ice, skiing, hockey, curling, turkey dinner, family gatherings and sleigh rides across unbroken snow, right?

Well...almost.

To many Canadians, the joys of Christmas mean freezing rain, stranded automobiles, dead batteries, whirring tires, "clowns" without snow tires, splashed pedestrians and the ever-popular pastime, driveway shovelling.

Indeed, Christmas is more than a religious feast and holiday season. It marks the last hurrah before Canadians brace themselves for yet another winter. In Vancouver, British Columbia, Christmas means a little more rain, a spot of sleet and a dash of snow. It's a shade colder than it is the rest of the year, but when the television news shows Montrealers "digging out" after a 25-centimetre snowfall, things don't seem so bad. After all, there's always skiing on B.C.'s Whistler Mountain to keep one busy and maybe the last round of golf before "old man winter" gets serious.

While the Vancouverite is out golfing, the rest of the country is treated to the standard front-page photographs of that same Vancouverite teeing off. A delightful image, particularly enjoyable after one has shovelled 25 centimetres of snow from the driveway.

Albertans, specially those around Calgary, enjoy the Chinooks, those warm winds from British Columbia. Edmonton is too far north to catch them, but there, residents are warmed by the growing revenues from the province's oil.

Inhabitants of Manitoba and Saskatchewan are the objects of continuing admiration of the rest of Canada. Only a rare breed of Canadian would willingly, if not joyfully, endure 40 to 80 below zero temperatures with such enthusiasm. Curling brooms appear everywhere on the streets at all hours of the day. To the uneducated, one might think these prairie folk had a fetish about tidiness — the truth is, for some strange reason, they're fanatical about sweeping ice.

Ontario enjoys the gentle and colour-



Michel, Sacha, Justin  
at Pierre E. Trudeau

The Prime Minister's Christmas card shows him with his children, Sacha, Justin and Michel. The photo was taken recently by Mrs. Trudeau.

## Ancient European Christmas ceremony still practised in Quebec

The centuries-old custom of blessing and distributing little bread rolls, called *les petits pains de Ste-Geneviève*, will take place again during Midnight Mass in the Mohawks' Catholic church in Caughnawaga, near Montreal, on Christmas Eve.

The blessing and distribution has taken place annually since 1669, shortly after the early Jesuit missionaries founded the first Christian mission in what is now called Laprairie.

According to tradition, Ste-Geneviève, who died in 512, played an important role in saving the inhabitants of Paris, France, undergoing a pagan siege, from starvation.

It is said that she escaped from the city and returned with 14 boats laden with wheat, which was then baked into little bread loaves and it was from this incident that the devotion of *les petits pains* derives.

The only other places where similar *petits pains* ceremonies are held are at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires Church in Quebec City, and in Paris, where Ste-Geneviève is the patron saint of the French capital.

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