

Bounty of sunlight

CULTURES AROUND the world celebrate the summer solstice, with its days of extended light, warmth and culmination of spring's promise. It precedes the so-called dog days of summer, signalled by the appearance in our hemisphere of the dog star, Sirius, when the hottest temperatures of the year suck moisture from the earth and fire touches the forests. The celebration of light and quest for shade are emblematic not just of the active and contemplative aspects of our lives, but also of the printmaker's handling of light and dark, negative and positive space.

This summer's wildfires in British Columbia, among the worst in the province's recorded history, saw more than three million acres burn. Between discussions of climate change and forest management, various media reported on how the fire-keepers of the province's Syilx people managed fire in the Okanagan, conducting controlled burns that saw scorched earth assure not-scorched earth, a balance of positive and negative spaces in nature.

Shortly before those fires erupted in earnest, I had visited the Tacoma Art Museum, which featured work by printmakers from Indigenous communities across the Pacific Northwest. We could not appreciate prints without sunlight, so far as we would be unable to see them. Too often, however, printmakers from North America's original peoples have occupied a marginal place in the broader culture. We admire the work of the Cape Dorset printmakers as part of some

collective national inheritance without necessarily naming them as artists in their own right. Perhaps my earliest memory of First Nations art was the stamp issued for the centennial of the Northwest Territories in 1970 featuring Kenojuak Ashevak's *The Enchanted Owl* (1960). The artist's name doesn't appear on the stamp, her identity forgotten with the work we remember.

In this issue, Tania Willard sheds light on this history, invisible to many of us even as we marked Canada's formation as a nation 150 years ago—a nation that inherited specific obligations to the continent's original people, something of which various initiatives have sought to remind us. The work of these printmakers is inherently part of our history too, as—the saying goes—we are treaty people, people of the treaties our governments have signed on our behalf. This art speaks to something in our own collective experience too.

We all work under the same sun to cultivate bounty either from the soil or from the mind. Sunlight makes possible the work of our hands as growers or makers. Although this issue of *Amphora* arrives long after midsummer, it reminds us that the work of the year's high point continues to shine and nourish us as darkness gathers in the year's closing months.

~ Peter Mitham, editor

