

## METRO

# Children's Day marks winter solstice

By CAROL JOHNSTONE

There'll be no Christmas tree or anticipation of Santa's visit for sisters Madeline and Anna Boyce on Christmas Eve.

But the Halifax girls will be ready for Children's Day, a Buddhist holiday started in 1980 for the Buddhist and Shambhala communities. It's modelled on Boys' Day and Girls' Day in Japan.

In recent years the holiday has been celebrated on the weekend closest to the winter solstice — Dec. 25 this year — to accommodate parents' vacation schedules.

But it wasn't until the winter of 1988, the year after Buddhist leader Chogyam Trungpa died in Halifax, that Buddhist Martin Janowitz wrote the Story of Children's Day after a request by Trungpa's widow, Diana Mukpo.

"It was time to write something gentle and nourishing for the children" to go along with the celebration, said Mr. Janowitz: the story of the king and queen of Shambhala, a remote snowy kingdom where the winter solstice is marked by balls and parties, and gifts delivered to children by the royal couple.

On Dec. 13, Madeline, 7, and Anna, 10, set up their Children's Day shrine as they have since 1988, preparing for the Children's Day Eve arrival of the king and queen on, as the story says, their

"enormous white horses, his known as Silver Bird Moon Light and hers called Rainbow Lightning Wind."

The girls explain that the five bowls in front of the king and queen represent the five "sense" offerings: the one on the left has a small round mirror for sight, the next a seashell for hearing, in the centre a bowl of saffron water for smell, to the right of it, an "Everest of gummy bears" for taste, and on the far right a bowl with a stick wrapped with ribbon for touch.

"We celebrate the five senses because of how valuable they are," Madeline said.

Mr. Boyce said that as the children get older, "we can introduce more of what the king and queen represent, which is the fact that each of us could be a king or queen."

But the children already have definite ideas. Said Anna: "I would have to be very nice to everyone," adding "I would not make the taxes too high."

Madeline chimes in: "I wouldn't be greedy. I wouldn't let people crowd around me, because I'm nothing really special. I'm like everyone else." She adds: "I'd give all the poor people money."

Madeline's mother, Judy, said part of the Children's Day tradition is for each child to give something special they own to charity. Last year it was Byrony House for battered women and their children.



Kerry Doubleday

Madeline and Judy Boyce finish their Children's Day shrine in anticipation of the arrival of the King and Queen of Shambhala