

Spotlight on Books



Angela Hovak Johnston's *Reawakening Our Ancestors' Lines: Revitalizing Inuit Traditional Tattooing* is a collection of photos and brief essays from participants in her amazing, admirable, and beautiful traditional tattooing project spearheaded by Johnston back in 2016.

With assistance from a traditional tattoo artist from Alaska, a contemporary tattoo artist from Yellowknife, a photographer, Elders, and more, Johnston explored the history behind the striking and unique cultural body art, including the shameful way it nearly died out altogether due to colonialist pressures. Most importantly

she began tattooing new volunteers.

Because of the rapid decline in the art across the north and because Inuit from different communities assigned different meanings, there were also differences in interpretation. Some suggested the tattoos traditionally had symbolic cultural meaning, other suggested they had more individually assigned symbolism, and still more suggested that the tattoos were for beauty, not symbolism at all.

In any case, for each volunteer in the project the art, the process, and the various symbols took on much importance. Most powerfully, it helped connect the volunteers with one another, with their families, and to Inuit communities past and present.

Flawlessly capturing these beautiful stories are crisp, artistic photos courtesy of Cora DeVos of Little Inuk Photography.

Meet, listen to, and talk with Angela Hovak Johnson as one of the many talented local writers participating in this year's NorthWords Writers Festival beginning on May 31st.

John Mutford, Library Manager

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