

LEAD — WITH — DIVERSITY

REHMAN ABDULREHMAN, Ph.D.

Celebrating Everything: **A Guide to Improving Inclusion Through Celebration.**

The key to ensure representation culturally, across all segments of Canadian society is to assist with creating a *truly* multicultural society. This means that Canadians from all communities feel they are represented publicly, in one cultural umbrella or another. Celebrating Everything, or more accurately, at least one major holiday or observance of different cultural communities in our country, can allow us to not only be more inclusive, but help educate and inform those who do not belong to those communities, thereby reducing ignorance, and thus bias and the roots of racism. In many ways, this makes us more cross culturally competent promoting pluralism and democracy. Celebration allows us to address ignorance and hate, through a more functional and positive way that the anxiety and stress that typically come with this kind of discussion. The goal is also to celebrate these holidays the way that these Canadian communities celebrate them, turning what is typically perceived as foreign into local, exotic into normal, and what is other or *them* into *us*; increasing relatability between different groups of people. To be clear, this is different than global festivals like Folkorama, where cultures can be stereotyped into how things were done “back home”. Rather, this is an initiative to shift thinking and practice to what we truly consider Canadian, to move beyond tokenism, and to empower positive cultural and ethnic identities in all Canadians, young and old.

Our current calendar of holidays reflects Christian, or Eurocentric holidays, or at least, primary ones. The goal now is to ensure equity and representation by doing the same with other cultural groups by looking at the umbrella groups communities fall under.

The best way to do this is to start to ensure major religious or cultural holidays are acknowledged publicly by government, business, schools, the media and private organizations. Since religious holidays (not unlike Christmas and Easter) are celebrated both religiously and culturally (secularly) from people in cultural communities, it is important religious and cultural holidays are included in this calendar, and are noted below.

Religious Holidays

Christianity

Communities who are not Caucasian but come from countries with a Christian heritage or culture (e.g., Latin, African, European, and Philipino communities), will be included in the current celebration of holidays such as Christmas and Easter. To be more inclusive, considering the different ways these are celebrated by cultural communities into our current practice would allow those already existent holidays to feel more inclusive (e.g., Popcorn ceremony for Ethiopian community). But because they already exist, cultural communities from Christian based countries, will already have representation. Our focus will be to include holidays listed below as they are not currently represented. Including different cultural aspects to already celebrated holidays is easier to do, and we do some of this already. Holidays below are where we need to place our focus to increase equity and inclusion.

Judaism

1. Rosh Hashanah
2. Yom Kippur (observed not celebrated).

Islam

1. Ramadan & Eid al Fitr (month observed, day celebrated at the end)
2. Eid al Adha

Hinduism

1. Diwali (also celebrated by Sikhs, Jains & Buddhists).

Buddhism

1. Vesak (birth of Buddha). But also many Buddhists also belong to other cultural communities and celebrate other noted holidays listed in this list, and may find inclusion in those holidays.

Sikhism

1. Baisahki (Vasakhi)

Bahai

1. Nawruz (also celebrated culturally by Persian, Kurdish, & Afghani community). But Bahai's also celebrate many Muslim and Christian holidays as well.

Cultural Holidays

It will also be important to ensure representation of cultural holidays from communities that may not belong to any religious community or have intersecting identities that are very important to them.

Two that I think of that fall in that category that do not have representation in religious holidays noted above are the:

East Asian Community

1. Lunar New Year (less inclusive term was Chinese New Year).

Indigenous community

1. National Indigenous People's day. Though noted last, this will be the most important day to celebrate as it celebrates the First Peoples of our country, and can be a step toward reconciliation.

**Consultation with communities is always encouraged as it allows clarification of how these holidays and observances can be acknowledged respectfully, and fully.*

Dr. R. Abdulrehman, C.Psych.

Clinical & Consulting Psychologist