

MULTICULTURAL AND DIVERSITY NEWSLETTER



MARCH 2025

MONTH-LONG OBSERVANCE

Women's History Month (**USA, UK**)

Mar 1

Ramadan (Islam)

This is the holiest month in the Islamic Year and begins at the sighting of the new moon. It commemorates the first revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad. Ramadan holds immense spiritual, religious, and social significance for Muslims around the world as it offers an opportunity for deep spiritual reflection, self-discipline, generosity, and closeness to Allah. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. By abstaining from food, drink, and sinful actions from dawn to sunset during the entire month, Muslims develop God-consciousness and gratitude for his blessings.



Mar 3

The Great Prayer Festival (Tibet, Buddhist)

It is one of the most significant religious festivals in Tibetan Buddhism. It was established in 1409 by Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism. It is a time when Tibetan Buddhists gather to pray for world peace, harmony, and the well-being of all beings. Monks engage in philosophical debates, prayer rituals, and recitations, reinforcing Buddhist teachings. Monasteries distribute food and tea to monks and laypeople, symbolizing compassion and generosity. The festival was banned in Tibet in the 1960s due to political restrictions. It continues to be celebrated in Tibetan communities in exile, particularly in India and Nepal.

Mar 5

Ash Wednesday (Christian)

It is a significant Christian observance that marks the beginning of Lent, a 40-day period of fasting, prayer, and repentance leading up to Easter Sunday, mirroring Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the desert. Ash Wednesday is observed by many Christian denominations, including Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, and some Protestant churches. Ash Wednesday reminds Christians of their mortality and the need for repentance. Clergy apply ashes to the forehead in the shape of a cross. The ashes used on Ash Wednesday come from burned palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday.



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Mar 8

International Women's Day (UN)

Celebrated on March 8th each year, International Women's Day (IWD) honours the achievements and contributions of women throughout history. The day also raises awareness about ongoing gender inequalities and women's rights issues. The origin of IWD dates back to 1908 when women in New York City protested for better working conditions, voting rights, and an end to discrimination. The day was celebrated for the first time in 1911 in several European countries. The United Nations began officially recognizing the day in 1975.

**EQUALITY
FOR
WOMEN**



Mar 14

Holi (Hindu, Sikh)

Holi, known as the "Festival of Colours", is a vibrant Hindu festival celebrated across India and many parts of the world. It signifies the arrival of spring, the victory of good over evil, and a time for joy, unity, and renewal. Holi is a time to let go of past grievances and start anew with love and friendship. Large bonfires are lit to symbolize the burning of evil. People gather around the fires, singing and praying for good fortune. Holi is celebrated in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and many other countries with Indian communities.

Mar 14

Purim (Jewish)

Purim, known as the Feast of Lots, celebrates the deliverance of Jews in Persia from the plot of the king's advisor, Haman, to exterminate them as recorded in the Book of Esther. The Jews were saved, and Purim was established as a day of rejoicing and gratitude. It is a time of celebration, feasting, and acts of kindness. The Book of Esther is read aloud in synagogues, with people cheering for Esther and booing Haman. People wear costumes to recall the hidden miracles in the Purim story. Traditional three-cornered cookies (Hamantash) filled with fruit, poppy seeds, or chocolate, symbolize Haman's hat.



Mar 17

St. Patrick's Day (N. Ireland, Ireland)

This day honours St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. He was born in Britain (late 4th century), kidnapped by Irish raiders, and enslaved in Ireland. After escaping, he became a Christian missionary and returned to Ireland to spread Christianity. He died on March 17, 461 AD, which became his feast day. It is a day of festivities, parades, and cultural pride, not just in Ireland but worldwide. Green symbolizes Irish pride, and shamrocks represent St. Patrick's teachings.



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Mar 20

Shunbun no Hi/Shunki-Sorei no Hi (Japan, Shinto)

Shunki-Sorei no Hi was a national holiday in Japan that was observed during the spring equinox. It was a Shinto event that honoured the spirits of the imperial ancestors. In 1948, after World War II, the Japanese government reformed the holiday system, and Shunki-Sorei no Hi was replaced by **Shunbun no Hi** (Spring Equinox Day), a secular holiday to comply with Japan's post-war constitution. This shifted the focus from imperial ancestor worship to a broader appreciation of nature and respect for all ancestors. It is a time to reflect on the past and seek blessings for the future. Activities include visiting shrines and temples, visiting family grave sites, house cleaning to symbolize renewal, and picnicking under cherry blossom trees.

Mar 20

Eostre (Wicca)

The Eostre festival was a feast day that celebrated the spring equinox. It was named after an Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, fertility, and new beginnings. Her symbol was the rabbit or hare, and the colours of the festival were green, yellow, and purple. The festival was celebrated by many pre-Christian people, including the Celts. People would cleanse their homes and sacred spaces, wash windows to let in sunlight, burn or discard anything decaying, and bathe in a salt bath while wearing spring flowers or foliage. Some believe the Christian holiday, Easter, derived from Eostre, and Easter traditions such as eggs and rabbits may have been absorbed from Eostre celebrations.



Mar 30

Ugadi (India, Mauritius, Nepal)

Ugadi marks the beginning of the Hindu New Year. The term Ugadi derived from the word Yugadi which is a combination of two great words: Yuga, which means age or period; and Adi, which means beginning, denoting the start of a new age. The festival coincides with the onset of the spring season, symbolizing renewal and rejuvenation in nature. Ugadi also holds deep religious significance, believed to be the day when Lord Brahma began creating the universe. It is marked by special rituals including the preparation of Ugadi Pachadi, a dish that combines six tastes - sweet, sour, salty, bitter, spicy, and tangy - symbolizing the variety of experiences one encounters in life. People often clean their homes, decorate their spaces, and wear new clothes.

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Mar 31

Eid al-Fitr (Islam)

Eid al-Fitr ("Festival of Breaking the Fast") is a major Islamic festival that marks the end of Ramadan. It celebrates the successful completion of Ramadan, and is a time for Muslims to express gratitude to Allah for the strength and patience shown during the month. The day begins with a special prayer, usually held in large congregational gatherings. Families and friends gather to celebrate with special meals and treats. Many Muslims wear new clothes as a symbol of renewal and joy. People exchange gifts and warm wishes. It is also a time to visit family members, especially the elderly and the sick to offer blessings.



OTHER OBSERVANCES

- Mar 1 - Baba Marta (**Bulgaria**)
- Mar 4 - Carnaval Parade (**Brazil**)
- Mar 15 - Hola Mohalla (**Sikh**)
- Mar 20 - Now Ruz (**Afghanistan, Iran-Bahai, Islam Ismaili, Zoroastrian**)
- Mar 20 - Poutuerangi (**Maori, New Zealand**)
- Mar 25 - Annunciation (**Christian**)
- Mar 26 - Birth of Prophet Zarathustra (**Zoroastrian**)
- Mar 26 - Laylat al-Qadr (**Islam**)
- Mar 30 - Mothering Sunday (**UK, Ireland**)

NATIONAL AND INDEPENDENCE DAYS

- Mar 1 - Independence Day (**Bosnia**)
- Mar 6 - Independence Day (**Ghana**)
- Mar 12 - National Day (**Mauritius**)
- Mar 15 - Memorial Day (**Hungary**)
- Mar 18 - Flag Day (**Aruba**)
- Mar 20 - Independence Day (**Tunisia**)
- Mar 21 - Harmony Day (**Australia**)
- Mar 22 - Emancipation Day (**Puerto Rico**)
- Mar 26 - Independence Day (**Bangladesh**)

Disclaimer:

In creating this newsletter, we aim to honour and celebrate the diversity of our community. While we strive to acknowledge a wide range of cultural and religious holidays and observances, we recognize that we may not be able to include every holiday or tradition. This is not a reflection of the value or importance of any holiday or tradition. We deeply respect all cultural, religious, and personal celebrations and appreciate your understanding.

Reference

Multicultural Calendar 2025
Sheena Singh, Creative Cultural Communications,
Toronto, ON.