

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

People from all over the world have moved to Canada. And many have brought more than just a suitcase with them. They have brought culture, traditions...and holidays!

Illustrated by Remie Geoffroi



Holiday celebrations in Canada began thousands of years ago. Our First Nations held celebrations to mark all kinds of events.

For example, they celebrated the harvest and the coming of spring. Many also paid tribute to the cycles of the sun and the moon.

No one is sure about the names of those holidays. But some of the ways in which they were celebrated are reflected in our holidays today. Thanksgiving, for example, is a time to celebrate the harvest.

As time passed, more people arrived in Canada.

They were explorers, fur traders, and settlers.

They were from England, France, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Italy, Poland, Spain and other places around the world.

These folks brought different holiday traditions with them.

Two popular ones were Christmas and Easter.

As different cultures settled all over the country, they continued to celebrate their traditional holidays.

Jews celebrated Hanukkah. Muslims celebrated Ramadan. Chinese immigrants celebrated their own New Year.

Canadians invented their own holidays, too. Canada Day celebrated the birth of the country in 1867.

Remembrance day honours the soldiers who gave their lives for our country.

The list goes on and on. But for this article, with Christmas right around the corner, we're going to focus on Canada's winter holidays.



People from all over the world have moved to Canada. And many have brought more than just a suitcase with them. They have brought culture, traditions...and holidays! Check out the rest of this article and you'll see four major celebrations. Each was brought to Canada by a different cultural group.

We can't guarantee you'll find a way to celebrate them all. But we guarantee this: With this info, you'll be celebrating a lot of Canadian culture this holiday season.

KWANZAA (QUAN-ZA)

**When to celebrate:**

December 26th to January 1st.

What is it:

Kwanzaa is a week-long celebration of African culture.

How to celebrate:

Have a Kwanzaa party. Dress up, dance, and feast!

Origin:

Kwanzaa was invented in 1966 by a professor from Nigeria, Africa. His name was Dr. Maulana Karenga. Dr. Karenga thought African-Americans needed to build stronger communities. He believed they could do that by focusing on African traditions.

Did you know?

The colours of Kwanzaa are black, red, and green.

BLACK is for the people.

RED is for their struggle.

GREEN is for the hope that comes from their struggle.

RAMADAN (RAH-MA-DAN)



When to Celebrate:

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar. (In 2006, September 24th to October 23rd.)

What it is:

Ramadan is a month-long religious holiday. During Ramadan, **Muslims** are not allowed to eat or drink while the sun shines.

How to celebrate:

Start your day with a meal before sunrise (suhur). End your day with a meal after sunset (iftar). Eat and drink nothing else!

Origin:

Ramadan celebrates an event that happened about 1400 years ago.

That's when the **Quran** was given to the Prophet Mohammed. (Some say Ramadan also honours a Muslim victory at the Battle of Badr.)

Did you know?

A **Muslim** is someone who believes in a religion called Islam. There are about 1.31 billion Muslims worldwide.

The **Quran** is the Holy Book that Islam is based upon.

HANUKKAH (HA-NU-KAH)



When to celebrate:

The 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev. (In 2006, Hanukkah begins December 16th.)

What it is:

Hanukkah is a holiday that lasts for eight days. It celebrates a miracle that happened long ago.

How to celebrate:

On each night, light a candle on the **menorah**. Cook some **latkes** Play with the **dreidel**.

Origin:

In 165 BC, a small Jewish army defeated a powerful Syrian-Greek force. The victory allowed the Jews to free the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Jews thanked their god, Hashem. Then they set out to repair the temple.

They needed light. But they found only enough oil to burn for one day. By some miracle, the oil burned for eight straight days. That is why Hanukkah is eight days long. It is also why Hanukkah is called the Festival of Lights.

Did you know?

A **menorah** is a candelabra that holds nine candles.

Latkes are potato pancakes fried in hot oil to represent the oil that burned in the temple.

A spinning top with four sides is called a **dreidel**

CHRISTMAS (KRIS-MISS)

**When to celebrate:**

The 25th day of December.

What is it:

Christmas is a religious holiday. It celebrates the birth of Jesus.

How to celebrate:

Decorate a tree. Put a stocking by the fireplace. If you've been good, Santa Claus will bring you some treats. Sing some carols. On the night before, eat a big dinner!

Origin:

Christmas started as an ancient Roman holiday called Saturnalia. It was a pagan festival (that means it wasn't Christian.)

A Roman Emperor named Constantine didn't like that. He wanted Saturnalia to be a Christian holiday. Constantine turned Saturnalia into Christmas.

Did you know?

Each Christmas, a giant tree travels from Nova Scotia to the city of Boston. It's Nova Scotia's way of thanking Bostonians who helped in the dark days following the Halifax Explosion.

When the massive tree arrives in Boston, people rejoice. They deck it out with thousands of bulbs and prepare for the tree's first lighting.

When Canada's tree comes to life, it fills Boston's city centre with holiday magic.