

WINTER 2024 VOLUME No.10

# diversity, equity & inclusion

## NEWSLETTER

LET'S TALK ABOUT:

THE DIVERSE FACES OF HOLIDAY STRESS

USING FOOD TO FOSTER CONNECTION

'TIS THE SEASON FOR CULTURAL HUMILITY

ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY UPDATE



Medical & Complex Care  
in Community



# FROM THE COMMITTEE

Welcome to the Winter 2024 edition of the PHSS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion newsletter. As we step into the serene stillness and frosty beauty of winter, our DEI journey continues with renewed purpose. Each edition reaffirms our dedication to cultivating a culture of inclusivity and belonging. Winter is a season for introspection and resilience, so as we gather warmth in this chilly season and witness the quiet strength of nature, let's celebrate diversity and honor the unique voices that bring vibrancy to our community.

*Thank You!*

PHSS DEI COMMITTEE

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## December

Advent	1-24
Hanukkah	24-Jan 2
Kwanzaa	26-Jan 1
Day of Persons with Disabilities	3
Pansexual Pride Day	8
Human Rights Day	10
International Migrants Day	18
Yule/Winter Solstice	21
Christmas Eve	24
Christmas Day	25
Boxing Day	26

## February

World Interfaith Harmony Week	1-7
White Cane Week	2-8
World Hijab Day	1
International Day of Women and Girls in Science	11
Thaipusam	11
Lantern Festival	12
Family Day	18
Nova Scotia Heritage Day	17
Pink Shirt Day	26
Losar (Tibetan New Year)	28
Lunar New Year/ Spring Festival	28/29

# WINTER CALENDAR

## January

Pongal	14-17
New Year's Day	1
Vasant Panchami	2
National Ribbon Skirt Day	4
World Braille Day	4
Orthodox Christmas	7
Lohri	13
Orthodox New Year	14
World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture	24
International Holocaust Remembrance Day	27
National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia	29



*By broadening awareness and approaching the season with care and intentionality, communities and workplaces can create inclusive, compassionate spaces that embrace the season's diversity.*



# The Diverse Faces of Holiday Stress

The holiday season, often celebrated as a joyful time, can also bring stress and anxiety. Financial pressures, family expectations, cultural nuances, and societal assumptions affect individuals differently.

Recognizing these dynamics through a DEI lens helps foster environments where everyone feels valued and supported.

Holiday experiences vary widely. Some find deep spiritual meaning in the season, while others may not celebrate at all. Small actions, like seasonal greetings or event planning, can unintentionally exclude or burden people. Financial stress, especially for those with limited resources, can also amplify feelings of isolation or inequity.

Emotional challenges, such as grief or loneliness, often intensify during the holidays. Marginalized individuals may feel excluded when dominant traditions overshadow their own, creating a sense of invisibility or tokenism. For example, focusing solely on Christmas while neglecting holidays like Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or the Winter Solstice can erase cultural diversity.



# BREAKING BREAD & BUILDING BRIDGES

## USING FOOD TO FOSTER INCLUSION

*Food has always been more than sustenance—it's a universal connector, a way to share culture, tell stories, and build community. In diverse spaces, whether in workplaces, neighborhoods, or social groups, food can serve as a powerful tool to promote understanding, celebrate differences, and create meaningful connections.*

### Food as a Cultural Storyteller

Every dish carries with it a history. From traditional recipes passed down through generations to modern fusions born from cultural intersections, food tells stories about where we come from and who we are. By sharing meals from different cultures, people can explore the richness of traditions that may be unfamiliar, fostering curiosity and respect for one another's backgrounds.

For example, hosting a potluck where participants bring a dish that represents their heritage can spark conversations about unique ingredients, preparation methods, and the significance of certain meals. This not only creates a sense of inclusion but also highlights the value of diversity in a tangible, delicious way.



### Breaking Down Barriers

Food also has a way of breaking down social and cultural barriers. Sitting together to share a meal levels the playing field, creating a space where people can connect as equals. It's an opportunity to build relationships in a relaxed, informal environment, where the focus is on enjoyment and connection rather than differences.

For individuals who may feel marginalized or excluded, being able to share their cultural foods can be empowering. It's a way to celebrate their identity while inviting others to appreciate and understand it.



### Tips for Using Food to Build Community

- **Host Inclusive Events:** Plan gatherings that highlight diverse cuisines. Be mindful of dietary restrictions, religious practices, and allergens to ensure everyone can participate comfortably.
- **Encourage Storytelling:** Pair meals with opportunities for people to share the significance behind their dishes, creating deeper cultural understanding.
- **Collaborate on Recipes:** Encourage cooking sessions where people can teach others how to prepare their favorite meals. It's a hands-on way to learn about each other's traditions.
- **Celebrate Together:** Use food as a way to acknowledge holidays and traditions from different cultures, fostering a sense of inclusion.

So, the next time you're thinking about ways to bring people together, start with a simple question: "What's your favorite dish?" You might be surprised how much you learn—and how much closer you feel—over a shared meal.

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*How to make*

# UGALI, SUKUMA WIKI & CHICKEN

Found in kitchens across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, this hearty meal is the epitome of comfort food. Ugali, a soft, maize-based staple, pairs perfectly with Sukuma Wiki, a flavorful sautéed greens dish, and tender, spiced chicken. It's simple, nourishing, and packed with tradition—perfect for gathering around the table this season.

Ready to bring this cultural classic to your kitchen? Let's dive into the recipe with Sandra and Regena!



## *Sukuma*

### **Prepare Ingredients**

- Wash and chop the kale, ensuring the stems are finely sliced or removed if preferred.

### **Cook Onions:**

- Heat the oil in a large pan or skillet over medium heat.
- Add the onions and sauté until they become soft and translucent.

### **Add Garlic and Tomatoes:**

- Stir in the minced garlic (if using) and chopped tomatoes.
- Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes break down into a thick mixture.

### **Add Kale:**

- Add the chopped kale to the pan.
- Mix well to combine with the tomato-onion mixture.

### **Cook the Sukuma Wiki:**

- Cover the pan and let the kale cook for about 5–7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it softens. Add a splash of water if needed to prevent sticking.

### **Season:**

- Add salt and black pepper (or chili flakes) to taste.
- Stir to combine.

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 bunch of kale (Sukuma wiki), finely chopped
- 2 medium-sized tomatoes, chopped
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil (vegetable or olive oil)
- 1 clove garlic, minced (optional)
- Salt to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper or chili flakes (optional)



## Ugali

### Boil the Water:

- In a large pot, bring 4–5 cups of water to a boil.
- Adjust the water amount depending on how firm or soft you prefer your ugali.

### Add Cornmeal Gradually:

- Reduce the heat to medium and gradually add the pre-cooked cornmeal to the boiling water while stirring continuously with a wooden spoon.
- This prevents lumps from forming.

### Mix Thoroughly:

- Keep stirring vigorously until the mixture thickens.
- The ugali should pull away from the sides of the pot, as it becomes firm and form a dough.

### Cook on Low Heat:

- Reduce the heat and let the ugali cook for another 3 to 5 minutes, turning it occasionally to ensure it cooks evenly.

### Shape and Serve:

- Use the spoon to mold the ugali into a round shape.

### Ingredients:

- 3 cups pre-cooked white cornmeal
- 4–5 cups water
- Salt (optional, to taste)



### Ingredients:

- 2 chicken breasts, chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (optional)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced (optional, for extra flavor)



## Spiced Chicken

### Season the Chicken

- In a bowl, mix the chopped chicken with paprika, salt, and black pepper.

### Heat the Pan:

- Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat.

### Cook the Chicken:

- Add the seasoned chicken to the pan in a single layer.
- Cook for 4 to 5 minutes on one side until browned, then flip and cook for another 4 to 5 minutes.

### Serve:

- Remove from heat
- Serve hot and enjoy!

# 'Tis the Season to Practice Cultural Humility

*The holiday season is a time of connection, celebration, and reflection. However, in diverse communities, it's also an opportunity to practice cultural humility—a lifelong process of self-awareness, respect, and openness to the experiences of others. During a time often marked by cultural and religious observances, embracing cultural humility ensures that everyone feels seen, valued, and included.*

## What is Cultural Humility?

Cultural humility goes beyond simply learning about other cultures. It involves acknowledging our own biases, recognizing that we don't know everything about someone else's experiences, and committing to lifelong learning. It means approaching others with curiosity and respect, rather than assumptions, and being willing to adjust our behaviors or expectations to create a more inclusive environment.

## Why Cultural Humility Matters During the Holidays

The holidays are celebrated differently across cultures and beliefs. While one person might look forward to Christmas traditions, another might observe Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, the Winter Solstice, or no holidays at all. Without cultural humility, it's easy to unintentionally exclude or alienate others by centering one dominant narrative or assuming that everyone celebrates in the same way.



Being culturally humble asks us to:

- **Ask Don't Assume:** Instead of presuming how someone celebrates, take time to ask. Questions like, "What does this season mean to you?" can open the door to meaningful conversations.
- **Expand the Narrative:** Recognize and include a variety of traditions in celebrations and discussions, ensuring that all voices are represented.
- **Reflect on Your Biases:** Be mindful of how your cultural lens might influence your expectations or interactions during the season.

## Small Actions, Big Impact

- **Inclusive Greetings:** Opt for neutral or inclusive language, such as "Happy Holidays," unless you know someone's specific preference.
- **Learn and Share:** Take time to educate yourself about traditions different from your own and share this knowledge to foster understanding.
- **Make Space for All:** Whether it's in your workplace, community events, or personal gatherings, ensure that everyone feels welcome and respected.

## Season for Growth

The holiday season offers a unique opportunity to celebrate not just traditions, but the diversity of the people around us. By practicing cultural humility, we can build stronger, more inclusive relationships, making the season brighter for everyone.

This year, let's not just share in the celebrations—let's also share in the learning, the listening, and the joy of understanding each other more deeply.

# Navigating Media Bias & Stereotypes

The holiday season is a time of joy for many, but it's also a period where biases in media and societal narratives become especially visible. From movies and advertisements to community events, the dominant holiday story often centers around a narrow, culturally specific lens—one that can inadvertently exclude or marginalize those whose experiences don't fit the mold.



Media portrayals frequently spotlight Christmas as the centerpiece of the season, often ignoring the rich diversity of other celebrations like Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, or the Winter Solstice. This overemphasis can make those who celebrate differently—or not at all—feel invisible or erased. Even within the Christmas narrative, stereotypes abound, reinforcing unrealistic expectations of lavish gift-giving, idealized family gatherings, and a singular "right" way to celebrate.

These depictions don't just shape perceptions; they set social norms. When only one kind of holiday experience is celebrated, it creates pressure to conform, leaving those who don't align with these norms feeling isolated or undervalued.



## Stereotypes and Exclusion

- **Gender Roles:** Advertisements often depict women as the primary gift-buyers, decorators, and caretakers, reinforcing traditional gender expectations.
- **Class Bias:** Many holiday campaigns showcase extravagant celebrations, creating a standard that feels unattainable for those facing financial hardship.
- **Family Expectations:** Whether it's in your workplace, community events, or personal gatherings, ensure that everyone feels welcome and respected.

## Fostering Inclusive Holiday Narratives

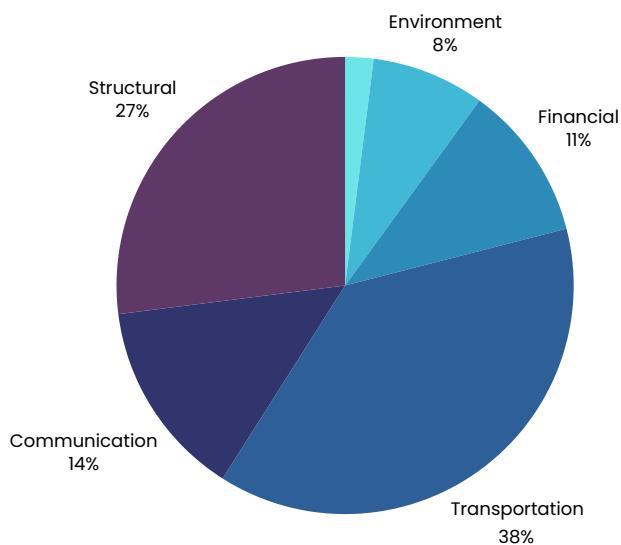
- **Challenge Media Bias:** Seek out and support content that highlights diverse holiday traditions and experiences. Share these stories with others to broaden perspectives.
- **Acknowledge Underrepresented Celebrations:** Incorporate multiple holidays into discussions, decorations, and events. Even small gestures, like displaying symbols from different traditions, can make a big impact.
- **Focus on Universal Themes:** Highlight values like generosity, connection, and gratitude that transcend specific holidays, creating inclusive spaces where everyone can participate.
- **Reframe Expectations:** Push back against media-driven ideals by celebrating authenticity over perfection. Normalize varied ways of experiencing the season.

# ACCESSIBILITY

## *The Barriers to Accessibility Survey*

Every year PHSS sends a 'Barriers to Accessibility' survey to individuals who receive support from PHSS. 194 people supported completed the survey in March 2024, which identified accessibility barriers that affected our community in 2023.

The information gathered is used to inform PHSS priorities and strategy opportunities for development and advocacy for those people supported. From the survey, people identified accessible transportation as their greatest barrier, followed by physical, structural barriers in their community and homes.



### ***Sub-Themes Identified from the Survey***

**Social Isolation:** a further impact on individuals supported due to lack of reliable and accessible transportation available to them.

**Loss of Income:** an identified outcome that is a result of both financial and transportation barriers for people supported.

**Inequity in Healthcare:** noted in the survey as a barrier due to attitudes and perceptions that may be held by some in our communities.

**Stigma in Community:** communication barriers were noted to further increase stigma and attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities within our communities.

## ***Moving Forward***

PHSS is committed to supporting individuals in addressing the barriers that they have identified. Please see below for a few initiatives of accessibility that PHSS is currently working on;

- In early 2024, PHSS collaborated with Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry at Western University in participating in their clinical skills sessions. This initiative is supportive of addressing inequity in healthcare for people with disabilities by helping students learn in a controlled setting.
- Open Doors, Open Minds, continues to advocate to London's Paratransit by attending meetings and seeking solutions for reliable, accessible transportation.
- In 2024, PHSS now requires that all new location Coordinators and full-time staff be driver trained to better accommodate people supported by PHSS.
- Also in 2024, PHSS Foundation acquired a new home that is being renovated to be fully accessible. This home is in response to changing needs of individuals supported currently living in a non-accessible location.





# COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

## London

### Event: **Magic Of Lights**

Date: November 22, 2024 – January 4, 2025

Location: Fanshawe Conservation Area

Description: A festive drive-through experience featuring over one million LED lights, celebrating the holiday season

### Event: **Broadway in London 2024/2025 Season**

Date: December 14, 2024 – May 27, 2025

Location: Canada Life Place

Description: A series of Broadway shows bringing diverse stories and performances to the community

### Event: **Winter Glow at Storybook Gardens**

Date: December 9, 2024 – January 5, 2025

Location: Storybook Gardens

Description: A winter wonderland featuring illuminated displays, interactive activities, and cultural performances.

## Ottawa

### Event: **Winterlude 2025**

Date: January 31 – February 17, 2025

Location: Various venues across Ottawa and Gatineau

Description: Canada's largest winter festival featuring ice sculptures, skating on the Rideau Canal, and cultural activities celebrating diversity.

### Event: **Coffee, Company and Conversation**

Date: December 19, 2024 – March 27, 2025

Location: St. Mark's Anglican Church, 1606 Fisher Avenue, Ottawa

Description: A community outreach program for older adults, fostering connection and conversation.

### Event: **Ottawa Ice Dragon Boat Festival**

Date: To Be Announced

Location: Dow's Lake, 1001 Queen Elizabeth Driveway, Ottawa

Description: International teams race beautifully decorated dragon boats on the world's largest skating rink in downtown Ottawa





EMPLOYER  
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As an Employer Partner with the Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion (CCDI), PHSS is able to provide a number of resources for staff to support us on our diversity and inclusion journey! If you haven't already; be sure to self-register today by scanning the QR code!

*(Be sure to use your PHSS staff email address when signing up!)*



CCDI Registration

[www.phsscommunity.com](http://www.phsscommunity.com)