

SPRING 2025 VOLUME No.11

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

NEWSLETTER

LET'S TALK ABOUT:

RAMADAN & EID CELEBRATIONS
TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY
RED DRESS DAY
ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL





FROM THE COMMITTEE

Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of the PHSS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion newsletter. As we step into the vibrant renewal of spring, our DEI journey continues with fresh energy and purpose. Each edition reaffirms our dedication to cultivating a culture of inclusivity and belonging. Spring is a season of growth, renewal, and hope, mirroring our commitment to fostering an environment where diversity flourishes. As we witness the blossoming of nature, let's also celebrate the unique voices and experiences that bring richness and vitality to our community.

Thank You!

PHSS DEI COMMITTEE



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March

Ramadan (Feb 28–March 29)
International Women’s Day (8)
Purim (13–14)
Holi (13–14)
Day to Combat Islamophobia (15)
St. Patrick’s Day (17)
Neurodiversity Week (17–23)
Iranian/Persian New Year (20)
International Francophonie Day (20)
Day for the Elimination of Racial
Discrimination (21)
World Down Syndrome Day (21)
Ugadi/Yugadi (30)
Day of Transgender Visibility (31)
Eid Al-Fitr (March 29 – April 1)
Great Lent (3–April 19)

May

Asian Heritage Month
Jewish Heritage Month
Dutch Heritage Day (5)
Red Dress Day (5)
Moose Hide Campaign Day (15)
International Day of Families (15)
Global Accessibility Awareness Day (15)
Lag Ba’Omer (15–16)
International Day of Living Together in
Peace (16)
Day Against Homophobia,
Transphobia, and Biphobia (17)
World Day for Cultural Diversity, for Dialogue
and Development (21)
Pansexual and Panromantic Visibility
Day (24)
Anti-Racism Awareness Week (26–30)
National AccessAbility Week (26– June 1)

SPRING CALENDAR

April

Autism Acceptance Month
Limb Loss Awareness Month
Sikh Heritage Month
Celebrate Diversity Month
World Autism Awareness Day (2)
International Day of Asexuality (6)
Palm Sunday (13)
Vaisakhi/Baisakhi (14)
Vishu (14)
Good Friday (18)
Easter Sunday (20)
Easter Monday (21)
St. George’s Day (23)
Armenian Genocide Memorial Day (24)
Day of Mourning (28)
Journey to Freedom Day (30)



Ramadan and Eid: A Time of Reflection, Compassion, and Celebration

As we approach the end of March, millions of Muslims around the world will be observing Ramadan, a sacred month of fasting, prayer, and reflection. This is followed by Eid al-Fitr, a joyous celebration marking the end of the fasting period. Here's what you need to know about these significant occasions.

What Is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and is considered the holiest month for Muslims. It is observed by fasting from dawn to sunset, refraining from food, drink, and other physical needs during daylight hours. The fast is broken with a meal called iftar after sunset, while the pre-dawn meal is known as suhoor.

Fasting during Ramadan is not just about abstaining from food—it is also a time for spiritual reflection, charity, and self-discipline. Many Muslims increase their acts of worship, such as reading the Qur'an, attending special nightly prayers (Taraweeh), and giving to those in need.

What Is Eid al-Fitr?

Eid al-Fitr, often referred to as the "Festival of Breaking the Fast," is celebrated at the end of Ramadan. It begins with a special communal prayer, followed by gatherings with family and friends, sharing festive meals, and exchanging gifts. Acts of charity, such as giving to the less fortunate (Zakat al-Fitr), are an essential part of Eid celebrations.

How to Show Respect and Support

- **Be Mindful of Fasting:** During Ramadan, colleagues and friends may be fasting, which can sometimes affect their energy levels. Being considerate and avoiding offering food or drink during fasting hours is a thoughtful gesture.
- **Offer Holiday Greetings:** You can say "Ramadan Mubarak" (Blessed Ramadan) during the holy month and "Eid Mubarak" (Blessed Eid) on Eid day.
- **Learn and Ask Questions:** If you're curious about Ramadan or Eid, feel free to ask your Muslim colleagues or friends in a respectful way—they'll likely appreciate your interest.

MAKING MA'AMOULE DATE-FILLED COOKIES

A Sweet Eid Tradition

Ma'amoul are delicate, buttery cookies filled with dates, nuts, or figs, enjoyed during Eid al-Fitr celebrations. Their rich, sweet filling symbolizes joy and abundance, making them a cherished treat shared with family, friends, and neighbors. These melt-in-your-mouth pastries are more than just dessert—they represent hospitality, generosity, and the sweetness of togetherness that defines Eid.

Ingredients:

For the Dough:

- 2 cups semolina
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsalted butter, melted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm milk (or orange blossom water for extra flavor)

For the Filling:

- 1 cup pitted dates, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon orange blossom water (optional)



*Servings: 20-25 cookies
Preparation Time: 30 minutes
Baking Time: 15-20 minutes*



Instructions:

Prepare the Dough:

- In a bowl, mix semolina, flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
- Add melted butter and mix until it resembles coarse crumbs.
- Gradually add warm milk (or orange blossom water) until a soft dough forms. Cover and let rest for 30 minutes.

Prepare the Filling:

- In a pan, melt the butter over low heat and add the chopped dates. Stir until soft and mash into a paste.
- Mix in cinnamon and orange blossom water. Let cool.

Shape the Cookies:

- Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
- Take a small piece of dough, flatten it, and place a teaspoon of date filling in the center. Wrap the dough around the filling and shape it into a ball or press it into a cookie mold.

Bake:

- Arrange on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 15-20 minutes, until lightly golden.
- Let cool, then dust with powdered sugar before serving.

Transgender Day of Visibility

Every year on March 31st, we celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV)—a time to honor and uplift transgender and non-binary individuals, recognizing their contributions to society while also acknowledging the challenges they face. Founded in 2009 by transgender activist Rachel Crandall, TDOV serves as a positive counterpart to Transgender Day of Remembrance (November 20), which mourns lives lost to anti-trans violence.



Why Visibility Matters

Visibility is crucial for fostering understanding, empathy, and inclusion. Many transgender and non-binary individuals continue to face discrimination, barriers to healthcare, employment inequities, and violence. By amplifying trans voices and experiences, we can help combat misinformation and create more affirming spaces where everyone can thrive as their authentic selves.



Ways to Show Support

Supporting transgender visibility is not just about awareness—it's about action. Here are some meaningful ways to engage:

- **Educate Yourself and Others** – Learn about transgender history, terminology, and issues impacting the community.
- **Use Inclusive Language** – Respect pronouns and chosen names.
- **Amplify Trans Voices** – Share stories and achievements of transgender individuals.
- **Support Trans-Led Organizations** – Donate to or volunteer with groups that advocate for transgender rights.
- **Advocate for Inclusive Policies** – Encourage workplace policies that protect and uplift transgender employees.

Looking Forward

Transgender Day of Visibility is a reminder that transgender and non-binary people deserve to be seen, valued, and celebrated every day. As an organization, we commit to fostering an inclusive workplace where all identities are embraced and respected. Let's continue to stand together in solidarity, championing diversity, equity, and inclusion for all!

Navigating Conversations About Gender

In today's world, conversations about gender are more common—and more important—than ever. With growing awareness of gender diversity, it's essential to approach discussions with curiosity, respect, and a commitment to learning. Here are some simple ways to engage in thoughtful and affirming conversations about gender.

Understanding Gender: A Quick Overview

Gender is more than just male or female—it exists on a spectrum. While some people identify as the gender they were assigned at birth (cisgender), others may be transgender, non-binary, genderfluid, or genderqueer. Everyone's experience of gender is unique, and acknowledging this diversity helps create more inclusive spaces.



Tips for Navigating Conversations with Care

- **Listen First** – If someone shares their gender identity with you, listen with an open mind. Their lived experience is valid.
- **Respect Pronouns and Names** – Using the correct pronouns and names is a basic way to show respect. If you're unsure, politely ask: "What pronouns do you use?"
- **Avoid Making Assumptions** – You can't tell someone's gender just by looking at them. Let people define themselves.
- **Stay Curious, Not Confrontational** – It's okay to ask thoughtful questions, but avoid interrogating someone about their identity.
- **Acknowledge Mistakes and Move On** – If you use the wrong pronoun or term, apologize briefly, correct yourself, and continue the conversation.
- **Push for Inclusive Spaces** – Advocate for gender-inclusive restrooms, workplace policies, and better representation in media and leadership.

Why it Matters

Respecting gender diversity strengthens our communities and workplaces. When people feel seen and affirmed, they can contribute fully without fear of discrimination or exclusion. By fostering open, respectful conversations, we create a culture of belonging for all.

International Day of Families

Every year on May 15th, the world marks the International Day of Families—a day dedicated to celebrating the importance of families and promoting awareness of social, economic, and demographic issues affecting them. In the context of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), this day is an opportunity to recognize and honor the many forms families can take.

Why Visibility Matters

Established by the United Nations in 1993, this day highlights the role families play in social development and raises awareness about issues impacting families, such as work-life balance, access to healthcare, and education. It also encourages policies and practices that support family well-being.

Why It Matters in DEI

Families today come in many shapes and sizes, including but not limited to:

- Nuclear families (parents and children)
- Single-parent families
- Blended families
- Multigenerational households
- Chosen families, often formed by LGBTQ+ individuals or others whose biological families may not be supportive
- Caregiving families, including those caring for elderly relatives or individuals with disabilities

Recognizing and supporting diverse family structures is essential to building inclusive workplaces and communities. When we acknowledge that families look different for everyone, we foster a culture of belonging.



Ways to Support Family Diversity

- **Inclusive Policies:** Advocate for family-friendly workplace policies such as parental leave, flexible work schedules, and caregiving support that reflect the needs of all families.
- **Respect for Chosen Families:** Recognize and respect the concept of chosen families, particularly for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Representation Matters:** Promote diverse family depictions in organizational communications and events.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Be mindful of the unique challenges different family structures face, including caregiving responsibilities or non-traditional family dynamics.

Celebrating All Families

On this International Day of Families, let's celebrate the diverse ways people define and experience family. By fostering inclusivity, empathy, and support for all family types, we build stronger, more compassionate, and equitable communities.

Red Dress Day: Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

On May 5th, we observe Red Dress Day, also known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). This day is dedicated to raising awareness about the disproportionate rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people across North America. It is also a day of remembrance and advocacy.

Why Red Dresses?

The red dress has become a powerful symbol of the missing and murdered. The campaign was inspired by Métis artist Jaime Black, whose REDress Project featured red dresses hanging in public spaces, representing the lives lost and the absence they leave behind. The red color symbolizes both lifeblood and the call for justice, while the empty dresses are haunting reminders of those no longer with us.

The Crisis of MMIWG

- Indigenous women and girls face violence at rates significantly higher than the general population. According to reports:
- Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be murdered or go missing compared to non-Indigenous women.
- The MMIWG crisis is fueled by systemic racism, lack of law enforcement accountability, and socio-economic disparities.



How to Show Solidarity

- **Wear Red:** On May 5th, wear red to honor MMIWG and spark conversations about the ongoing crisis.
- **Learn and Amplify:** Educate yourself on the history and current realities of Indigenous communities. Share information on social media to spread awareness.
- **Support Indigenous-Led Organizations:** Donate to or volunteer with groups advocating for justice, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) or Families of Sisters in Spirit.
- **Advocate for Policy Change:** Support policies that protect Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people, such as improved investigations and greater community resources.

A Commitment to Justice and Equity

On Red Dress Day—and every day—we stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities and commit to amplifying their voices, supporting justice efforts, and promoting equity. Let us continue to listen, learn, and take action.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessible Travel

With spring in the air and people starting to think about warm weather travel plans, here are some things to keep in mind to ensure that your accessible vacation is a success!

The Province of Ontario has created accessibility regulations designed to help travellers with accessibility planning and selecting the appropriate attractions, accommodations and destinations that best fit their needs.

Public Transit

Specialized transit service should be available in all major Ontario cities that offer public transit service. These services can be found online on the town's website under "community" or "transit".

Outdoor Spaces

The Design of Public Spaces Standards sets requirements to make most public spaces accessible. This could include; recreational trails, beach access, playgrounds, service counters, and parking lots.

Accessible Spring Activities

The [Destination Ontario](#) website allows you to sort activities in Ontario by specific accessibility requirements - check it out!



If you experience something that is not accessible and it is advertised to be, please submit a customer feedback form. Businesses may not know that their features are not as accessible as they believe.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

London

Event: 42nd London Spring Craft Show

Date: April 17 - 18, 2025

Location: Western Fair District, 316 Rectory Street

Description: A sure sign of spring! Over 190 artisans and crafters, apparel, bath & beauty, jewelry, garden art, home decor, Easter chocolate, food, candles, art, ceramics, glass, Mother's Day gifts plus so much more!

Event: UPwithART Exhibition

Date: May 2 - 10, 2025

Cost: \$7

Location: Museum London, 421 Ridout St N

Description: Celebrate culture, compassion and community in support of Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness and Museum London featuring 45+ incredible artworks by renowned, emerging, and Unity Project participant artists, as well as historical and contemporary works generously donated by local collectors.

Event: Holi Festival

Date: April 26, 2025, 1-5pm

Location: Western Fair District, 316 Rectory Street

Description: A sure sign of spring! Over 190 artisans and crafters, apparel, bath & beauty, jewelry, garden art, home decor, Easter chocolate, food, candles, art, ceramics, glass, Mother's Day gifts plus so much more!

Ottawa

Event: Our Land, Our Art

Date: December 2, 2022 - April 14, 2025

Location: Canadian Museum of Nature, 240 McLeod Street

Description: Come see Nunavik in all its beauty through the eyes of Indigenous artists. Avataq Cultural Institute, in collaboration with the Canadian Museum of Nature, invited artists from across Québec's Nunavik region to create artworks inspired by objects from Avataq's collections. Nunavik includes 14 villages along the coasts of northern Québec.

Event: Canadian Tulip Festival

Date: May 9 - 19, 2025

Location: Commissioners Park

Description: Welcome spring at the world's largest tulip festival! This popular annual event features massive tulip displays, family fun and more. Over 11 days each May, the Canadian Tulip Festival celebrates the seasonal flower's beauty and its historic ties to Canada's capital. The outdoor event takes place at Commissioners Park, where over 300,000 tulips bloom alongside the Rideau Canal's picturesque Dow's Lake. Access to the site and select programming is free!





EMPLOYER
PARTNER

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