

DIVERSITY AT WORK

February 2007

(For interest/information purposes only)

February is Black History Month (Canada/US). This recognition was started in 1926 in the US and February was chosen because both Abraham Lincoln (US president who freed slaves during the Civil War) and Frederick Douglas (a man who worked to end slavery) have birthdays in February. In Canada, the Ontario Black History Society was the first black history organization to celebrate Black History Month. In December of 1995, Canada recognized February as Black History Month following a motion to the Parliament introduced by the first African Canadian woman elected to Parliament, Madam Jean Augustine. The presence of peoples of African descent in Canada dates back farther than Samuel de Champlain's (a French explorer and navigator in early 1600's) first voyage down the St. Lawrence River.

Aboriginal Spirituality: Buxwaks The season of blowing needles; the wind shakes loose the foliage of frozen evergreens. The New Year approaches.

February 2: Imbolg (Wicca). Comes from an archaic Gaelic expression "in the belly" which signalled the first stirrings of life within the womb of mother earth. Corn dolls are burned as offerings to the sun to hasten his return.

February 3: Tu B'shevat (Judaism) Jewish celebration of the coming of spring, special meals (Seders) are eaten which include eating the seven fruits of the land: wheat, barley, figs, grapes, pomegranates, olives and dates. Trees are also planted

February 14 – 20: Random Acts of Kindness Week (International)

Established in 1995, the movement inspires people to share kindness with one another as they discover for themselves what power it has to effect positive change as healthy relationships are created and community connections are nourished.

February 15 : Flag Day (Canada). Twenty- year old Joan O'Malley sewed Canada's first flag in 1964. The official ceremony inaugurating the new Canadian flag was held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on February 15, 1965.

February 16: Shivratri (Hinduism). It is dedicated to Shiva, one of the major deities of Hinduism. The night before the feast, Hindus recite texts, sing and tell stories in honour of Lord Shiva whose dynamic cosmic dance Tandav, that creates, preserves, destroys and recreates the world. A 24-hour fast is kept, and devotees make pilgrimages to major shrines and temples for worship.

February 18: China/Vietnam/Korea/Taiwan New Year: this is the Year of the Fire Pig...year 4705 in the Chinese Lunar Calendar and the most important holiday. It is a 3 day holiday in China and Hong Kong. The Chinese decorate their homes with 5 lucky signs for happiness; new clothes and shoes are worn for it is considered bad luck to step down on the ground into old shoes. Vietnamese call it the Tet Festival. This is the biggest event of the year in Korea and is called Solnal. 15 days after the Solnal, on the first full moon day, Koreans eat a five grain meal and pray for a bountiful harvest at shrines of worship.

February 19: Losar (Tibet). This is the Tibetan New Year and is celebrated for three days visiting, feasting and relaxing of monastic discipline.

February 19: Great Fast Begins (Coptic; Eastern Orthodox Christian)

Clean Monday is the beginning of the 40 day fast, the greatest fasting period in the church year in Eastern Christianity which prepares the Christians for the greatest feast of the church year, Easter or "Holy Pasch". Whereas Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus after his death on the Cross, Lent is concerned with preparation for Holy Week (also known as Passion Week) which recalls the events leading up to and including Jesus' crucifixion which took place around AD 33, in Roman occupied Jerusalem in Judea province. Observance of Great Lent is characterized by abstention from many foods, intensified private and public prayer, and almsgiving. The foods traditionally abstained from are meat and dairy products, fish, wine and oil. Great Lent itself lasts for forty days, but unlike the West both Saturdays and Sundays are included in the count. It officially concludes on the eve of Lazarus Saturday, the day before Pal Sunday. However, fasting continues for the following week, known as Passion Week, up until Pascha or Easter Sunday

February 20: Shrove Tuesday (Christian). The day before Lent. Taken from the old word 'shrive', it means forgiveness. Traditionally it was a time to give up meat and dairy foods. The British and Canadians make pancakes; Italians cook omelettes; the Polish make special doughnuts called paczki; the Portuguese throw baby powder at each other; the Russians use up all their butter; the Germans hold festivities called Fasching; and the Brazilians hold a Carnival ball, known round the world as Mardi Gras.

February 21: Ash Wednesday-Lent begins (Christian). Ash symbolizes sorrow for wrong doings and foreheads are marked with the shape of the cross with ashes as a sign of penitence. During the forty days of Lent, Christians fast and pray to imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness before his crucifixion.

February 21: International Mother Language Day (U.N.) The International Mother Language Day is being observed every year in UNESCO's Member States and at its Headquarters to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

Languages are at the very heart of UNESCO's objectives. They are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to development fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue

February 22: Great Prayer Festival: (Buddhism, Tibet) Monks from the Three Great Monasteries of Tibet assemble in Jokhang temple in Lhasa to pray to Shakyamuni's image as if it were the Living Buddha. Philosophical debates are held among the candidates for the Doctor of Metaphysics. Pilgrims come from every corner of Tibet and donations are offered to the monks. On the 14th of March, Butter Lamp Festival is held to celebrate Shakyamuni's victory over non-Buddhist opponents in 1409. Lord Neu Dzong, a noted patron of King Tsonkapa, founder of the Dalai Lama's order, illuminated numerous butter lamps; the tradition continues.

February 26: Intercalary Days (Bahai). There are four or five days inserted into the calendar called Ayyam-I-ha, adjusting the Bahai' year to the solar cycle. This preceded a month of fasting from March 2 to 20. Gifts are exchanged, parties and public meetings are held to share the faith.

February 28: Kalevala Day (Finland) Elians Lonrot, country doctor, folklorist and philologist compiled the Kalevala, Finland's National Epic in 1835. This day is observed nationally with parades, recitations and lectures to honour him.

Diversity Calendars/Resources:

<http://www.blackhistorysociety.ca>

<http://www.3.kumc.edu/diversity>

<http://www.chinapage.com/newyear.html>

<http://www.diversityatwork.com>

<http://www.multiculturalcalendar.com>

<http://www.hillel.org/hillel/NewHille.nsf/0/f31926fb5da8bc648525686c00805e05?OpenDocument>

<http://www.omc.ca/products/calendar.html>

<http://www.ca.bahai.org/index.en.cfm>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holydays/shrovetuesday.shtml>

<http://www.namasthenri.com/fairsandfestivals/shivratri.htm>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/holydays/ashura.shtml>

<http://www.wiccaweb.org.uk/imbolq.html>

<http://webworld.unesco.org/imld/>