

**DIVERSITY AT WORK**  
**MARCH 2007**

(for interest/information purposes only)

**March** : National Women's History Month: began as a single week and as a local event. In 1978, Sonoma County, California sponsored a women's history week to promote the teaching of women's history. The week of March 8<sup>th</sup> was selected to include "International Women's Day". This day is rooted in such ideas and events as a woman's right to vote and a woman's right to work; women's strike for bread; women's strikes for peace at the end of WW 1; and the U.N. charter declaration of gender equality at the end of WW 2. The Government of Canada established October as Women History Month in 1992; this special month provides an opportunity to learn more about women's historic accomplishments and their contributions to Canadian society.

**Aboriginal Spirituality: Xsaak** The season when Oolichan, the candlefish, swarm. The Nisaga'a dry and render them into oil.

**March 2: World Day of Prayer (International)**. Held on the first Friday of March, the World Day of Prayer is a world-wide movement of Christian women of many traditions who came together in 1927 to observe common day of prayer each year.

**March 2: Ala' (Bahai')**. The nineteenth and final month in the Bahai' calendar and the time of the 19-day fast in preparation of their new year, Naw Ruz. The English translation of Ala' ( Arabic word ) is Loftiness.

**March 3: Holi (Hindu)** The festival of colour celebrates Spring, where people play with liquid and powdered colours, light bonfires and blow horns to celebrate the destruction of Holika, a demon. The religious significance of the festival of Holi is to mark the burning of self-conceit, selfishness, greed, lust, hatred, in fact all the undesirable demoniac tendencies, propensities, thoughts and behaviours; it is the victory of righteous forces over demoniacal forces. Holi is the most exuberant of the Hindu festivals, where everyone is a target for colour squirting and all religious and cultural differences of caste and gender are levelled even for the festival. Please check with your local communities as to the schedule of the festivities.

**March 3: Hinamasturi** (**Japan**) Ceremonial dolls are displayed to honour the daughters in the family.

**March 4: Purim** (**Jewish**) Known as the Feast of Lots, celebrates the deliverance of Jews in Persia from the machinations of Haman. Jews dress in costume and give gifts of food to each other.

**March 4: Hola Mahalla** (**Sikhism**) Mock battles are fought and martial arts are displayed in honour of Guru Gobind Singh, who took to armed struggle against tyranny. Nowadays, these mock battles are followed by music competitions and festivities.

**March 8: International Women's Day** (**Canada/United Nations**) Is an occasion marked by women's groups around the world. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday. When women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate their Day, they can look back to a tradition that represents at least nine decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development. According to one source, a women's march in New York in 1857 provided the inspiration for the day. Others claim that it began as a commemoration of a strike by women needle traders in New York City in 1908. International Women's Day was revived in the 60's and in 1975, UN began sponsoring the day. (Please see attached information sheet)

**March 17: St. Patrick's Day** (**Irish**) The death anniversary of the patron saint of Ireland. He used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the Christian idea of the Holy Trinity, thus the idea of wearing the shamrock.

**March 18: Mothering Sunday** : (**England**) Begun in the 1600's, England celebrates a day known as Mothering Sunday on the fourth Sunday of Lent. This day honours the mothers of England.

**March 19: Ugadi; Nawabarsha** (**Hinduism**) Ugadi marks the beginning of the new Hindu Lunar calendar. Yuga + Adi means beginning of New Age., where is believed that Lord Brahma started creation on this day. Celebrated in southern states of India as Ugadi, people awake before the break of dawn, bathe and decorate the entrance of their homes. They eat bitter leaves with sweet made from sugar called jaggery to signify the bitter and sweet of life. The first day of the

first month of the new year is called Nawabarsha in Nepal and areas and is an official holiday with various celebrations. Year 2064 Bikarami Samvat begins.

**March 19: St. Joseph's Day (Christian)** This day is celebrated through out most of Italy and the Italian communities in North America. He was the foster father of Jesus and is the universal patron of the Catholic Church. According to Legend, when a severe drought struck western Sicily in the Middle Ages, the people of that area prayed to St. Joseph asking him to intercede for them and send rain. Their prayer was granted and since then they honour St. Joseph by helping the needy in their community.

**March 21: Naw Ruz (Baha'i, Zoroastrian, Iran, Afghanistan, Kurd, Persia)**. It means 'new day' and is the New Year's day for 1375 AY or 3744 AZ in the Fasli calendar. It celebrates the renewal of the world. It also celebrates the creation of fire and is the day on which Zarathustra received his revelation. It begins at sun down on March 21 and ends at sundown March 22.

**March 21: Eostre (Wicca)**. A fertility festival celebrating the birth of Spring. The word Easter is derived from the Maiden Goddess. Celebrations include lighting fires at sunrise, ringing bells and decorating hard-boiled eggs, that is an ancient Pagan custom associated with the goddess of Fertility.

**March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Canada/United Nations)**. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March. On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid "pass laws". Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination (resolution 2142(XXI)).

In 1989 - Canada was the first country in the world to hold a National March 21 campaign. Youth participated right across the country in a "Together We're Better" theme.

**March 25: Evangelismou (Greece)** The Greeks combined the national Independence Day with the Annunciation and what was earlier believed to be the Spring Equinox. Greeks wear traditional clothes and celebrate with speeches and folk dancing.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash\\_Wednesday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash_Wednesday)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lent>

<http://www.kencollins.com/holy-04.htm>

<http://www.intertours-nepal.com/tibet/tibet-festivals.html>

<http://www.bawarchi.com/festivals/holi.html>

<http://www.hillel.org/Hillel/NewHille.nsf/FCB8259CA861AE57852567D30043BA26/59F076F93A22DCE985256B4C005481BC?OpenDocument>

<http://allaboutsikhs.com/way/holamohalla.htm>

<http://members.aol.com/nonstopny/italiano/march19.htm>

[http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/ethnic\\_relig/nawruz.html](http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/ethnic_relig/nawruz.html)

<http://www.unesco.org/shs/eng/dayagainstracism.shtml>

[http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d\\_icerd.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_icerd.htm)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eostre>

<http://www.namasthenri.com/fairsandfestivals/ugadi.htm#ugadi>

<http://www.snowmannepal.com/festivals.htm>

## International Women's Day:

International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history; it is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society on an equal footing with men. In ancient Greece, Lysistrata initiated a sexual strike against men in order to end war; during the French Revolution, Parisian women calling for "liberty, equality, fraternity" marched on Versailles to demand women's suffrage. The idea of an International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a movement of women struggling for better working conditions and recognition of their fundamental rights, including the right to vote, emerged in North America and Europe. A number of people believe that *International Women's Day* emanates from labour strikes of female textile workers on March 8, in both 1857 and 1908, to protest against poor working conditions in New York City. Others say the first official reference to *International Women's Day* can be traced to a demonstration for women's suffrage organized by the National Association of Socialist Women. Referred to as "*Women's Day*", the demonstration took place on February 28, 1909 and had been celebrated annually in the United States on the last Sunday in February until 1913. In 1977, two years after *International Women's Year*, the United Nations adopted a resolution inviting countries to dedicate one day to celebrate the rights of women and international peace. March 8 became the date of recognition in many countries.

Since its inception, International Women's Day has assumed a new global dimension for women in developed and developing countries alike. The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights and participation in the political and economic process. Increasingly, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

Women on all continents often divided by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences come together to celebrate *International Women's Day*. It is a celebration of women as makers of history.

- Agnes Macphail(1890-1954) – First woman elected to Canada's House of Commons. Equality rights, cooperatives and prison reform advocate..
- Jean Augustine is the first black woman elected to the House of Commons in 1993
- Beverley McLachlin is the first female Chief Justice appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1999
- Bertha Wilson becomes the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1982
- Christine Silverberg becomes the first woman police chief in a major city in Canada with the Calgary Police Services in 1995.