

# Multicultural Holidays

*from Lauri Cunningham and Michael Milette*

**T**HE SPIRIT OF GIVING and sharing is alive in December. This spirit is celebrated around the world, and each country has its own traditions. Celebrating various holidays within your group can be a challenge, but bring these traditions together for an evening and see what happens!

## Activities For A Multicultural Night

“Merry Christmas” in 19 different languages:

1. Afrikaans – Geseende Kerfees en 'n gelukkige
2. Armenian – Shenoraavor Nor Dari yev Soorp Janunt

3. Cantonese – Seng Dan Fai Lok, Sang Nian Fai Lok
4. Cree – Mitho Makosi Kesikansi
5. Dutch – Vrolijk Kerstfeest en een Gelukkig Nieuwjaar!
6. English – Merry Christmas
7. Flemish – Zalig Kerstfeest en Gelukkig nieuw jaar
8. French – Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!
9. Greek – Kala Christougenna Ki'eftihismenos O Kenourios Chronos
10. Italian – Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo
11. Japanese – Shinnen omedeto. Kurisumasu Omedeto
12. Korean – Sung Tan Chuk Ha
13. Lebanese – Milad Saeed wa Sanaa Mubarakah
14. Mandarin – Kung His Hsin Nien bing Chu Shen Tan
15. Ojibwe (Chippewa) – Niibaa' anami'egiizhigad & Aabita Biboon
16. Russian – Pozdrevlyayu s prazdnikom Rozhdestva i s Novim Godom
17. Somali – ciid wanaagsan iyo sanad cusub oo fiican.
18. Spanish – Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo
19. Ukrainian – Veseloho Vam Rizdva i Shchastlyvoho Novoho Roku!

## Sweet Bagel Wreath

You need a sliced bagel, cream cheese, green decorating sugar, blueberries (or other round small fruit or candy) and red lace licorice.

To make this delectable edible wreath – spread the cream cheese on half the bagel, sprinkle with green sugar and place the fruit on it. Then take the licorice and tie it in a bow and place it on the top of the bagel.

## Dreidels

For these homemade Dreidels, all you need is a small milk carton (empty ones work best and are less messy), a pencil, glue and paint or other craft items to decorate with. Then you fold the carton top down to make a square box. Decorate the box with paint or whatever you choose to use. Take the pencil and poke it through the top and then through the bottom of the carton.

Now as they spin their dreidel they can say this little verse...  
 “I have a little dreidel, I made it out of clay. And when it's dry and ready, a dreidel game I'll play.”

## Playdough Menorah

What you will need for this is playdough, eight birthday candles, and a large candle.

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Now all you need to do is shape the playdough into a base large enough to hold the candles. Place the large candle in the centre and four birthday candles on each side. There you have it – your very own menorah to take home!

## Winter Holiday Celebrations the World Over

### Diwali

Diwali is a five-day Hindu festival in India which occurs on the fifteenth day of Kartika, sometime in October or November just before the new moon when the sky is at its darkest. Diwali when translated means “rows of lighted lamps” and the occasion is also referred to as the “Festival of Lights”. Two days before Diwali, people clean their houses thoroughly and buy supplies for the festivities. During Diwali, Indian homes are cleaned and windows are opened to welcome Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Thousands of lamps called Diye lights and candles are lit after sunset as a greeting to Goddess Lakshmi. Shrines are decorated with flower garlands.

Neighbours and friends visit each other during Diwali. Gifts are exchanged and everyone enjoys traditional festive Indian meals and sweets including coconut candies, small sugar disks called patashe and khil (puffed rice). A more recent custom is to send Diwali greeting cards.

### Hanukkah

In 165 B.C., a small group of Jews called the Maccabees recaptured Jerusalem from the Syrian King Antiochus IV. After cleaning the temple, they could only find enough oil to light the Hanukkiya for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days.

Today, on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev (usually around December), Jewish families get together to celebrate Hanukkah – the festival of lights. Hanukkah lasts for eight days and features an eight-branched candlestick, which Jews used to remind them of the miracle that happened to the Maccabees. The ninth middle candle is called the Shamash and is used for lighting the others, one for each day of Hanukkah.

Some children receive eight small presents while others receive one big

present the first night. Many people wrap the gifts in blue and white paper, the colours of the Israeli flag.

During Hanukkah, Jewish people are encouraged not to work while the candles are burning. Instead, they play traditional games such as Dreidel. Players spin a four-sided top and receive a pile of chocolate coins if they win. Each side of the top is marked with Hebrew initials.



## Find your own special way to enjoy this time.

### Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year takes place every year between January 21 and February 20th and lasts 15 days, marking the start of the new year. The exact date is fixed using the Chinese lunar calendar, in which a new moon marks the beginning of each new month.

For many families, it is a time for feasting, visiting relatives and friends and watching spectacular processions take place. The celebrations are based on bringing luck, health, happiness, and wealth to the coming year. Chinese families clean their houses thoroughly to rid them of last year’s bad luck before the celebrations begin.

Tangerines or oranges with leaves are the lucky fruits of the New Year because of their bright colour. Odd numbers are unlucky, so the tangerines are always given in pairs.

### Kwanzaa

This is an African American and Pan-African holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. Celebrated from December 26 through January 1, its origins are in the first harvest celebrations of Africa from

which it takes its name. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase “matunda ya kwanza” which means “first fruits” in Swahili, a Pan-African language which is the most widely spoken African language.

Kwanzaa represents:

- ☞ a time of gathering of the people to reaffirm the bonds between them;
- ☞ a time of special reverence for the Creator and creation in thanks and respect for the blessings, bountifulness and beauty of creation;
- ☞ a time for celebration of the good of life and of existence itself, the good of family, community and culture, the good of the awesome and the ordinary; in a word – the good of the divine, natural and social.

### Christmas

Christians believe that Jesus was born in a stable over 2000 years ago in the town of Bethlehem. An angel visited shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem to tell them about Jesus’ birth and the shepherds went to visit him. Three wise men from the east followed a bright star to where Jesus lay, and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This event is called the Nativity.

People give presents at Christmas to remind them of gifts that the shepherds and the Wise Men took to the stable for Jesus. Adults give gifts to each other but the children’s main gifts come from Santa Claus.

Ask your youth to describe some of their own family holiday traditions. Encourage them to find similarities between all the cultures of the world, such as:

- The presence of some form of light
- People clean their homes
- There are presents exchanged
- Friends and relatives get together to celebrate and share a meal
- There are decorations.

Your youth, no matter what their ages, will enjoy experiencing a taste of other cultures, and they’ll find out people around the world really aren’t that different. \

– Lauri Cunningham and Michael Milette both love celebrating the holidays as Ontario Scouters.