

Multicultural Scouting Diversity and Unity – part two

by Lena Wong

In January we explored the cultural diversity within Canadian society. This however, is not the whole story. Another important aspect of our differences and similarities is the way we practice and live our spiritual beliefs. To help you complete the circle, we have looked into some resources to assist you and your youth in understanding the many diverse belief systems.

A good start is to visit the Scouts Canada web site at www.scouts.ca and access the Religion in Life information through the badge sections under Cubs and Scouts. You will find a large number of pamphlets describing the requirements for the Religion in Life badge for various religions and denominations. While these do not describe the beliefs as such, they do provide an insight into the spiritual activities of those who participate in them. Most pamphlets also provide a list of reference books and resources.

For Christian denominations, *Let's Celebrate* (a Scouts Canada publication available in Scout Shops and through the on-line catalogue) is an excellent interdenominational resource. This little book shows how spirituality can be introduced into every aspect of Scouting life and activities. Most Christian denominations have excellent centralized web sites where you can find specific information. See for example www.anglican.ca, www.united-church.ca or <http://www.cccb.ca/> for three of the major Christian church organizations in Canada. A few other specific web sites are www.mbconf.ca for the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church or visit www.mennonitechurch.ca for The Mennonite Church of Canada. Go to www.mormon.org for information about The Church of Latter-day Saints.

One of the best overall web sites on religions in Canada comes to us thanks to the Government of Canada. Surf to www.forces.gc.ca/hr/religions/engraph/religions00_e.asp and

Let's Celebrate is an excellent interdenominational resource that is available in Scout Shops and through the on-line catalogue.



click on Table of Contents for a long list of religions and denominations practiced in Canada and recognized by the Armed Forces to allow adherents to celebrate their faiths. Each faith page ends with a list of web sites and other references for further exploration. Under "Native Spirituality" for instance, you'll find www.rcmp.ca/pdfs/spiritgde.pdf, a document published by the RCMP to assist in understanding the religious needs and practices of Native Canadians who follow traditional beliefs.

Another interesting web site for overall information is www.religious-tolerance.org. This site is maintained by a multi-faith group for the purpose of promoting religious tolerance. It has links to almost any religious faith as well as essays about many of the issues being discussed within religious communities. You might also try www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions, another very informative web site.

The Rainbow Family Web Site at <http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/carol-rb/index.html> is a nice resource with child-friendly stories and information about Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. This is a site produced by a teacher and her family in the UK and the author is careful to point out that the information is simplistic to make it understandable for young children. For child-friendly information on Buddhism go to www.gakkaionline.net/kids/. This site offers a lot of material to work with and also provides links to other sites. A Jewish resource can be found at www.tzivos-hashem.org.

There are a few religious holidays to celebrate in March and April. These are:

March 20 - Palm Sunday (Christian); 24 - Maundy Thursday (Christian); 25 - Good Friday (Christian); 26 - Purim (Jewish); 27 - Easter Sunday (Christian).

April 21 - Milad-un Nabi (Islam); 24 - Palm Sunday (Orthodox Christian); 23 to 25 - Passover (Jewish); 29 - Holy Friday (Orthodox Christian).

Purim is one of the most festive holidays on the Jewish calendar; celebrations include good food, gift giving, costumes, noise makers and other fun activities. Visit www.holidays.net/purim/ for the story behind the celebration as well as instructions and cutouts for crafts.

Milad-un Nabi celebrates the birth of the prophet (pbuh) and many Muslim families tell their children stories about his life on this day. It is a quiet day given to prayer and reflection on the prophet because the day also marks his death. Families sit down to a feast and the poor are fed. Many people donate to charity on this day. Pbuh means "Peace be upon him" and is used in connection with the prophet's name.

Easter and Orthodox Easter both provide the opportunity to paint Easter eggs. Ask your youth members to bring in hard-boiled eggs and decorate them with markers or crayons. To make a simple basket to carry them in, use a small paper bag with a square bottom. Cut the top half of the bag off and use a strip of the paper to glue on as a handle. Decorate with stickers and crayons.

Using data from the Internet we have produced a multi-faith calendar. You can find it on the Scouts Canada web site under "For Leaders" then "Resources". Please let me know if we have missed anything or made mistakes so that corrections can be made (lwong@scouts.ca). X

– Lena Wong works in International Relations and administers the Honours and Awards program.