



# TIP SHEET

## INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES - RECOGNIZING HOLIDAYS, OBSERVANCES AND CELEBRATIONS

*This tipsheet can be used as a conversation-starter for a team or organization wishing to honour and celebrate cultural and religious differences and commemorative days in the workplace.*

### ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION

Decisions about what to mark at work, and how, can be contentious. It is important to build authentic relationships with individuals representing diverse and equity-deserving groups to make inclusive decisions about what to celebrate and honour. By forging long-lasting partnerships, you will be able to ask for and act on their advice and feedback and invite them to participate in events and evaluate celebrations and activities for continuous improvement.

Here are some other ways to distribute the decision-making across the organization so that as many people as possible can contribute to meaningful celebrations of diversity:

**Engage and involve employees:** Survey employees to understand what events or occasions should be marked and how. Establish a diverse working group or committee composed of folks from all divisions and departments to lead/coordinate organizational efforts.

**Communicate, communicate, communicate:** Clearly share your intentions for openness and consideration of all equity-deserving groups, use diverse mechanisms and channels for accessibility, and communicate often about the meaningful actions for improvement that accompany your celebrations and other activities so they don't seem performative.

**Evaluate and adjust:** Check in after events or activities to see how they were received, and make changes to future iterations based on participant feedback. Pay special attention to feedback from members of the communities referenced in the celebration or event.

**Be equitable:** Too often, workplaces rely on women and others experiencing marginalization for invisible labour, such as supporting equity, diversity and inclusion, event planning, and administrative tasks. Invisible labor doesn't impact all women equally. The [2021 Women in Workplace Report](#) found that at the manager level and above, Black women, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities are "up to twice as likely as women overall to spend a substantial amount of time promoting DEI." Compensating, valuing and recognizing team members for their time is considered a leading practice.

### COMMEMORATIVE DAYS, WEEKS AND MONTHS

Marking designated days, weeks and months in the multicultural calendar like International Women's Day, ADHD Awareness Week or Black History Month reaffirms your organization's commitment to inclusion. It also educates and raises awareness among employees about events and the groups represented and can start conversations about oppression and discrimination and how they can be tackled. Not all days that should be recognized can be found in a calendar. Recognizing how current events may impact employees also shows that you care.

Here are some ways to mark important days, weeks and months at work:

**Educational Events:** Hosting workshops, conferences, panel discussions, keynotes and other activities can help everyone learn (and unlearn) important information that can enhance their decision-making and their interactions with others.

**Artistic Exhibits:** Organizing photo contests, showcasing artists from specific groups and screening and discussing documentaries at work introduces employees to the talents and gifts of individuals and groups they may not have encountered before.

**Cultural Activities:** Arranging museum visits or city tours from various perspectives, or bringing in food trucks so employees can sample different kinds of cuisine promotes a deeper understanding of diversity.

**Celebrate Talent:** In celebrating the excellence and positive contributions of members of equity-deserving groups, go beyond cultural or artistic accomplishments to promoting their achievements in industries and professions and within the community. Often, members of equity-deserving groups are not recognized for their holistic contributions to all aspects of society.

## RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS

In a secular work environment, it's important to be clear that no one religion or faith tradition takes precedence over others. Here are some ways to honour the spirituality and faith-based practices of employees:

**Make space:** Incorporate a designated quiet reflection space into your workplace for all employees to use for prayer, meditation or quiet time alone.

**Accommodate religious celebrations:** Offer the option for employees to take a day off for their religious celebrations not covered by national or provincial holidays. Facilitate agreements with management in advance.

**Tell the story:** Share organization-wide communications highlighting significant religious celebrations and make informative resources visible and accessible.

## RESOURCES LISTING COMMEMORATIVE DAYS

- List of International Days and Weeks | United Nations ([un.org/en/observances/list-days-weeks](http://un.org/en/observances/list-days-weeks))
- International Days | Unesco ([unesco.org/en/days](http://unesco.org/en/days))

