

# CCRL The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy

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## CLRC Le centre de litt ratie religieuse civique

### December 2020 Newsletter

#### CCRL Updates

CCRL The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy  
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2019-2020  
Annual Report

We are a team of religious literacy specialists and those committed to promoting understanding.

Together, we work as a non-religious non-profit to foster understanding about religious, spiritual, and non-religious beliefs and people in all sectors of Canadian society.

To live, work, and engage better together.



This has been a unique year for us all. It is hard to look back and perceive how far we have all come and what we have done.

News outlets always like to share a recap of the year, but headlines about religious and non-religious matters and people are often negative. Thankfully, we know that in reality, there are good headlines amidst the bad ones. This is seen in recent headlines below.

Three key themes in the headlines are: 1) That effects to members of a community impact the rest of the community, across provincial *and* international borders, seen in the excerpts from Sikh, Muslim, and Indigenous Canadians. 2) Interfaith dialogue is a source of strength for many at this time, evident as [religious groups from NWT are coming together](#) and [an atheist student is calling for more interfaith conversation](#). 3) Different members in the same

community are struggling with COVID-19 in different ways – some oppose regulations and some easily support and are thriving through them.

The contrasting headlines show how difficult the pandemic and past few months have been for many. At the same time, the good news and positive perspectives in the articles are encouraging and show promise for 2021.

Likewise, it has been a hard year for CCRL. For this reason, we are thankful for our community engagements (noted in the [CCRL 2019-2020 Annual Report](#)), the addition of an already committed new board member – [Dr. Bryan Hillis](#), and two new grants funded by the Catherine Donnelly Foundation and the Vancouver Foundation. We look forward to working with the [Rural Development Network](#), [Keepers of the Circle Indigenous Hub](#) and the [Islamic Families and Social Services Association](#), and the [Victoria Multifaith Society](#) on the respective grants. Moreover, our team continues to stay strong and steady, illustrated by Dr. Sivane Hirsch’s “Thought Corner” piece below.

Looking back, we're so proud that we did and can continue to offer this kind of diverse, inclusive programming to communities across Canada, often for free or at a low accessible rate. If you'd like to show your support, we invite you to [give a donation](#) to help us maintain programs like this for community groups that cannot afford to.

Thank you for journeying with us, [Alice](#)

CCRL Executive Director & Co-Founder

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## The Pulse



How does belief (religious or not) inform life and society in Canada today? Here are some headlines that show how religious, spiritual, and non-religious perspectives remain part of our daily lives and society. They show the struggles, virtues, and influence of Canadians in local and global communities. Some are one-on-one interactions while others are systemic, good and bad.

*Follow our Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts for headlines on a regular basis. Note, these headlines do not indicate endorsement but are shared for the purpose of awareness.*

### Canada:

- [Canada: Federal Government Fulfills Promise To Introduce UNDRIP Legislation](#) *Mondaq*
- [Should Canada try to forge closer ties with India? Experts are raising red flags. Here's why](#) *Toronto Star*
- [Christmas traditions: Spiritual aspect important for Ecuador celebration](#) *Toronto Star*
- [PM praises leaders for COVID presence](#) *The Catholic Register*

### Territories:

- [Religion conferences – normally held in Hay River and Yellowknife – united into one online event](#) *NNSL Media*

- [Putting a Yukon spin on a holiday classic](#) *CBC News*
- [Through the lens of an Inuk woman](#) *Corporate Knights*
- [Yukon releases MMIWG2S+ strategy in response to National Inquiry](#) *CBC News*

### British Columbia:

- [Many online faith services in B.C. reporting surge in worshippers during COVID church closures](#) *CBC News*
- [Restorative justice program launches in Squamish](#) *The Squamish Chief*
- [Surrey to Vancouver car rally held in solidarity with Punjabi farmers](#) *Global News*
- [LETTER: Please, some respect for what you have taken](#) *Surrey-Now Leader*
- [Indigenous birth knowledge fills massive gaps in healthcare, but needs support](#) *IndigiNews*

### Alberta:

- [Opinion: COVID is a wakeup call that rights and freedoms can be tested in a crisis](#) *Edmonton Journal*
- [Man charged after 2 women in hijabs attacked in Edmonton mall parking lot](#) *Edmonton Journal*
- [Manning: Now is the time for Albertans to shelve their differences and stick together](#) *Calgary Herald*

### Prairies:

- [‘Smiling all day’: Churches and businesses celebrate Manitoba’s reversal on drive-in events](#) *CTV News*
- [Clergy to scofflaw churches: repent. Letter admonishes pastors for breaking COVID-19 restrictions](#) *Winnipeg Free Press*
- [Core neighborhood outreach programs in Saskatoon reopen after COVID-19 closure](#) *CTV News*

### Ontario:

- [Churches return land to Indigenous groups as part of #LandBack movement](#) *Religion News Service*
- [Toronto church files constitutional challenge over COVID-19 restrictions](#) *CBC News*
- [Controversial bill allowing Doug Ford supporter to grant new degrees passes](#) *Global News*
- [Tamil Community Centre and ‘hub for Tamil Canadian heritage and histories’ to open in Toronto](#) *Tamil Guardian*

### Quebec:

- [Loi 21 : les propos de l’avocat ont été mal rapportés](#) *Droit-inc.*
- [Sondage: baromètre des réalisations dont nous sommes le plus fiers](#) *Le Journal de Québec*

- [Memorial to the victims of the Quebec City mosque attack unveiled](#) *CBC News*
- [Judge rejects Hasidic couple's case in trial over inadequate education](#) *Montreal Gazette*

### Atlantic Provinces:

- [Salvation Army in P.E.I. 'open' to third-party investigation](#) *The Chronicle Herald*
- [World-renowned organist buys a Nova Scotia church, pumps out Bach in his pyjamas](#) *CBC News*
- [First Light Fridays: Find out about our radio series about being Indigenous in N.L.](#) *CBC News*
- [Redefining sports journalism: Shireen Ahmed refutes objectivity, and fights for authenticity](#) *The Link*

### International:

- [Religion, race and nationality – what are our prejudices and how can we overcome them?](#) *The Conversation*
- [Pandemic's suffering opens way for Buddhist chaplains](#) *Religion News Service*
- [Farmers' protests against India's new agriculture laws follow long Sikh tradition](#) *Religion News Service*
- [Amid COVID-19, we stand to benefit from interfaith dialogue](#) *The Princetonian*



## Religious Literacy Thought Corner

Every issue, this section will focus on one specific aspect of society or identity. Using religious literacy skills and framework, our team will briefly prompt how to identify and perceive the influence of religion, spirituality, and non-religious belief in our lives and world.

**In this issue, Dr. Sivane Hirsch, a subject matter expert on our team, discusses teaching about religion.**



Religion is often named by teachers – at primary, secondary or post secondary levels – as a sensitive topic. And for good reason! Religion has all the characteristics of a sensitive theme:

1. Religion does evoke values, but not only because it proposes ways of living together. The values and social representations also arise from beliefs and practices and proposes various ways of living together. It is not surprising then that it gives rise to conflicts of values, especially in a democratic and plural society like Canada.

2. Religion is constantly coming back as a hot topic in local, provincial, national and international politics and raises social debate all over the world.

3. Those who study religion do not agree on the definition of religion, what religion looks like, or its role in public life. Such lack of agreement, not to mention the diversity among and within religious traditions, places an added responsibility on teachers who address religion in the classroom. They are responsible to have a clear idea of their approach before discussing it with students.

4. Religion is a very complex topic. In order to fully understand it, and its management in the public space, it is necessary to understand the geopolitical, economic and historical contexts from which each religion originated and in which they are lived today.



*Dr. Sivane Hirsch,  
CCRL Subject Matter Expert*

[Thus, approaching religion in the classroom requires a nuanced pedagogical approach that demonstrates a great deal of delicacy and tact.](#) One must take the time to examine the various points of view, in a world that often prefers certainties. Students, too, should be encouraged to question their preconceptions about the issue and to avoid shortcuts.

It is with this in mind that the Centre for Religious Civic Literacy plays such an important role in providing a better understanding of the issues at hand. Religious literacy offers a framework to recognize each of these four characteristics (and more!) and analyze religious, spiritual, and non-religious belief in individual lives and society.

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## Cultural/Holy days (December 2021 & January 2021)

This list of dates are generally commemorated or observed by many individuals within a community. Some individuals from each community may not adhere to the cultural/holy days themselves. It is not a comprehensive list of cultural/holy days worldwide but a list of those commonly recognized across parts of Canada.

As different parts of Canada enter the second wave of the pandemic, and fluctuates between public and private commemorations online, indoors, or outdoors (with the government approved numbers), our team wishes you a rejuvenating time of contemplation and community support this December and January.



### December 2020

Dec 6 – [St. Nicholas Day](#) (Western European and Romanian Christian groups)

Dec 8 – [St. Clement of Oris – Patron Day](#) (Macedonian Orthodox Christians), [Immaculate Conception of Mary](#) (Catholic Christians)

Dec 10 – [Tsongkhapa Butter Lamp Festival](#) (Tibetan Buddhists)

Dec 11 – [Hanukkah](#) (Jewish people, ends Dec 18)

Dec 12 – [Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast Day](#) (Mexican and other Catholic Christians)

Dec 13 – [Salgirah](#) (Shi'a Imami Ismaili Muslims)

Dec 16 – [Posadas Navidenas](#) (Hispanic Catholic Christians from Latin America, some from the Philippines, and others. Ends Dec 24)

Dec 19 – [St. Nicholas Day](#) (Eastern European Christian groups)

Dec 21 – [Winter Solstice](#) (Indigenous Peoples), [Yule/Litha](#) (Wiccans)

Dec 25 – [Christmas Day/Feast of the Nativity](#) (All Christian sects and denominations, with the exception of most Christian Orthodox groups); [Geeta Jayanthi](#) (Hindus)

Dec 26 – [St. Stephan's Day](#) (Catholic Christians)

Dec 27 – [Feast of the Holy Family](#) (Catholic Christians)

Dec 28/29 – [Holy Innocents](#) (Various Christian groups)

## January 2021

Jan 1 – [Mary, Mother of God](#) (Catholic Christians), [Feast Day of St Basil](#) (Orthodox Christians), [Gantan-sai](#) (Shinto), [Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus](#) (Orthodox Christians)

Jan 5 – [Twelfth Night \(Various Christian groups\)](#)

Jan 6 – [Epiphany/Dia de los Reyes](#) (Various Christian groups), [Theophany](#) (Orthodox Christians), [Nativity of Christ](#) (Armenian Orthodox Christians)

Jan 7 – [Christmas Day](#) (Orthodox Christians)

Jan 10 – [Baptism of the Lord Jesus](#) (Various Christian groups)

Jan 14 – [Maghi Lohri/Makar Sankranti](#) (Sikhs and Hindus)

Jan 17 – [World Religion Day](#) (initiated by Baha'i but celebrated by many other groups)

Jan 20 – [Guru Gobindh Singh birthday](#) (Sikhs); [Bodhi Day](#) (Japanese and Various Mahayana Buddhist groups)

Jan 28 – [New Year](#) (Mahayana Buddhists), [Thaipusam](#) (Predominantly Malaysian Hindus)

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