

CCRL The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy
CLRC Le centre de litt ratie religieuse civique

February 2021 Newsletter

CCRL Updates

As the pandemic continues, many of us are seeking new and innovative ways to stay engaged. Some people are [uplifting themselves and others through community service](#) grounded in their religion. Others are [committing themselves more regularly to nature](#) and connecting to the world through outdoor activity. Among these stories is an extremely inspiring approach from [Annie Neevee Buscemi – an Inuk youth sharing daily “Reasons to Stay Alive” via social media](#). Having struggled with poor mental health herself, she posts details about local culture and life that she is thankful for, as a way to support many locally and globally and keep her spirits up.

Such resilience, strength, and creativity is invigorating as the pandemic exasperates inequity in many pockets of Canada and the world, noted in this newsletter. This is clearly a time for us to go deeper in our relationships and systems, and engage with *the tough stuff*. Our Ontario Regional Director, Hiren Mistry, guides us through one of these tough conversations in our “Thought Corner” below – the intersection of race and belief.

As we progress in 2021, we know that there will be a continued wrestling of discomfort as we work towards positive and sustainable change. *Change is never easy, right?* For this, we are thankful for our ongoing projects and partners in this work. If you would like to partner with us in [project work](#) or [donation](#), please reach out.

Hopeful,

[Alice](#)

CCRL Executive Director & Co-Founder

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:

- [MPs demand relocation of 2022 Olympics due to China's abuse of Uighurs](#) *Regina Leader Post*
- [Using terrorist list to label white supremacists risks repeating errors of 9/11 era, civil rights groups say](#) *CBC News*
- [Canada's prison chaplains have a \(tentative\) new labour agreement](#) *Radio-Canada International*
- [Three years ago, I left Toronto to walk across Canada. Now I'm riding out the pandemic in an Arctic community of nine people](#) *Toronto Life*
- [Canadian Anglican archbishops sign anti-conversion therapy declaration](#) *Episcopal News Service*

Territories:

- [Meet the Inuk Woman Giving Youth Daily 'Reasons to Stay Alive' Through Social Media](#) *Native News Online*
- [Sisters' service still looms large at 99](#) *The Catholic Register*

British Columbia:

- [B.C. residents fear further violence in India as farmers protests trigger trauma from 1984](#) *CTV News*
- [Abusers from Mount Cashel Orphanage allegedly victimized boys in B.C., lawsuit says](#) *Prince George Citizen*
- [South Asian COVID Task Force working to dispel vaccine myths](#) *Surrey Now-Leader*
- [West Coast First Nations strike agreement to protect sacred cultural cedars](#) *Times Colonist*

Alberta:

- [Edmonton police hate crime unit investigating two 'hate-motivated assaults' against Muslim women](#) *Calgary Herald*
- [Alberta's 'back door' plan to free up billions of litres of water for coal mines raises alarm](#) *The Narwhal*
- [Last night in September: The lingering questions behind the 2017 Edmonton 'terror' attack](#) *Edmonton Journal*
- [Edmonton-area church continues to defy public health orders, questioning COVID-19 restrictions](#) *Edmonton Journal*

Prairies:

- [Remorse a factor in no hate speech charges after shooting of Colten Boushie: document](#) *Regina Leader-Post*
- [Saskatoon production company makes series on resilient Canadians coping with physical and mental challenges](#) *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*
- [900 miles before 90: Saskatoon senior sets ambitious walking goal](#) *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*
- [Serving God by picking up litter](#) *Winnipeg Free Press*

Ontario:

- [The anxieties and apps fuelling the astrology boom](#) *BBC News*
- [Unequal opportunity: What it's like to be a minority faith in the workplace](#) *The Eyeopener*
- [Conservation group moves forward with Heaven's Gate purchase](#) *CBC News Sudbury*
- [Church built by Harriet Tubman gets grant to repair it](#) *CBC News*

Quebec:

- [4 ans de l'attentat à la mosquée : Legault pressé de reconnaître le racisme systémique](#) *Radio Canada*
- [Le cauchemar de M. Camara décortiqué](#) *La Presse*
- [Racisme systémique: la chef du Parti vert a essayé de convaincre Legault](#) *The Huffington post*
- [Des Canadiens d'origine chinoise dénoncent une hausse du racisme à leur endroit](#) *Le Soleil*

Atlantic Provinces:

- [Column: Spiritualism or religion](#) *The Minden Times*
- [Minors cause an estimated \\$15K worth of damage to new mosque in Newfoundland](#) *Journal Pioneer*
- [97-year-old Cape Breton church organist finds meaning in music](#) *CTV News*
- [Mi'kmaw writer, actor is new co-ordinator of UPEI's Indigenous Student Centre](#) *CBC News*

International:

- [American Humanist leader Roy Speckhardt stepping down to make room for diverse leaders](#) *Religion News Service*
- ['This has to end peacefully': California's Punjabi farmers rally behind India protests](#) *The Guardian*
- [The military coup in Myanmar presents opportunities to Buddhist nationalists](#) *The Conversation US*
- [Sri Lanka to allow burial of COVID-19 victims following ban](#) *Washington Post*



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, Hiren Mistry, our Ontario Regional Director, discusses: “To Be Seen as Fully Human: Religious Literacy in the Context of Anti Racism”



The reality of anti-Black racism that gripped most of the world in 2020 signalling [calls for solidarity](#) from all identity groups to dismantle anti-Black racism. [George Floyd's](#) public murder turned the “unspeakability of race” ([Dei, 2012](#)) to an unprecedented [reckoning with race](#) and racism for our generation. Conversations about race and racism are no longer confined to lecture halls, activist meetings or grassroots workshops with mostly [BIPOC](#) individuals. Along with ‘[anti-Black racism](#)’, terms such as ‘[white supremacy](#)’, ‘[white fragility](#)’, and explicit conversations about ‘[how to be an anti-racist](#)’ have compelled Canadians from all walks of life to understand inclusion, belonging and civic identity with a more critical lens.

Where does knowledge about religion, spirituality and [creed](#) fit into the global call for allyship and activism to dismantle anti-Black racism in North America?

1. We need an intersectional approach to dismantle anti-Black racism.

Being knowledgeable about race and anti-racism requires knowing more than the toxic way [power came to be associated with skin colour](#). This knowledge *is* important, but as anti-racism scholar, George Dei, has pointed out, race is not “just about skin colour”. He urges Canadians to understand that being race-conscious or anti-racist does not mean we can reject “the intersectionality of our multiple identities” ([Dei 2012, p. 240](#)). While anti-racist actions require a critical understanding of the connection between skin

pigmentation and power it is equally important that the various identities, experiences and world views of racialized people are not reduced to being about colour only. This [intersectional](#) approach to understanding identity invites us to consider conceptual toolkits we need to see and understand racialized people as more fully human.

2. We need an approach and tool that can help us see the interplay between world view and race.

Knowledge of religious literacy is a critical tool in the work of anti-racism. It helps bring to life the varied and nuanced world views and histories of Black, Indigenous and other racialized Canadians. Furthermore, religious literacy helps to build connections and understanding with [Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities](#) who have often been the targets of hate crimes in Canada. A deeper understanding of the ways that religious influenced traditions and mindsets have been used by [South Asian Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs](#) in the face of racism, for instance, also demonstrates that these communities are not just passive victims of racism. The interplay between religious culture, beliefs, history and concepts of identity inform the lives of BIPOC people in Canada and globally.

3. We need a framework that helps us see the interplay at the personal, cultural, and systemic societal levels.

Dismantling anti-Black racism requires us to confront what we understand about Blackness. Religious literacy can help displace the [single story](#) of Black people constructed by society by providing a framework to understand the influence of culture, context, history, belief and practice on the millions of religious-affiliated, spiritual, and non-affiliated Black peoples globally and locally. Similarly, religious literacy is helpful in unravelling discussions of white supremacy, specifically the connection between affiliation with [white evangelical churches](#) and white supremacist values in North America. The ways that religion has been racialized, and the ways that race has been marked by religion, confirms the importance of religious literacy in furthering civic understanding of race in society today.



Hiren Mistry, CCRL Ontario Regional Director

Cultural/Holy days (February and March 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.



February 2021

- FEB 2 – [Imbolc](#) (Wiccans)
- FEB 12 – [Lunar New Year/Chun Jie/Vietnamese Tet/Korean Solnal/Tibetan Losar](#) (Various groups)
- FEB 15 – [Parinirvana/Nirvana Day](#) (Mahayana Buddhists and other Buddhist groups)
- FEB 16 – [Carnival/Shrove Tuesday](#) (Various Christians); [Vasanta Panchami](#) (Some Hindus)
- FEB 17 – [Ash Wednesday](#) (Various Christians)
- FEB 25 – [Purim](#), begins, ends Feb 26 (Jewish)
- FEB 27 – [Magha Puja Day/Sangha Day](#) (Buddhism)

March 2021

- MAR 11 – [Maha Shivaratri](#) (Various Hindus); [Laylat al Mi'raj/Isra/Mi'raj](#) (Many Muslims)
- MAR 15 – [Clean Monday/Ash Monday](#) (Orthodox Christianity)
- MAR 16 – [Farvardegan](#) begins, ends on Mar 20 (Zoroastrians)

MAR 17 – [Higan-e](#) (Mahayana Buddhists and other Buddhist groups); [St. Patrick's Day](#) (Irish Catholics)

MAR 20 – [Nowruz](#) (Baha'i, Zoroastrian, and Persian celebration); [Shunbun-no-hi](#) (Shintos); [Ostara](#) (Wiccans)

MAR 25 – [Spring Equinox](#) (Various Indigenous groups), [Ugadi / Gudi Padwa / Telugu New Year](#) (Hindus from the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, and Maharashtra)

MAR 26 – [Birth of Prophet Zarathustra](#) (Zoroastrians)

MAR 27 – [Earth Hour](#) (Humanists and many others)

MAR 28 – [Pesach/Passover](#) (Jewish people), [Palm Sunday](#) (Christians); [Laylat al Bara'at/Mid-Sha'ban](#) (Many Muslims)

MAR 29 – [Holi](#) (Hinduism and Sikhism); [Hola Mohalla](#) (Sikhism)

Photo sources (top to bottom): Photo by [Isaac Demeester](#) on [Unsplash](#), [Ben Sweet](#) on [Unsplash](#), [Mindaugas Norvilas](#) on [Unsplash](#)