

CCRL The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy
CLRC Le centre de litt ratie religieuse civique
April 2021 Newsletter

CCRL Updates

We begin April with great news and optimism, especially with [a new grant from the Multiculturalism Branch of the BC Government](#). This extends our current project to co-create an anti-racism tool with local leaders in Victoria to now include collaboration with regional and provincial leaders in BC. It continues our focus on making long-term systemic changes.

This is an important and challenging task as we see changes across the country. Changes like the proposed Alberta curriculum and how it reframes [social studies, religion, Indigenous history](#), and the consistent theme of tension between Indigenous groups and businesses and governments regarding land and resource use, noted in several headlines below. Amidst the changes, we're thankful for our incredible team that offers a nuanced perspective, like [Dr. Margie Patrick's](#) contribution in the article below on the Alberta curriculum, and advisors, like [Dr. Blair Stonechild](#), who guides our own nuanced understanding and work with the many different Indigenous groups across this land.

To understand the complexity in religious, spiritual, and non-religious groups, Margie's "Thought Corner" below presents a strong and clear foundation for this whole conversation. I encourage you to check it out and share it with others.

In the meantime, if you are looking more internally and art has become an outlet during the pandemic (as it has for many people), consider these beautiful [Inuit art pieces](#) and a capture of [Shah Jahan's 17th Century India](#).

As ever, this spring opens up a time of growth and regeneration, but it also opens up seasons for heavy lifting. If you would like to engage in this long-term and complex work with us in [project work](#) or [donation](#), we would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

[Alice](#)

CCRL Executive Director & Co-Founder

The Pulse

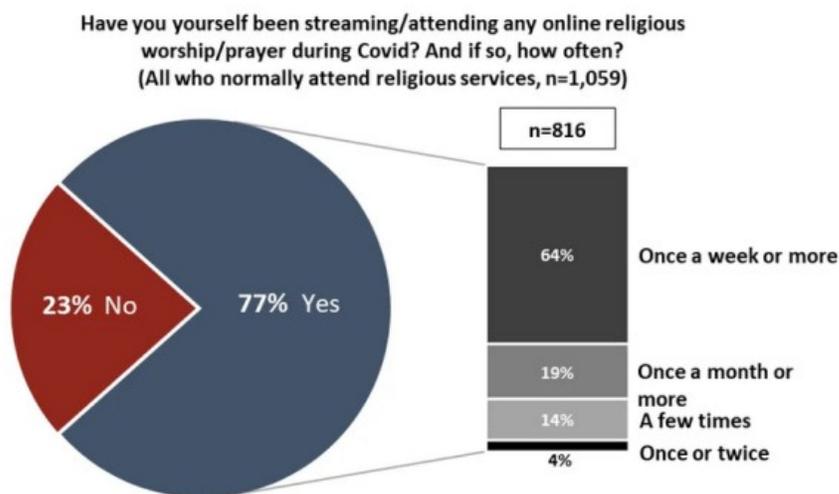


How does belief (religious or not) inform life and society in Canada today? Here are some headlines that show how religious, spiritual, and non-religious perspectives remain part of our daily lives and society. They show the struggles, virtues, and influence of Canadians in local and global communities.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

- [Amnesty International report condemns Canada's treatment of Indigenous people, minorities](#) *CityNews Winnipeg*
- [Kurl: Religious rituals suffer under COVID – but Canadians' faith is still strong](#) *Ottawa Citizen*
- ['I can feel your breath': when COVID-19 and environmental racism collide](#) *The Narwhal*
- [Religious Canadians praying for return to in-person worship, but won't forsake online services in future](#) *Angus Reid Institute*



Data from the Angus Reid Institute from the article on “Religious Canadians praying for return to in-person worship.”

Territories:

- [First Nations' rights will be respected, say New Democrats](#) *Whitehorse Daily Star*
- [New book tells Gwich'in Elders' stories of life on the land](#) *NNSL Media*
- [Ontario drug dealer jailed for trafficking cocaine in Inuvik](#) *Cabin Radio*
- [Indigenous groups request Wood Buffalo National Park apology](#) *Cabin Radio*

British Columbia:

- [Sikh Motorcycle Club rolls out 60,000 face masks as gift to B.C. frontline workers](#) *Surrey-Leader Now*
- [Douglas Todd: Black churches regret pandemic ban on dancing, indoor praise at Easter](#) *Vancouver Sun*
- [Indigenous youth suicide prevention initiative taken over by Stó:lō Nation](#) *Vancouver Sun*
- [Maple Ridge principal receives provincial award for helping others](#) *Maple-Ridge Pitt Meadows News*

Alberta:

- ['The human spirit is so creative': Edmonton spiritual care practitioner looks ahead to Easter](#) *CBC News*
- [Mosque, synagogue leaders in Alberta call on GraceLife Church to follow COVID-19 rules](#) *The Globe & Mail*
- [Parkland County residents raise environmental concerns over \\$22M church development near Chickakoo Lake](#) *CBC News*
- [Social studies, religion, Indigenous history sections of proposed Alberta curriculum under fire](#) *The Canadian Press*

Prairies:

- [Cowessess First Nation new child welfare legislation will keep children in care connected to community](#) *CTV News Regina*
- [Does cannabis have a place in hospice?](#) *Regina Leader-Post*
- [First Nations organizations calling on Manitoba government to fund addictions treatment centre](#) *APTN News*
- [Get an inside look at 3 works from INUA at Qaumajuq, the world's largest collection of Inuit art](#) *CBC News*

Ontario:

- [Canada First Nation group opposes De Beers waste dump on traditional land](#) *National Post*
- [Remembering Canadian Muslim Historian the Late Dr. Daood Hamdani](#) *MuslimLink*
- [Councillors want place where mourners can spread funeral ashes on waterfront](#) *CBC News*

Quebec:

- [Le manque d'écoute du gouvernement force à nouveau le Conseil des juifs hassidiques du Québec à s'adresser aux tribunaux](#) *Newswire*
- [Des témoins du passé retrouvés dans la collection d'un ferrailleur](#) *Le Devoir*
- [Contestation de la Loi sur la laïcité de l'État: Québec dévoile des rapports d'experts](#) *Journal de Québec*

Atlantic Provinces:

- [Nova Scotia enlists historically Black churches to help get COVID-19 vaccine to African Nova Scotians](#) *The Globe & Mail*
- [From the archives: Remembering Cape Breton labour leader Winston Ruck](#) *CBC News*
- [P.E.I. Baha'i Centre's interfaith devotionals an invitation to one and all](#) *The Chronicle Herald*
- [Good Friday still a big deal in Newfoundland and Labrador, even in a pandemic](#) *The Globe & Mail*

International:

- ['Allergic reaction to US religious right' fueling decline of religion, experts say](#) *The Guardian*
- [Opinion: Lil Nas X is inviting the Black church in with 'Montero'](#) *Religion News Service*
- [What a Tiny Masterpiece Reveals About Power and Beauty](#) *The New York Times*



Art work depicting Shah Jahan, described in the New York Times article, "What a Tiny Masterpiece Reveals about Power and Beauty" listed above.



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. Margie Patrick, one of our Subject Matter Experts, discusses:

“What is “religion”? What’s in a definition?”

In 2018, reporters asked the newly minted national NDP leader Jagmeet Singh about his views of violence after videos surfaced of him at previous rallies supporting an independent Sikh homeland. In one video Singh was on a panel where a fellow panelist indicated that violence may be necessary for Sikhs to obtain their independence. When [reporters pressed Singh about his views, Singh initially stated that the issue was too complex to answer with a simple response](#). But [columnists continued to criticize his lack of “clarification,” although a CBC columnist hastened to add that the issue was not one of religion, but of politics](#). And therein was the problem.



The problem was the columnist’s definition of religion and the assumption that religion can so easily be separated from politics. Granted, defining religion is incredibly complex. Academics debate whether religion is an irreducible and unique phenomenon or a social construction. They further observe that:

- Religious traditions are dynamic, changing over time and place, and internally diverse.
- Some religious adherents highlight belief while others might emphasize practice and/or experience.

- Some religious adherents prefer the term spirituality, although this term is as ambiguous as religion.
- Some individuals may have more than one religious and/or spiritual identity.
- Some do not separate their religion or spirituality from politics and ethics.
- Some see religion as only one among many motivating factors (e.g. economic, social, and political) when explaining people's actions.

How a society defines religion matters. And the points listed above remind us to avoid reducing people to their religious identities, to avoid a form of essentialism that ignores the totality of how people live their lives. At the same time, it is equally problematic to assume all religious traditions are primarily individualist and private.

A columnist more aware of these complexities would not assume that a question about an independent state for Sikhs is merely a political question. Similarly, a humanist cannot separate their philosophy from the ethical question of how a society can best support the dignity of every human person. Worldviews, both religious and non-religious, are often comprehensive, informing one's economic, social, and political views. Questions regarding one's views of violence are, and indeed must be, open to investigation. One of the roles of the media is to bring such views to the surface, especially those of our political leaders. But to think that complex questions like the ones posed to Singh have nothing to do with religion perpetuates the myth that religion is nothing more than private sentiment.



The CCRL, with its focus on religious literacy, supports all Canadians in learning more about religious and non-religious worldviews, about definitions and why they matter, and about how we can better live together when we more thoroughly understand each other.

To see a more detailed version of this article, click [here](#).

[Dr. Margie Patrick](#), CCRL Subject Matter Expert on Inclusion of religion and worldview in school curriculum

Cultural/Holy days (April and May 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.



April 2021

- APR 1 – [Maundy Thursday](#) (various Christian groups)
- APR 2 – [Good Friday](#) (Protestant and Catholic Christians)
- APR 4 – [Easter Sunday](#) (Protestant and Catholic Christians)
- APR 13 – [Vaisakhi/Baisakhi](#) (Sikhs), [Ramadan](#) begins (Muslims, until May 12)
- APR 19 – [First Day of Ridvan](#) (until May 1, Baha'i)
- APR 21 – [Rama Navami](#) (Hindus)
- APR 22 – [Earth Day](#) (Humanists and various other groups)
- APR 27 – [Hanuman Jayanti](#) (Hindus)
- APR 24 – [Guru Purnima](#) (Hindus)
- APR 30 – [Good Friday](#) (Orthodox Christians)

May 2021

- MAY 1** – [Beltane](#) (Wiccans)
- MAY 2** – [Easter Sunday](#) (Orthodox Christians)
- MAY 8** – [St. Mark's Feast](#) (Coptic Christians)
- MAY 9** – [Laylat-al-Qadr](#) (various Muslim groups)
- MAY 12 or 13** – [Eid-ul-Fitr](#) (date depends on Muslim group)
- MAY 16** – [Shavuot](#) (until May 18, various Jewish groups)
- MAY 22** – [Declaration of the Bab](#) (until May 23, Baha'i)
- MAY 23** – [Pentecost](#) (Orthodox Christians)
- MAY 25/26/27** – [Vesak](#) or [Buddha Purnima](#) (Mahayana, Theravadan, and Riwoche Tibet Buddhism)
- MAY 27** – [Ascension of Bahá u' lláh](#) (until May 28, Baha'i)

Photo sources (top to bottom): Photo by [Aniket Bhattacharya](#), [Dollar Gill](#), and [Mindaugas Norvilas](#) on Unsplash.