

CCRL The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy

CLRC Le centre de litt ratie religieuse civique

June 2021 Newsletter

CCRL Updates

Canada has been shaken in the recent weeks and days. The [mass grave of 215 Indigenous children from a residential school in Kamloops, BC](#) and the [targeted killing of a Muslim family in London, ON](#) have left us speechless. Global events have affected many groups in Canada too, such as the [11-day conflict in Gaza and Israel](#) and a [recent ban in New South Wales against Sikh students wearing their kirpan to schools](#).

In these difficult times, we mourn and take stock. What led to these events? What can we do? Human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

From our work, we know that a non-neutral response includes introspection, dialogue, and taking a stance. Sometimes, people look down on dialogue but that's where it often starts. Dialogue is part of relationship building, which is crucial to move forward.

Our team is going through these steps. We are doing this individually, together, and with our incredible partners because we know that these complex issues cannot be tackled alone.



Partners in our "Discussing Racism: Leading Change from Multifaith Spaces" project:
(counterclockwise) Dr. Moussa Magassa, Sheila Flood, Ivan Paquette, Dr. W. Y. Alice Chan
(myself)

We thank you for supporting our work on religious literacy too. You are part of our process towards change.

The headlines below reflect the sadness, frustration, and hurt among many communities. They are unfortunate reminders that more religious literacy is needed to foster understanding. Please check out [Dr. Hicham Tiflati](#)'s "Thought Corner" (below) on the "Islamization of identity" too (2 min read). His thoughts are even more relevant for many brown-skinned people in light of the London attacks.

Again, thank you for making change with us. If you would like to support, collaborate, or connect with us in any way, please reach out at any time. You are welcome.

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:

- [Catholics need to 'ask their church to do better' in the wake of Kamloops discovery, minister says](#) *CBC News*
- [CANADA: Indigenous women's group releases own plan on MMIWG, citing 'toxic' federal process](#) *Orilliamatters.com*

- [Muslim family killed in terror attack in London, Ontario: Islamophobic violence surfaces once again in Canada](#) *The Conversation*
- [Rights for nature: How granting a river 'personhood' could help protect it](#) *The Conversation*
- [Jewish groups decry mock 'eviction notice' sent to residents in Canadian cities](#) *Global News*

Territories:

- ['We Seek to Find our Loved Ones, and We Seek to Find Justice': Chief Norman Yakeleya of the Dene Nation on the 215, and how reconciliation demands an apology from the Pope.](#) *The Tyee*
- [Fort Simpson, N.W.T., reckons with 'wounds beneath the surface' as burial sites enter public discussion](#) *CBC North*
- [YK Islamic Centre to hold vigil for victims of London attack](#) *Cabin Radio*

British Columbia:

- [Expression of Commitment](#) *Archdiocese of Vancouver*
- [Faith in action: Turning asphalt into apartments](#) *Community Housing Transformation Centre – News*
- [B.C. Muslims shocked at London attack but resolve to openly practise faith](#) *Vancouver Sun*

Alberta:

- [More than 800 join walk and ceremony at First Nation near Calgary](#) *The Globe & Mail*
- [Blood Tribe pays tribute to residential school victims, demands gov't action](#) *Lethbridge Herald*
- [Alberta premier says more action coming to prosecute hate crimes](#) *CBC Edmonton*

Prairies:

- [Bergen Rallying Municipal Support For Suicide Prevention Line](#) *Pembina Valley Online*
- [The next step to GMO wheat](#) *CountryGuide*
- [EDITORIAL: The horrible effect of religious hatred](#) *Winnipeg Sun*

Ontario:

- [Some Catholic schools in Ontario fly rainbow Pride flag for 1st time](#) *CBC News*
- [Councillors call for renaming of Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway](#) *CBC News Ottawa*
- [« Commençons par la vérité » : parlons-nous assez des pensionnats autochtones à l'école?](#) *Radio-Canada ICI Nord de l'Ontario*

Quebec:

- [Jugement Blanchard sur la laïcité de l'État : à revoir de fond en comble](#) *Le Journal de Québec*
- [Montrealers of all religions gather to honour victims of London attack](#) *Montreal Gazette*
- [Lien entre l'attentat de London et la loi sur la laïcité de l'État: Trudeau persiste](#) *Le Soleil*

Atlantic Provinces:

- [Strangers verbally attack Jewish man in Moncton over Gaza conflict](#) *CBC News*
- ['All I can say is pray': A Q&A with residential school survivor Toby Obed](#) *CBC Nfld. & Labrador*
- [New Brunswick's long and little-known history of assimilating Indigenous children](#) *CBC New Brunswick*

International:

- [Pope voices 'pain' over Canadian deaths, doesn't apologize](#) *Associated Press*
 - [Younger Jews see no contradiction in speaking up for Palestinians](#) *Religion News Service*
 - [Tulsa pastors honor 'holy ground' 100 years after massacre](#) *Religion News Service*
 - [Lack of burial space is changing age-old funeral practices, and in Japan 'tree burials' are gaining in popularity](#) *The Conversation*
 - ['Ignorance and xenophobia': NSW school dagger ban sparks international furore](#) *The Sydney Morning Herald*
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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. Hicham Tiflati, our Quebec Regional Director discusses:

“The ‘Islamization’ of Identity”



Religious literacy challenges ignorance, discrimination, conflict, and exclusion. This ignorance can manifest itself in the [“Islamization” of other identities](#), when non-Muslims are assumed to be Muslim. Faith identities are primarily seen as religious-based identities through which individuals confess their belief to a deity and pledge allegiance to a set of traditions. [These identities also embody many cultural and ethnic forms.](#)

For example, the anti-Muslim hate Sikh rhetoric is not a new phenomenon. It has been happening for a long time and reached its peak after 9/11—and continuing on a high since then. It varied from insults, discrimination, and ‘Hello bin Laden’ to mass shootings. Since 9/11, Islamophobia has spread and targeted groups indiscriminately. Sikhs, who wear a turban as an article of faith, have often been mistaken for Muslims, therefore labeled as a “legitimate target.”

The first victim of a 9/11 “revenge killing” was Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh-American gas station owner. On September 15, 2001, he was [shot dead](#) in Arizona. The perpetrator mistook him for an Arab Muslim. In 2012 in Wisconsin, another shooter stormed the Sikh

Figure 1 A meme shared by Prof. Simran Jeet Singh
<https://twitter.com/simran/status/1126549943437676545?s=20>

Temple of Wisconsin Oak Creek, [Killing 6](#) at a Sikh Temple Near Milwaukee.

This global phenomenon led Britain's first turban-wearing Sikh MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi to call for a [change](#) to the definition of Islamophobia to include 'perceived Muslimness' which he says would protect other groups from persecution. [Canada has the second largest Sikh population](#) in the world, outside of India so this concern is relevant and local.

Many Sikh parents are finding it extremely difficult to explain to their children why they are being [targeted](#) with Islamophobic attacks, when they themselves are not Muslim. Nonetheless, Sikhs warn against saying '[We're not Muslim](#)' as defence. Saying, 'Don't hate me, I'm not a Muslim' is not a response Sikhs tend to make. Their own religious consciousness allows them to have the awareness of how saying this would demonize another religious group.

To engage with fellow members of our society, we need to recognize that assuming an individual's Muslim identity based on race is racialized Islamophobia. It is common for anyone with Brown skin to be targeted for being Muslim—this includes Arabs Christians, Latinos, Hindus, and many others. The perpetrators fail to separate radical terrorist groups from Muslims. This is bigotry and shows the palpable need for a society that embodies religious literacy.



[Dr. Hicham Tiflati](#), our CCRL Quebec Regional Director and Subject Matter Expert

Cultural/Holy days (June and July 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. Our team wishes you a rejuvenating time of contemplation and community support this June and July.



June 2021

JUNE 3 – [Corpus Christi](#) (some Christians)

JUNE 16 – [Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib](#) (Sikhs)

JUNE 20 – [Summer Solstice](#) (various groups)

JUNE 21 – [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#), [World Humanist Day](#) (Humanists)

JUNE 24 – [St. Jean Baptiste](#) (Catholics, predominantly in Quebec)

July 2021

JULY 9 – [Martyrdom of the Báb](#) (Baha'is)

JULY 12 – [Rath Yatra](#) (some Hindus)

JULY 17 – [Tisha B'Av](#) (ends on July 18, some Jewish people)

JULY 20 – [Eid-al-Adha](#) (Muslims)

JULY 24 – [Dharma Day](#) (Theravada Buddhists), [Guru Purinima](#) (some Hindus), [Pioneer Day](#) (Latter Day Saints)

Photo sources (top to bottom): Photo by [Sergey Shmidt](#) and [Ravi Piniseti](#) on Unsplash.