



Holy Days & Days of Significance Handbook





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The Lakehead District School Board community includes students and staff from diverse creed, belief, and faith groups. It is the commitment of the board to respect and uphold every individual's right to observe and practice their creed, and as such, the Board endeavors to provide accommodations to all staff and students. The Board upholds the Ontario Human Rights Code (Code) that protects an individual's right to be free from discrimination because of creed.

Creed is not defined in the Code; it includes religious beliefs and practices as well as Indigenous spiritual practices. The duty to accommodate creed is about providing the most appropriate accommodation in the circumstances. It is also about engaging in a meaningful and respectful good-faith process to assess needs and find appropriate solutions. The duty to accommodate is about determining an appropriate solution and providing it, short of undue hardship.

Although creed observances are based on generally accepted practices as defined by a religion/faith group, the Board recognizes that members of faith groups are not homogeneous in their understanding, interpretation, and practice of their faith. It is not the role of schools to monitor students' compliance with a particular observance.

Human rights protection for creed do not extend to practices and observances that are hateful or incite hatred or violence against other individuals or groups or contravene criminal law.

The Holy Days & Days of Significance Handbook is a resource which:

- Lists the upcoming Holy Days & Days of Significance for the upcoming school year;
- Provides sample accommodations which may be requested by students or staff;
- Provides guidance for members of the Board on how to request accommodations; and
- Provides information on planning around Holy Days & Days of Significance.

This guide identifies some of the important Holy Days & Days of Significance from various faiths. While every effort is made for this guide to be inclusive of our entire Board community, it is not an exhaustive list. Students and staff may need time for holy days and related observances which are not listed.

2024 – 2025 Holy Days & Days of Significance

Holy Days are dates that are set aside for religious- or creed-based festivals and observances. Some religions, like Christianity, may use the Gregorian calendar for their Holy Days (i.e. Christmas is observed on December 25 every year). Other religions use different calendar systems, such as a solar calendar, a lunar calendar, or a combination of both (luni-solar calendar). As such, please be sure to note if an observance may begin on the evening before the listed date in the chart below. For example:

- » Holy Days from the Baha’i, Jewish, and Wiccan faith begin at sunset on the evening prior to the listed date, and end at sunset of the listed date.
- » Holy Days from the Islamic faith may vary by a day due to the lunar calendar.
- » The Anishinaabeg follow a lunar calendar, where a ‘month’ is the period from one full moon to the next. The moon names presented in this calendar are an example of the moon names commonly used in and around Animbiigoo Zaagi’igan and Aninshnaabewi Gitchi-Gami. However, every community and region have their own way of recognizing moon cycles and harvesting times.

Days of Significance are dates that are designated to raise awareness or promote action about different social, cultural, or historical events. While these dates may be associated with a particular creed or belief, they are not religious observances. By recognizing Days of Significance, we can help promote a more inclusive and equitable society and climate.

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○ - Avoid scheduling events at any time during days marked with this symbol

● - Avoid scheduling events on the evening prior for days marked with this symbol

± - Dates marked with this symbol may vary by a day due to the Lunar calendar.

Begin	Ends	Holy Day/Day of Significance	Faith or Organization
SEPTEMBER			
Waatebagaa-Giizis (Changing Leaves Moon)			
1		Installation of Holy Scriptures of Guru Granth Sahib	Sikhism
2		Labour Day ○	Canadian holiday
2		Farvadegan	Zoroastrianism
6		Ganesh/Vinayak Chauth ○	Hinduism
8		Samvatsari/Paryushan Parva ends/Daslakshan Parva begins	Community Observance
8		International Literacy Day	Community Observance
9		International FASD Awareness Day	Community Observance
10		World Suicide Prevention Day	Community Observance
11		Nayrouz (Coptic New Year)	Christianity (Orthodox)
15		Milad-un-Nabi	Islam
17		Kshamavani/Dashlakhan Parva ends ○	Jainism
19		Powley Day ○	Indigenous Worldview
21		International Day of Peace	Community Observance
22		Harvestide/Fall Equinox ○●	Wicca & Indigenous Worldview
25	30	National Truth and Reconciliation Week	Indigenous Worldview & Government of Canada
25		Franco-Ontarian Day	Government of Ontario
27		Rowan's Law Day	Government of Ontario
30		National Day for Truth and Reconciliation ○	Indigenous Worldview & Government of Canada
30		Orange Shirt Day ○	Indigenous Worldview
OCTOBER			
Autism Awareness Month Caribbean Heritage Month Islamic Heritage Month Latinx Heritage Month Learning Disabilities Month Women's History Month Binaaakwe-Giizis (Falling Leaves Moon)			
2	4	Rosh Hashanah ○●	Judaism
3	12	Sharad Navratri	Hinduism

Begin	Ends	Holy Day/Day of Significance	Faith or Organization
4		National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ+ People	Community Observance
5		World Teachers' Day	Community Observance
23	24	Simchat Torah ○●	Judaism
10		World Mental Health Day	Community Observance
10		Durga Ashtami	Hinduism
11	12	Yom Kippur ○●	Judaism
12		Vijaya Dashmi/Dussehra	Hinduism
14		Thanksgiving Day	Community Observance
16	23	Sukkot	Judaism
16		International Pronouns Day	Community Observance
17		International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	Community Observance
20		Karva Chauth	Hinduism
21	25	National School Bus Safety Week	Community Observance
21	25	Media Literacy Week	Community Observance
24		Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Appreciation Day	Community Observance
31		Samhain ○●	Wicca/Pagan
31		Halloween	Community Observance
NOVEMBER			
Gashkadino-Giizis (Freezing Over Moon)			
Movember (Men's Health Awareness)			
4	10	Holocaust Education Week	Community Observance
Oct 31	1	Diwali ○●	Hinduism/Jainism
1		Bandi Chhor Divas ○●	Sikhism
2		Birth of the Báb	Bahá'í
3	9	Treaties Recognition Week	Community Observance
5	11	Veterans' Week	Community Observance
7		International Inuit Day	Community Observance
8		Indigenous Veterans' Day	Community Observance
11		Remembrance Day	Community Observance
15		Birth of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib ○	Sikhism
11	15	Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week	Community Observance
20		Transgender Day of Remembrance	Community Observance
25		International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women	Community Observance
25		Day of the Covenant	Bahá'í

Begin	Ends	Holy Day/Day of Significance	Faith or Organization
27		Ascension of 'Abu'l-Bahá'	Bahá'í
DECEMBER			
Atikomego Giizis (Whitefish Moon) Manidoo Giizisoons (Little Spirit Moon)			
1		World AIDS Day	Community Observance
Nov 28	1	Advent (Christianity)	Christianity
2		International Day of the Abolition of Slavery	Community Observance
3		International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Community Observance
4		Installation of Guru Granth as Guru	Sikhism
5		International Volunteer Day	Community Observance
6		Martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur	Sikhism
6		National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women	Community Observance
10		International Human Rights Day	Community Observance
13		Birthday of Imam Aga Khan	Islam
21		Winter Solstice/Yule ○●	Wicca/Indigenous Worldview
25	Jan 2	Chanukah	Judaism
26	Jan 1	Kwanzaa	African-Canadian and American Celebration
26		Zarathosht-no-diso	Zoroastrianism
JANUARY			
Gichimandoo-Giizis (Big Spirit Moon)			
1		New Year's Day ○	Canadian Holiday
1		Gantan-sai ○	New Year's - Shinto
4		National Ribbon Skirt Day	Community Observance
5		Birth of Guru Gobind Singh ○	Sikhism
6		Epiphany	Christianity
7		New Year's Day ○	Orthodox Christianity
14		Makar Sankranti	Hinduism
21		Lincoln Alexander Day	Government of Ontario
24		World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture	United Nations
23		International Day of Education	United Nations
27		International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust	United Nations
29		National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia	Community Observance

Begin	Ends	Holy Day/Day of Significance	Faith or Organization
FEBRUARY			
Namebin-Giizis (Suckerfish Moon) Black History Month			
2		Vasant Panchami	Hinduism
5	9	Canadian School Counselling Week	Community Observance
11		International Day of Women and Girls in Science	Community Observance
15		Parinirvana Day	Buddhism
15		National Flag Day of Canada	Government of Canada
17		Louis Riel Day ○	Indigenous Worldview
17		Family Day ○	Canadian Holiday
21		International Mother Language Day	Indigenous
25		Ayyam-i-Ha	Bahá'í
26		Maha Shivarati ○	Hinduism
28		Pink Shirt Day	Community Observance
28	Mar 31	Ramadan	Islam
MARCH			
Onaabani-Giizis (Snowcrust Moon) National Social Work Month Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Women's History Month National Music Therapy Awareness Month			
1	20	The Month of Fasting	Bahá'í
4		Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Tuesday)	Christianity
5	April 17	Lent	Christianity
5		Ash Wednesday	Christianity
8		International Women's Day	Community Observance
14	15	Purim ○●	Judaism
14		Holi	Hinduism
14		Hola Mohalla	Sikhism
15		International Day to Combat Islamophobia	United Nations
20		Naw Ruz (New Year) ○●	Bahá'í
21		Navroze/Nowruz ○●	Zoroastrianism
21		World Down Syndrome Day	Community Observance
21		International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	United Nations
25		International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade	United Nations

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Begin	Ends	Holy Day/Day of Significance	Faith or Organization
31		Eid-ul-Fitr ○●	Islam
31		International Transgender Day of Visibility	United Nations
31		National Indigenous Languages Day	Government of Canada
APRIL			
Iskigamizige-Giizis (Sugar Bushing Moon) Child Abuse Prevention Month Autism Awareness Month Sikh Heritage Month Earth Month			
2		World Autism Awareness Day	United Nations
6		Rama Navami	Hinduism
9		International Day of Pink	Community Observance
12	14	Pesach (Passover)	Judaism
12		Theravada New Year	Buddhism
13		Palm Sunday	Christianity
14		Vaisakhi (Baisakhi)	Sikhism
18		Good Friday	Canadian Holiday
20		Easter	Christianity
20	May 1	Ridvan	Bahá'í
21		Easter Monday	Canadian Holiday
24		Yom Hashoah	Judaism
28		World Day for Safety and Health at Work	Government of Canada
28		Ninth Day of Ridvan	Bahá'í
MAY			
Zaagibagaa-Giizis (Budding Moon) Asian Heritage Month South Asian Heritage Month Canadian Jewish Heritage Month			
1		Twelvth Day of Ridvan ○●	Bahá'í
1		Beltane ○	Wicca
5		National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit People ○	Government of Canada
6	12	Children's Mental Health Week	Children's Mental Health Ontario
10		Bear Witness Day (Jordan's Principle)	Government of Canada
12		Vesak/Wesak (Buddha's Enlightenment) ○	Buddhism
15		Buddha's Birthday	Buddhism
16		Moose Hide Campaign Day	Indigenous Worldview
17		International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia	Community Observance

Begin	Ends	Holy Day/Day of Significance	Faith or Organization
19		Victoria Day	Canadian Holiday
23		Declaration of the Báb	Bahá'í
28		Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh	Bahá'í
29		Ascension Day	Christianity
30		Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	Sikhism
JUNE			
Ode'imini-Giizis (Strawberry Moon) National Indigenous History Month Pride Month			
1	3	Shavuot ○●	Judaism
4		Anishinabek Nation Holiday (Anishinaabe Chi-Naaknigewin) ○	Indigenous Worldview
6	7	Eid-ul-Adha ○●	Islam
8		Pentecost	Christianity
9		International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples	United Nations
21		Litha/Summer Solstice ○	Wicca
21		National Indigenous Peoples Day / Solidarity Day ○	Government of Canada
27		Canadian Multiculturalism Day	Government of Canada
27		First Day of Muharram (New Years Day) ○	Islam
JULY			
Miinke Giizis (Berry Moon)			
1		Canada Day	Canadian Holiday
4	6	Jalsa Salana ○	Islam
6		Ashura ○	Islam
9		Martyrdom of the Bab	Bahá'í
10		Guru Purnima	Hinduism
11		Imamat Day ○	Islam
20		Global Day of Inclusion	Special Olympics Ontario
AUGUST			
Manoominike-Giizis (Ricing Moon)			
1		Lammas	Wicca
2	3	Tishah B'Av	Judaism
4		Civic Holiday	Canadian Holiday
8		Fravardeghan	Zoroastrianism
16		Sri Krishna Jayanti ○	Hinduism
18		Nowruz ○●	Zoroastrianism
21	28	Paryushana-parva	Jainism
27		Ganesh Chaturthi ○	Hinduism

Requests for Creed-Based Accommodations

Lakehead District School Board will take reasonable steps to provide accommodation to students or staff who believe that the Board's operations or requirements interfere with their ability to exercise their creed beliefs and practices, to the point of undue hardship. A determination of undue hardship will be based on an assessment of costs of the accommodation, outside sources of funding, and health and safety risks to the individual and/or others at the Board.

It is expected that students and their families, as well as staff, will help the Board to understand their creed related needs and will work with the Board and its schools to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students or staff may request an accommodation to observe their creed beliefs, commonly in one or more of the following areas:

1. **School Opening and Closing Exercises:** At minimum, all public schools in Ontario are required to open or closed each day with the national anthem (PPM 108 & Education Act R.S.O. 1990). A student or employee who objects to all or part of opening or closing exercises for faith-based reasons will be exempted and given the option not to participate and to remain in the class or in an agreed-upon location.
2. **Prayer:** Schools should make every reasonable effort to accommodate the requirements for daily prayer by providing an appropriate location within the building for prayer when requested by students or staff. Some accommodation for late school arrival and/or early school leaving may be necessary. Prayer times change in some faiths according to the seasons.
3. **Dietary Requirements:** Schools should be aware of dietary restrictions of various faith groups. This awareness includes breakfast and lunch programs, snacks, overnight outdoor education activities and field trips that cover a meal-time period, and catering for special occasions and community events. Provision of halal, kosher or vegetarian options may be needed.
4. **Fasting:** Schools should accommodate students and staff with respect to fasting observances. Appropriate space other than the cafeteria or lunchroom should be designated during lunch period for fasting students. Field trip plans should also consider the needs of fasting students. Students might need exemptions or alteration of activities in some classes, e.g., physical education. For sporting or athletic activities during fasting periods, attempt to plan these events during time periods where a fasting student would have more energy (i.e. closer to the beginning of their fasting).
5. **Religious Attire:** Student/staff wearing of certain hairstyles and attire, such as, but not limited to: yarmulkes, turbans, hijab (headscarves), crucifixes, stars of David, should be permitted. It is worth noting that harassment based on religious attire or wearing articles of faith is one of the most common forms of discrimination. Staff attitudes are crucial to establishing a positive climate of understanding and respect for differences regarding faith-based attire.
6. **Accommodation of Religion Related Dress for Physical Education:** When a student requests an accommodation for dress code for participation in physical education activities including swimming, the school and family are encouraged to find a mutually agreeable accommodation. Health and Safety must be considered in the accommodation of dress. For example, a head scarf can be tucked into clothing, track pants may be worn instead of shorts. The curriculum requirements should be explained to the family, so the family has sufficient information to understand the physical education curriculum and to select available curriculum alternatives.

7. **Participation in Daily Activities, Curriculum and Program:** When an accommodation is requested, related to the content of curriculum and/or program, it is important to have an open discussion between the parents/guardians and the school. The accommodation applies to the individual who requests it, not the whole class or classroom practices in general.
8. **Observing Faith-based (Creed) Days of Significance:** It is recommended that schools recognize religious holy days and days of significance, pertinent to their school community. Schools are encouraged to recognize the days of significance on the Board's Diversity calendar through announcements, bulletin board displays, assemblies, and other events befitting the school setting and student demographics. Schools will endeavor to be aware of the faith-based observances of their school community when planning activities.
9. **Leave of Absence for Faith-based (Creed) Days of Significance and Celebrations:** All staff and students who observe faith-based (creed) days of significance in accordance with Sec. 21 (2) (g) of the Education Act may be excused from attendance.

Student Requests for Accommodation

Parents/guardians/adult students must present verbal or written notice for the student to their teacher/principal/vice-principal, specifying their accommodation needs relating to creed observances, including holy days on which they will be absent from school. This notice should be made enough in advance (preferably at the beginning of each school year) to ensure that scheduling of major evaluations, such as tests, assignments or examinations, takes the creed observances into consideration.

If a student is unable to attend a major evaluation due to a creed-based observance, members of staff are expected to work with the student and their parent/guardian to develop an accommodation plan.

Student handbooks and parent newsletters should include information about the procedure to follow to request an accommodation for creed observances and/or faith or creed-based days of significance.

Staff Requests for Accommodation

Members of staff requesting accommodation for creed-based observances should advise their supervisor at the beginning of the school year, if possible. Otherwise, staff should endeavor to make their requests as early as possible.

Unresolved Requests

For Staff: If the immediate supervisor is not able to resolve an accommodation request, members of staff should refer the matter to the appropriate superintendent or human resources, if applicable.

For Students: Requests for classroom-based accommodations should first be directed to the classroom teacher. If the classroom teacher is unable to facilitate or grant the accommodation request, parents/guardians/adult students should refer the matter to the school vice-principal/principal. If resolution is unsuccessful at this level, the matter should be referred to the appropriate superintendent.

Planning for Holy Days & Days of Significance

The intent of this guide is to provide Board members with information to promote diversity in their schools, celebrate the diversity of our community, and create awareness about creed-based observances which may prevent students and community members from participating in school events.

When planning events, consult this guide to ensure there is not a conflict with another observance, especially those marked as significant holy days. If a scheduling conflict is unavoidable, consider how you might maximize participation and ensure access for those who may not be able to attend. For example, are you able to provide flexible scheduling so people can attend on a different date as well?

Many creed-based observances may fall on the same date, or during time periods that are recognized provincially or federally as holiday/break periods. It is important for schools to recognize all observances as equally as possible during these periods. Recognition in schools can include, but is not limited to:

- Announcements
- Displays
- Bulletin boards
- Posters
- Student Work
- Assemblies
- Curriculum Connections

Recognition of Days of Significance and Holy Days is not meant to indoctrinate students or staff towards a certain creed or belief. Lakehead District School Board upholds and celebrates not only creed, but every right protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code. While staff and students may request accommodations or exemptions from participation in events or activities, the Board will continue to support learning and working environments which celebrate human rights, respect for differences, and anti-discrimination.