

MAY 2025

## MONTH-LONG OBSERVANCES

- Asian Heritage Month (**Canada**)
- Asian Pacific Heritage Month (**USA**)
- Jewish Heritage Month (**Canada, USA**)
- National Older Peoples Month (**USA**)



May 1

### Labour Day/May Day (**International**)

International Labour Day, also known as May Day, is celebrated on May 1st in many countries around the world. It honours the labour movement and the contributions of workers to society. The day is observed with parades, protests, and public gatherings, where workers and labour unions often demand better working conditions, fair wages, and workers' rights. In Canada, May Day is not a widely recognized public holiday, but is observed by some labour unions, social groups and activists. Canadians and Americans observe Labour Day in September.

May 1

### Beltane Festival (**Wicca**)

Beltane is a Celtic celebration marking the start of summer, traditionally held on April 30th to May 1st. It originated from ancient Gaelic traditions and is associated with fire, fertility, and renewal, linked to pagan beliefs particularly honouring nature, deities, and spirits. It was celebrated in Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man. Large fires were lit to protect and purify people, animals, and crops. Jumping over flames was believed to bring good luck, fertility, and protection. Today, neo-pagans and Wiccans celebrate Beltane with fire rituals, feasts, and dancing.



May 5

### Cinco De Mayo (**Mexico**)

Cinco De Mayo ("Fifth of May") is a holiday that commemorates the Mexican victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. The underdog victory against the French Empire symbolizes Mexican resistance and patriotism. It is celebrated with military parades, reenactments of the battle, and cultural events including Mariachi music and traditional dancing.



May 5

## Kodomo no Hi (Japan)

Kodomo no Hi is Children's Day in Japan. It is a national holiday to celebrate the health, happiness, and growth of children, particularly boys. Originally called Tango no Sekku, it dates back to the Heian period (794-1185) and was a boys' festival. In 1948, the Japanese government declared May 5th as Kodomo no Hi, officially celebrating all children (both boys and girls) and honouring parents and families. Families raise colourful carp-shaped windsocks outside their homes. The carp represents strength and perseverance. The largest black carp represents the father, the red carp represents the mother, and smaller carps symbolize children.



May 5

## African World Heritage Day (UNESCO)

This day was proclaimed by the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference of UNESCO in November 2015. It offers the opportunity for people around the world, particularly Africans, to celebrate the Continent's unique cultural and natural heritage and to promote its preservation. It is a day to showcase the diversity of African heritage sites and traditions. Celebrations include Educational Programs and Workshops, Cultural Events, Exhibitions, and Social Media Campaigns.



May 5

## National Day for Awareness of Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls (Canada, USA)

Also known as Red Dress Day in Canada, this day brings attention to the high rates of violence, abduction, and murder faced by indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. It is marked by awareness campaigns, marches, and the display of red dresses to symbolize those who are missing or have been lost.



May 11

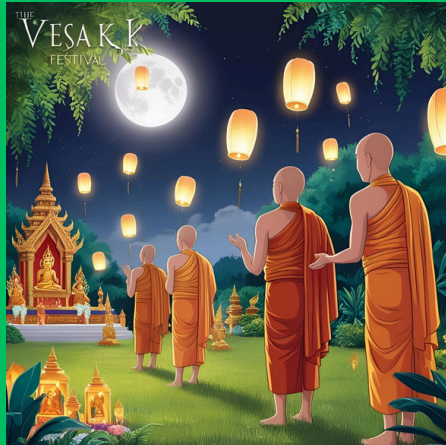
## Mother's Day (Canada, USA)

In Canada and the United States, Mother's Day is celebrated on the second Sunday of May. It is a day to honour mothers, grandmothers, and maternal figures for their love and sacrifices. The modern Mother's Day was first celebrated in the USA in 1908 when Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis, who had cared for wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Jarvis campaigned to make it a national holiday, and in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson declared the second Sunday of May as Mother's Day. Canada adopted Mother's Day from the USA. It is not a statutory holiday, but it is celebrated across the country.



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May 12

## Wesak (Buddhist)

Wesak, also known as Vesak, Buddha Purnima, or Buddha Day, is the most significant Buddhist festival celebrated worldwide. It commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha as one event. It reminds Buddhists of Buddha's teachings on compassion, wisdom, and mindfulness, encourages self-reflection and spiritual growth, and promotes peace, harmony, and kindness among communities. Devotees visit Buddhist temples to offer prayers, meditate, and listen to teachings. Many engage in Dana (giving) by offering food, donations, and aid to monks and the needy. Captive animals are released as a symbolic act of kindness and compassion for all living beings.

May 16

## Lag BaOmer/Ba'Omer/B'Omer (Jewish)

Lag BaOmer is a Jewish holiday that occurs on the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the Omer (the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot). According to medieval tradition, a plague that struck the students of Rabbi Akiva ended on the 33<sup>rd</sup> day of the Omer. It is also associated with the passing of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his teachings. It is a day of celebration and joy, marking a break from the semi-mourning period of the Omer. It is customary to hold weddings, have picnics, and celebrate with bonfires. In Israel, it is celebrated as a symbol for the fighting Jewish spirit.



May 19

## Victoria Day (Canada)

Victoria Day is a Canadian public holiday celebrated on the last Monday before May 25<sup>th</sup> each year. It honours Queen Victoria's birthday (May 24, 1819). It has been observed in Canada since 1845 and became an official holiday in 1901 after her death on January 22, 1901. Victoria Day is a statutory holiday in most provinces and territories except Quebec, where it is celebrated as National Patriots' Day (Journée nationale des patriotes). Many cities hold fireworks displays (especially in Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver). Some communities host parades, particularly in Victoria, British Columbia.



May 21

## World Day for Cultural Diversity (UN)

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002, following UNESCO's adoption of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001. The day aims to promote cultural diversity as a means of enriching societies, encourage dialogue among different cultures, highlight the role of cultural diversity in sustainable development, and combat stereotypes and discrimination related to cultural differences. The day is not a public holiday in Canada but is observed in line with the country's commitment to multiculturalism and diversity. Various organizations, government bodies, and community groups use this day to promote cultural awareness and inclusion.



MAY 2025



May 25

## African Liberation Day (**International**)

African Liberation Day or Africa Day commemorates the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on May 25, 1963, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The OAU was later succeeded by the African Union (AU) in 2002. This day celebrates the collective struggle of African nations against colonialism, apartheid, and all forms of foreign domination, honours the efforts and sacrifices of African countries in their quest for independence throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and promotes unity and cooperation among African nations in political, economic, and social development.

May 31

## Dragon Boat Festival (**China, Hong Kong**)

This day honours the patriot poet Qu/Chu Yuan who drowned himself in the Miluo River in protest against political injustice in 277 B.C. The villagers raced to the river and jumped into dragon boats but never found him. As they searched, they beat drums to scare off fish and dragons that might eat his body. It is a holiday celebrated by races. Long, narrow boats in the shape of dragons are powered by teams of paddlers, symbolic of community spirit. The festival is also tied to themes of loyalty, sacrifice, and the battle between good and evil.



### OTHER OBSERVANCES:

- May 3 - World Press Freedom Day (**UN**)
- May 4 - Mother's Day (**Portugal, Spain**)
- May 8 - World Red Cross Day (**International**)
- May 13 - Our Lady of Fatima (**Portugal**)
- May 15 - San Isidro Labrador Festival (**Spain**)
- May 15 - Int'l Day of Families (**International**)
- May 23 - Declaration of Bab (**Bahai**)
- May 25 - Mother's Day (**France, Sweden**)
- May 26 - Yom Yerushalayim (**Israel**)
- May 26 - National Sorry Day (**Australia**)
- May 29 - Ascension Day (**Christian**)
- May 30 - Joan of Arc Day (**France**)
- May 31 - World No-Tobacco Day (**UN**)

### NATIONAL & INDEPENDENCE DAYS:

- May 1 - Independence Day (**Israel**)
- May 1 - National Day of Prayer (**USA**)
- May 3 - Constitution Day (**Japan, Poland**)
- May 4 - Memorial Day (**Netherlands**)
- May 5 - Liberation Day (**Netherlands**)
- May 9 - Victory Day (**Russia**)
- May 14/15 - Independence Day (**Paraguay**)
- May 17 - Constitution Day (**Norway**)
- May 20 - National Day (**Cameroon**)
- May 22 - National Day (**Yemen**)
- May 23 - Labour Day (**Jamaica**)
- May 23 - Bermuda Day (**Bermuda**)
- May 24 - Independence Day (**Eritrea**)
- May 25 - Independence Day (**Jordan**)
- May 25 - Revolution Day (**Argentina**)
- May 26 - Independence Day (**Guyana**)
- May 28 - Republic Day (**Azerbaijan, Nepal**)

#### Disclaimer:

*In creating this newsletter, we aim to honour and celebrate the diversity of our community. While we strive to acknowledge a wide range of cultural and religious holidays and observances, we recognize that we may not be able to include every holiday or tradition. This is not a reflection of the value or importance of any holiday or tradition. We deeply respect all cultural, religious, and personal celebrations and appreciate your understanding.*

#### Reference:

Multicultural Calendar 2025  
Sheena Singh, Creative Cultural Communications,  
Toronto, ON.