



GRIFFIN GAZETTE

October 2019 Edition

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A History of Thanksgiving in Canada

Ah, Thanksgiving weekend! A day off from school and/or work, what's not to love? This wonderful autumn holiday is known for the harvest, spending time with family and most importantly, the turkey! And of course, the pumpkin pie! But have you ever thought about the origin of this wonderful holiday? What many people do not know is that Canadian Thanksgiving has its own unique history that is separate from that of the United States.

The tradition of giving thanks in Canada can be traced back to the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island (also known as North America). After surviving winter, receiving harvest and hunting game, the Indigenous peoples would partake in traditions that



included dancing, praying, feasting, attending potlatches and much more!

On the English side of things, English explorer Sir Martin Frobisher and his crew practiced an early version of Thanksgiving in 1578. Dining on beef, biscuits and peas, they gave thanks, through Communion, for their safe arrival in Newfoundland. This is commonly accepted as the first “Canadian” Thanksgiving, forty-three years before the first “American” Thanksgiving.

A few decades later, on November 14, 1606, the French caught up and New France, under Samuel de Champlain, held huge Thanksgiving feasts between city inhabitants and the local Mi'kmaq. The Mi'kmaq are credited to have introduced cranberries to the French, contributing to the decline in scurvy amongst the French population.

Despite the unique history of Canadian Thanksgiving, our modern-day traditions have been heavily influenced by those of the United States. “Traditional” Thanksgiving foods, such as turkey, squash and pumpkin, were introduced to the citizens of Halifax in the 1750s by United Empire Loyalists. They were to spread these traditions to other parts of the country as the years went by.

Since 1957, Thanksgiving in Canada has taken place, annually, on the second Monday of October, as declared by the Canadian Parliament. Prior to 1957, Thanksgiving in Canada was held randomly to celebrate special occasions and national successes. All in all, we have the Indigenous peoples of Canada to thank the most, for introducing the age-old tradition of giving thanks (thanksgiving) that is now celebrated with much festivity throughout the country!

Happy Thanksgiving!

By: Hargun Mujral



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A History of Diwali

Diwali (also known as Deepavali), is commonly referred to as the celebration or festival of lights. Why? Because this is when Indian communities light clay lamps outside their homes to showcase their inner light and protect themselves from darkness. Depending on the area, different stories are told about the festival's origin. In Northern India, it is held in celebration of the King Rama's return to Ayodhya after the defeating Ravana. In Western India, Diwali is known as when Lord Vishnu (one of the main gods of the Hindu trinity) sent Bali to rule the netherworld. Southern India celebrates in honour of Lord Krishna defeating the demon Naraksura. Sikh people celebrate Diwali as the day the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and fifty-two princes, along with him, were released from prison in 1619.

In addition to lighting diwas (clay lamps), people often add to the festivities by dressing up, holding feasts, going to temples, and spending time with their family. Over

time, the clay lamps also seem to be getting more and more decorative.

This year Diwali also falls on the Kashmiri's day of mourning, as it remembers the massacres committed against the Kashmiris in October and November of 1947 after the Partition of India. Diwali is a very important cultural event and is meant to be a new beginning, to symbolize hope and remind people of the light in the darkness.



Happy Diwali!

By: Astha Sharma

A History of Halloween

Halloween is one of Canada's most popular celebrations, however it's not all just fun, costumes and candy. For the countries Halloween originates from, it represents a time of superstition and the paranormal.

Halloween (Hallowe'en) is a contraction of All Hallows' Eve, meaning the day before All Hallows' Day.



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Many of the traditions associated with Halloween can be traced back to ancient Celtic celebrations. Halloween wouldn't be what it is today without the 2000-year-old Celtic holiday of Samhain (pronounced "Sow-en,"). On October the 31st, Samhain marked the start of the Celtic year. This also marked the beginning of a cold, dark winter, and an end to the harvest season. An especially important part of Samhain was the lighting of bonfires. The bonfires were sacred, people gathered around them to burn crops and cattle as sacrifice to the Celtic deities. Samhain was seen as a special time of year when the border between our world and the other, paranormal, world was at its thinnest. Due to this closeness, Celts believed that deceased family members would visit them on this night. Thus, the Celtic people left feasts on their tables. In addition to the dead, a mystical species, known as Aos Sí- which is related to elves and fairies- was thought to come out on this day. Guising was practiced because of its effectiveness in disguising oneself from the fearsome Aos Sí. This is how the tradition of dressing up in costumes came to be.

By the time the fifth century came around, the traditions of Samhain had evolved. By the 1900's, the focus of Halloween had shifted from a religious holiday to a more communal celebration. Borrowed from the Celtic traditions, children adopted the practice of guising and would

dress up in costumes, go door-to-door and "trick-or-treat". Despite the good intentions of some people, Halloween pranks and mischief had become a huge problem in the 1920s and 1930s. A good number of pranks often resulted in vandalism and property damage. Schools and communities did the best they could to stop vandalism by encouraging the "trick-or-treat" concept.

The popularity of Halloween has increased year after year. Television shows, movies, and other media platforms have helped it become one of North America's most celebrated commercial holidays. Due to all the media attention and influence, Halloween has lost its original, religious, meaning. However, for this spooky celebration to endure the coming years, it doesn't matter if people celebrate culturally or spiritually, what matters is that they are safe and having fun!



Happy Halloween!

By: Kristyn Tiefenbach
