

SUMMER 2026 VOLUME No.15

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

NEWSLETTER

LET'S TALK ABOUT:

**PRIDE
THE SUMMER SOLSTICE
UNDERSTANDING OUR
SHARED LANGUAGE**





FROM THE COMMITTEE

Welcome to the Summer 2026 edition of the PHSS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion newsletter. Summer is a season filled with celebrations, traditions, and opportunities to connect with others. Whether gathering with family and friends, participating in cultural festivals, or enjoying community events, these moments remind us of the importance of belonging and the many ways people celebrate around the world. In this edition, we explore how our diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences strengthen our communities through stories of Pride, Disability Pride Month, the Summer Solstice, and cultures from across the globe. As we celebrate this season together, we invite you to continue learning, listening, and helping create spaces where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and valued.

Thank You!

PHSS DEI COMMITTEE

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July

Disability Pride Mon

Canada Day 1

International Non-Binary People's Day 14

Tisha B'Av 22-23

International Self-Care Day 24

Asalha Puja (Dharma Day) 29

Orthodox Easter 12

Vaisakhi 14

Earth Day 22

International Dance Day 29



SUMMER CALENDAR

August

Civic Holiday 3

International Day of the World's Indigenous People 9

International Youth Day 12

Obon 13-15

Public Service Pride Week 17-21

Mawlid al-Nabi 25

Onam 26

Raksha Bandhan 28

A Time to Celebrate



During the warmer days of summer, our communities rapidly burst into lively celebration, with festivals, outdoor concerts and neighbourhood events. We anticipate the return of farmer's markets, time spent at the beach and opportunities to gather with friends and family for picnics, barbecues and backyard parties. While celebrations take place all year long, there's something about the long summer days, sun on your skin, and ability to gather in shared outdoor spaces that adds an indelible vibrancy.

Summer evenings and weekends fill quickly with events, gatherings and activities. After an active week or weekend, it is common to pause and take note of how busy things have been. But the observation is also accompanied by a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction; it is busy, definitely, but in the best kind of way.

A core part of the human experience is to come together with others to participate in shared joy, whether loved ones or strangers. It might be hard to put a finger on why it's so special to meet friends at a street party, or sit down around a campfire beside family for a birthday gathering. There are some qualities about these shared experiences that explains why celebration is so important across all cultures.

Celebration builds social bonds

Sharing an experience, win or milestone invites us to come together around a mutual feeling. Did you get that job you were hoping for? Reach that milestone birthday? Rejoicing in each other's accomplishments deepens trust and mutual appreciation. The win is made sweeter when others share our joy.

Celebration fosters resilience

If you've ever heard the proverb "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy", you might have an appreciation that all human beings need play and fun to thrive. The opportunity to live in the moment and with family and friends helps us to take a break from responsibilities of everyday routines.

Celebration cultivates gratitude

Across the world, gratitude is a central theme of cultural and national holidays. Frequently these holidays focus on times of harvest and plenty, such as Pongal in India, Chuseok in South Korea or Thanksgiving Day in numerous countries. Celebrating creates space to pause and recognize the good in our lives.

Celebration solidifies identity

Attending a cultural celebration, national holiday or spiritual event opens up an opportunity to share experience with others who recognize a mutual value or quality with ourselves. These moments allow us to express our art and stories and remind us that we belong.

Celebration encourages self-worth

Celebrations aren't just times for joy and fun – they also reflect who we are as individuals and as a group. They are times of learning, giving and commemoration that encourage us not just to observe, but to participate. Engaging actively reinforces that we are valued by our community.

The Summer Solstice:

A Time of Connection, Reflection, & Community

Occurring around June 21st each year, the Summer Solstice marks the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. Around the world, many cultures recognize this special time as an opportunity to celebrate nature, renewal, and community.

Here in Canada, the Summer Solstice holds special significance as it connects with National Indigenous Peoples Day, which honours the cultures, histories, and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. Many Indigenous communities recognize the relationship between the sun, the land, and the importance of maintaining harmony with nature.

Across the world, celebrations take many different forms. In Sweden and other Scandinavian countries, people celebrate Midsummer with flower crowns, traditional meals, music, dancing, and gatherings with family and friends. In the United Kingdom, people gather at Stonehenge to witness the sunrise and celebrate an ancient connection between humanity and the natural world.

In India, the sun has long been respected as a symbol of energy, life, and gratitude. Practices such as Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) reflect appreciation for the role the sun plays in sustaining life and promoting wellbeing.

Although the traditions may look different, the meaning behind them is often the same: coming together, appreciating what we have, and celebrating the world around us.

At PHSS, our diverse backgrounds, experiences, and traditions make our community stronger. Learning about celebrations from different cultures gives us an opportunity to build understanding, create connections, and ensure everyone feels a sense of belonging.

As we enjoy the summer season, take a moment to appreciate the longer days, connect with others, and learn about the traditions that are meaningful to those around us.

Wishing everyone a joyful and inclusive Summer Solstice!





Pride Month:

What does Allyship Really Mean?

If you aren't sure how to be an ally, the most important thing to know is that Allyship isn't about being perfect. It's about being willing to take the time to learn, hearing experiences that are different from your own, and stepping up to support others when they are facing discrimination or inequity.

When is Pride Month?

Pride Month is recognized every June. It is a time to celebrate the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, but it is also a reminder of the history, advocacy, and courage behind Pride.

Pride Month honours the Stonewall Uprising which began on June 28, 1969, after police raided the Stonewall Inn (a popular gay bar in New York City). The protests that followed became an important turning point in the movement for LGBTQ+ rights. Pride today is joyful and colourful, but it also comes from a history of people standing up and saying they deserve to be safe, respected, and treated equally.

What does Allyship really mean?

Being an ally means showing respect, listening, learning, and speaking up when something is not right. It is not about taking over the conversation or trying to prove you are supportive. It is about standing beside people and helping create spaces where they feel safe and valued.

A simple place to start is with names and pronouns. Use the name and pronouns a person gives you. If you make a mistake, correct yourself, apologize briefly, and move on. Don't make the moment about you or expect the other person to make you feel better. Respect is often shown in small everyday actions.

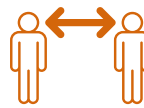
Allyship also means doing some of your own learning. It is not fair to expect 2SLGBTQIA+ people to always explain their experiences or educate everyone around them. There are many good resources available through organizations like PFLAG, The Trevor Project, Human Rights Campaign, GLAAD, and PFLAG Canada. Taking the time to learn shows that support is real and not just something we talk about during Pride Month.

What Allyship looks like day to day



Use respectful language

Let people describe themselves in their own words and avoid making assumptions.



Make space for people

Include people without putting them on the spot or asking them to speak for a whole community.



Speak up respectfully

Challenge harmful jokes, comments, or misinformation when you hear them.



Check the systems around you

Look at meetings, programs, and policies to see whether they are welcoming & inclusive.

Allyship shows up in everyday moments

Good Allyship also means speaking up when it is uncomfortable. That could mean challenging harmful jokes, correcting misinformation, supporting inclusive policies, or making sure people are treated with dignity at work, in the community, and in everyday life. These actions may seem small, but they help set the tone for safer and more respectful spaces.

Pride is powerful because it is both a celebration and a call to action. It reminds us that inclusion takes more than a flag, a post, or good intentions. Real Allyship is about respect, consistency, and action, not only in June, but throughout the year.

Ask yourself: *What is one small thing I can do this week to make someone feel safer, respected, or included?*

Keep Learning, Keep Showing Up

Here are a few helpful places to keep learning:

- **PFLAG** - Resources to Be a Lifelong Ally: pflag.org/resource/resources-to-being-a-lifelong-ally/
- **The Trevor Project** - Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth: www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth/
- **Human Rights Campaign** - Being an LGBTQ+ Ally: www.hrc.org/resources/being-an-lgbtq-ally
- **National Women's History Museum** - Marsha P. Johnson: www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/marsha-p-johnson

Note on language: Language changes over time. When in doubt, use the words people use for themselves and stay open to learning.



How the Pride Flag Has Evolved

The original Pride flag was created in 1978 by LGBTQ+ activist and artist Gilbert Baker. The first version featured eight colours but was soon simplified to six because pink and turquoise fabrics were difficult to source. Baker chose the rainbow as a symbol of hope, diversity, and inclusion. Over time, the flag has continued to evolve to better reflect the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community.



The original Pride flag (1978)

The original six-colour rainbow flag represents the following:

- Red: life
- Orange: healing
- Yellow: sunlight
- Green: nature
- Blue: serenity
- Violet: spirit



The Progress Pride Flag (2018)

Designed by Daniel Quasar, the Progress Pride Flag added a chevron to the left side of the rainbow flag. The chevron includes:

- Brown: represents LGBTQ+ people of colour
- Black: represents LGBTQ+ people of colour, those living with HIV/AIDS, and those lost to AIDS
- Light blue, pink, and white: colours from the Transgender Pride Flag, representing transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people



The Intersex-Inclusive Progress Pride Flag (2021)

In 2021, activist Valentino Vecchietti added the Intersex Pride Flag symbol to the Progress Pride Flag. This symbol is a yellow triangle with a purple circle, which represents intersex people and symbolizes wholeness, completeness, and bodily autonomy. Today, the Intersex-Inclusive Progress Pride Flag is one of the most widely recognized versions of the Pride flag and reflects the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community.

Disability Pride Month: Start with the Person

July is Disability Pride Month. It is a good time to celebrate people with disabilities, but also to pause and think about how we speak about disability in our everyday work and conversations.

Words matter. They can make people feel respected, included, and seen. They can also unintentionally make someone feel reduced to a diagnosis, a label, or a support need. That is why person-first language is so important.

Person-first language means putting the person before the disability. For example, we say “person with a disability,” “person who uses a wheelchair,” “person who receives support,” or “person with a developmental disability.” Using this approach encourages language that is respectful, accurate, and focused on the person, not just the disability. It is normal to be worried about saying the wrong thing. The best way to make the adjustment is to remember that every person is more than a single identify. A person is not just their diagnosis or disability. They are someone’s friend, family member, neighbour, co-worker, artist, advocate, sports fan, coffee lover, music fan, or the person who makes everyone laugh at the worst possible time.

The goal is not perfection. The goal is dignity.

If you aren’t sure where to begin, start with the person. Ask what language they prefer. Be willing to learn. Working together on accessible language allows us to create spaces where people feel valued, included, and fully human.

Helpful resources

Government of Canada: A Way with Words and Images

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/words-images.html>

Accessible Employers: Disability Inclusive Language Guide

<https://accessibleemployers.ca/resource/disability-inclusive-language-guide/>



Slowcooker Mac n' Cheese

This recipe is designed to reduce many of the physical demands that can make meal preparation difficult for people with disabilities, chronic pain, fatigue, or limited mobility. There is no chopping, no standing over a hot stove, and no draining a heavy pot of boiling water. Instead, all of the ingredients are added directly to a slow cooker at the same time, making it simple with minimal hands-on time. It's also the perfect dish to bring to a summer barbecue!

Ingredients

- 1 pound elbow macaroni, uncooked
- 2 cans (12 ounces each) evaporated milk
- 1 cup mild cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 cup Swiss cheese, shredded
- 6 slices of American cheese (helps get the right consistency)
- 1 cup whole milk, plus additional for thinning
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 4 tablespoons butter, plus more for brushing the bottom of the crockpot

Instructions

- Brush melted butter in the crockpot. Add all ingredients to the crockpot, stir, cover, and cook on low for one hour.
- After one hour, stir again, then cook for one additional hour.
- Thin with milk until desired consistency is achieved.



DEI Corner: Understanding Our Shared Language

As part of our ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, taking time to understand common DEI terms helps us build stronger connections and create a workplace where everyone feels respected and included. Here are a few terms that support our shared learning:



Allyship

Allyship means standing with and supporting individuals or groups who may experience barriers or discrimination. Being an ally involves listening, learning, speaking up, and taking actions that help create a more inclusive environment.



Belonging

Belonging is the feeling of being accepted, valued, and connected. When people feel a sense of belonging, they are more comfortable bringing their full selves to the workplace.



Diversity

Diversity represents the many differences that make each person unique, including backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, abilities, and identities. Celebrating diversity helps us learn from one another and strengthens our community.



Equity

Equity recognizes that everyone may have different needs, experiences, or barriers. It focuses on providing the right support and opportunities so everyone has a fair chance to succeed.



Gender Identity

Gender identity is how a person personally understands and experiences their own gender. Everyone's experience of gender is unique, and respecting how individuals identify is an important part of creating an inclusive space.



Inclusion

Inclusion is about making sure everyone feels welcomed, respected, and valued. It means creating opportunities for all voices to be heard and ensuring people feel they belong.



Psychological Safety

Psychological safety means feeling comfortable to share your thoughts, ideas, questions, or concerns without fear of judgment or negative consequences. When people feel safe, they are more able to participate, contribute, and be their authentic selves.



Microaggressions

Microaggressions are small comments, behaviours, or actions that may unintentionally make someone feel excluded or misunderstood. Becoming aware of them helps us create more respectful and supportive interactions.

By continuing to learn and have meaningful conversations, we can all contribute to a culture where everyone feels included, respected, and valued.

Summer *Watch/Reading List*



1.



North of North: A comedy set in Nunut that focuses on Inuit life, culture, language, and community through the eyes of an Inuk mother starting over. Watch on Netflix or CBC Gem.

2.



Sort Of: A Canadian sitcom that follows the life of Sabi, a non-binary millennial of Pakistani descent, as they balance work, family, and identity in Toronto. Watch on Netflix or on CBC Gem.

3.



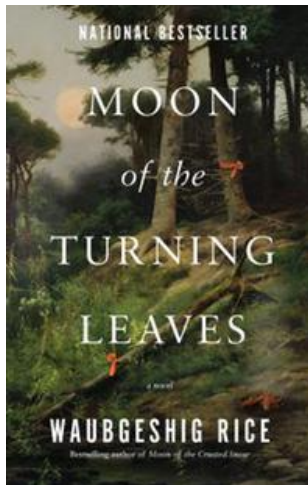
Reservation Dogs: A coming-of-age dramedy that follows four Indigenous teens in rural Oklahoma and explores themes of intergenerational trauma, friendship, identity, mental health, and resilience. Watch on CBC Gem.

4.



Atmosphere by Taylor Jenkins Reid: Set in NASA's Space Shuttle program in the 1980s, this novel follows a female astronaut as she navigates her career, identity, and an unexpected queer romance while breaking barriers in a male-dominated field.

5.



Moon of the Turning Leaves by Waubgeshig Rice: In this post-apocalyptic novel, an Anishinaabe community journeys toward its ancestral homeland in search of a sustainable future. The story explores resilience, cultural identity, and the strength of Indigenous knowledge and community.

6.



The Skin We're In by Desmond Cole: In this nonfiction book, journalist Desmond Cole examines anti-Black racism in Canada through personal experiences and reporting. Cole offers a look at systemic inequality and the ongoing work toward equity and inclusion.

Summer Festivals Around the World

Celebrating Culture, Community, and Tradition

Midsummer (Sweden)

Celebrated Late June

One of Sweden's most beloved holidays, Midsummer celebrates the arrival of the longest days of the year. Families and friends gather outdoors to dance around a maypole, wear flower crowns, enjoy traditional foods, and spend time together in nature.



Obon (Japan)

Celebrated in August

Obon is a Buddhist tradition that honours the memory of ancestors. Families often return to their hometowns, visit gravesites, light lanterns, and participate in Bon Odori (traditional dances). It is a time of remembrance, gratitude, and family connection.



Onam (India)

Celebrated in August or September

Onam is a harvest festival celebrated primarily in the state of Kerala. Homes are decorated with colourful floral designs called Pookalam, families gather for a traditional vegetarian feast known as the Onam Sadhya, and communities celebrate with music, dancing, and boat races.



Panigiri Festivals (Greece)

Celebrated throughout the summer

Many Greek villages celebrate their patron saints with community festivals called Panigiri. These gatherings often feature live music, dancing, local foods, and bring together people of all ages, including family members returning home from around the world.





COMMUNITY EVENTS

London

Latin Community Festival '26

Date: August 7 – 9

Location: Dundas Place – Block #1

The biggest party of the year is here with dancing lessons, beer garden, vendors, live music and more!

Wortley Village Jazz & Blues Festival

Date: August 23

Location: Wortley Village

A FREE street music festival on two blocks of Wortley Road between Askin/Craig and Elmwood. A community event: many of the London artists who will be performing live in Wortley Village or Old South!

Oxford Renaissance Festival

Date: August 29 – 30

Location: Thorndale Fairgrounds

The Oxford Renaissance Festival brings the legends of knights and maidens to life through medieval comedy, fire-eating performances, magic shows, jousting not that "theatrical" kind, Celtic music, and ale.

Pawlooza 2026

Date: August 15

Location: Plunkett Estate

Pawlooza is one of Canada's largest dog-friendly festivals, bringing together dog lovers, families, vendors, rescues, and community organizations for a fun-filled day supporting local charities.

Ottawa

Hintonburg Night Market

Date: August 6

Location: Urban Art Collective

troll through the Hintonburg Night Market to pickup local eats, treats and all things handmade. Sit back, relax, eat and be entertained by local musicians, buskers and entertainers.

Ottawa International Buskerfest

Date: August 7 – 9

Location: Sparks Street

Get ready for a weekend of unforgettable street performances at the Ottawa International Buskerfest — a vibrant celebration of talent, creativity, and live entertainment in the heart of downtown Ottawa!

Dance at Zibi

Date: August 20

Location: Warehouse at Zibi

Take your first steps in Argentine Tango with the team from Siempre Tango Ottawa.

Owen Sound

The Mountain at Harbour Nights

Date: August 16

Location: 1155 1st Ave West, Owen Sound

The Mountain is a four piece indie-folk band based in Kitchener, ON. Known for their joyous harmonies, interactive live performances, and passion for building community through music, the band has built a fanbase of loyal "Mountaineers" across Canada.

Summerfolk 51

Date: August 21 – 23

Location: Nawash Park

From whimsical creations to nature-inspired craftsmanship, there's something to discover around every corner of the Artisan Village.



**EMPLOYER
PARTNER**

As an Employer Partner with the Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion (CCDI), PHSS is able to provide a number of resources for staff to support us on our diversity and inclusion journey! If you haven't already; be sure to self-register today by scanning the QR code!

(Be sure to use your PHSS staff email address when signing up!)



CCDI Registration

www.phsscommunity.com