educational service center of Central Ohio

equity committee

Holidays Around the World

Happy Holidays! We are lucky to live in a world with unique people and unique beliefs. During this time of year, many countries and religions are celebrating a variety of holidays. Here are just a few to showcase how diverse our world truly is!

Hanukkah

- The holiday commemorates the triumph of a band of rebel Jews known as the Maccabees in reclaiming their temple from the Greek-Syrians.
- Hanukkah lasts for eight nights, to commemorate how long the holy light burned. It is observed starting on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar.
- A Menorah is a candelabra with nine candles. Four on either side and a candle in the center intended to light all the others. This is known as the shamash and it sits higher than (or somehow apart from) the other candles. It is lit each night of the holiday.

International Human Solidarity Day (United Nations)

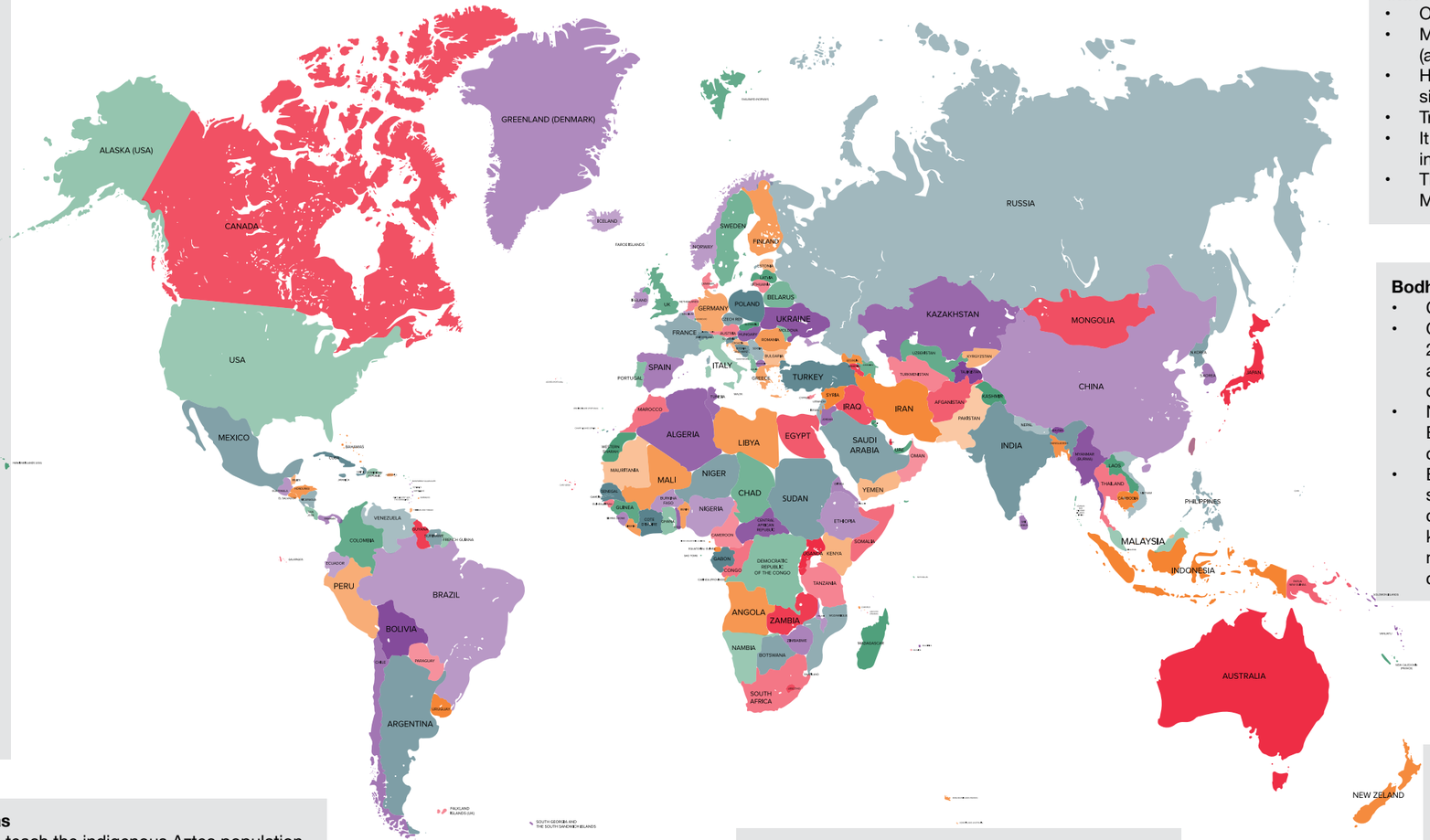
- A day to celebrate our unity in diversity.
- A day to remind governments to respect their commitments to international agreements.
- A day to raise public awareness of the importance of solidarity.
- A day to encourage debate on the ways to promote solidarity for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals including poverty eradication.

Yule

- Comes from the name of a 12-day winter solstice festival, celebrated December 21st - January 1st.
- Lights, fire, and feasting were important festival themes.
- Predates Christmas by thousands of years.
- First celebrated by Germanic peoples.

Kwanzaa

- An annual celebration of Black culture on December 26th - January 1.
- Created by activist Maulana Karenga and first celebrated in 1966.
- The name derives from a Swahili phrase meaning "first fruit."
- Each of the 7 days is dedicated to a principle:
  - **Umoja (Unity):** To strive for and to maintain unity in the family and community.
  - **Kujichagulia (Self-determination):** To define and name ourselves, as well as to create and speak for ourselves.
  - **Ujima (Collective work and responsibility):** To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together.
  - **Ujamaa (Cooperative economics):** To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.
  - **Nia (Purpose):** To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
  - **Kuumba (Creativity):** To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.
  - **Imani (Faith):** To believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.
  - Also celebrated by the adorning of colorful African cloth.
- The first Kwanzaa Hallmark card was sold in 1992.
- The first Kwanzaa stamp was issued by the US Postal Service in 1997.



Christmas

- Observed on December 25th.
- Meant to commemorates the birth date of Jesus (although this is widely contested).
- Has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.
- Traditional colors are red, green and gold.
- It is believed the first Christmas trees were incorporated into the holiday in the 16th century.
- The popular Christmas carol, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" has origins in 1930s England.

Bodhi Day (Japan)

- Celebrated in Japan on December 8th every year.
- Observed to mark the moment that took place 2,500 years ago when Siddhartha Gautama achieved enlightenment and became the Buddha or 'awakened one'.
- Not an official holiday in Japan — only Buddhists, who make up about 34% of the country's population, observe the day.
- Buddhists commemorate this day by meditating, studying the 'dharma' ('universal truth or law'), chanting sutras (Buddhist texts), and performing kind acts towards other beings. Some people mark the day in a more traditional sense by cooking a meal of tea and cakes.

Las Posadas Navidenas

- It is a celebration to teach the indigenous Aztec population about the birth of Jesus by having daily Christmas masses for nine days.
- Coincided with the winter solstice ceremonies of the Aztecs
- Every night from Dec. 16-24, neighbors gather to recreate the Holy Family's experience. They dress up, sing, pray and celebrate the coming anniversary of the Savior's birth.

Human Rights Day (United Nations)

- Human Rights Day is observed every year on December 10th.
- It is the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Boxing Day

- Celebrated on December 26th.
- It originated as a day to give gifts to those is need but overtime, became a major shopping holiday.
- Most commonly, the holiday is associated with the United Kingdom. Other countries that celebrate it are part of the commonwealth — the nations that used to be British colonies (such as Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand).