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September 2023

NDEP Inclusive Events & Observances Calendar

Holiday/Observance: Labor Day

Date: First Monday of September

Explanation: A federal holiday in the U.S. that is observed to honor and celebrate the contributions and achievements of American workers and the labor movement.

Background: Originated in the late 19th century, during a time when working conditions in the U.S. were often dangerous and unfair. Labor unions began to organize and advocate for better wages, shorter workdays, and safer working conditions. Officially recognized as a federal holiday in 1894.

Celebrations: Many Americans observe the holiday by taking the day off from work and attending parades or picnics. Labor Day also signifies the unofficial end of summer and summer vacation season.

Additional Information: Many schools and universities begin their academic year shortly after the holiday.

Holiday/Observance: Krishna Janmashtami

Date: September 7, 2023.

Explanation: A Hindu festival celebrated to mark the birth of Lord Krishna.

Background: Celebrating the birth (janma) of the god Krishna on the eighth (Ashtami) day of the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada (August-September). The number eight has significance in the Krishna legend being the eighth child of his mother.

Celebrations: Devotees observe fasting, sing devotional songs, and engage in various rituals to honor Krishna. Temples and household shrines are decorated with leaves and flowers; sweetmeats offered to the god and then distributed as prasada (god's leftovers, which carry his flavor) to all members of the household.

Additional Information: Usually falls in August or September.



Holiday/Observance: Rosh Hashanah Starts

Date: First and second days of the Jewish month of Tishrei, usually September and October. Sunset of Sept. 15 to sunset Sept. 17, 2023.

Explanation: A Jewish holiday that marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year.

Background: A significant holiday and time for introspection and repentance as Jewish people reflect on their actions and seek forgiveness for any wrongdoing in the past year. Also, a time to celebrate the new year and reaffirm one's commitment to living a good and meaningful life.

Celebrations: Traditionally observed by attending synagogue services, where special prayers and readings are recited. The shofar, a hollowed-out ram's horn is blown during services as a call to repentance. Also, a time for festive meals with family and friends.

Additional Information: Traditional foods include apples dipped in honey, which symbolize the hope for a sweet new year, round challah bread, which represents the cycle of life.

Holiday/Observance: Hispanic Heritage Month Starts

Date: A month-long celebration, taking place from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 every year in the U.S.

Explanation: A time to recognize and celebrate the contributions, culture, and history of Hispanic and Latino Americans, who have roots in Mexico, Central America, South America, and Spain.

Background: Sept. 15 marks the anniversary of the independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The holiday includes Mexico's Independence Day on Sept. 16 and Chile's on Sept. 18.

Celebrations: Many activities are held across the country to celebrate the diverse traditions, customs, and achievements of Hispanic and Latino Americans. Often includes parades, festivals, concerts, art exhibits, and educational programs.

Additional Information: The month-long holiday is an opportunity for people to learn more about the rich and varied history and culture of Hispanic and Latino Americans and celebrate their contributions to American society.

Holiday/Observance: Yom Kippur Starts

Date: The 10th day of the Jewish month of Tishrei, usually September and October. Sunset of Sept. 24 to sunset Sept. 25, 2023.

Explanation: The holiest day in the Jewish calendar and a solemn and reflective holiday often referred to as the Day of Atonement because it is a time for repentance and forgiveness.

Background: Jewish people fast the entire day and spend much of the day in synagogue, engaging in prayer and reflection. The holiday begins at sunset the night before with the Kol Nidre service, during which a special prayer is recited that annuls any vows or promises made to God that were not fulfilled.

Celebrations: A time for celebration and renewal, as Jewish people look forward to a fresh start and a year of growth and spiritual fulfillment.

Additional Information: At the conclusion of Yom Kippur, the shofar is blown to mark the end of the fast and the beginning of a new year. The holiday emphasizes the importance of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation to connect with God and lead a meaningful life.



Holiday/Observance: Sukkot Starts

Date: Begins at sunset Sept. 29 and ends nightfall Oct. 6.

Explanation: A Jewish holiday that commemorates the 40 years that Jewish people spent wandering the desert after exodus from Egypt. Also known as the Feast of Tabernacles.

Background: The holiday is observed for seven days, beginning on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Tishrei, usually Sept. or Oct. During the holiday, Jewish people build and dwell in temporary outdoor shelters called sukkahs. Sukkahs are meant to symbolize the makeshift dwellings that the Israelites lived in during their time in the desert and are typically decorated with fruits, vegetables, and other harvest items.

Celebrations: Sukkot involves the waving of the lulav and etrog, a bundle of palm, myrtle, and willow branches, and a citrus fruit that symbolizes the harvest. Celebrations may include parades, festivals, and other festive events.

Additional Information: The first two days of Sukkot (from sundown of the first date listed, until nightfall two days later) are full-fledged, no-work-allowed holiday days. Sukkot emphasizes the importance of remembering the past, celebrating the present, and looking forward to a bright and bountiful future.

Holiday/Observance: Eid Milad un-Nabi

Date: September 26 – 27, 2023.

Explanation: An Islamic holiday commemorating the birthday of the prophet Muhammad. The holiday is also known as Mawlid or Mawlid al-Nabi.

Background: Observed in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, the third month of the Islamic lunar calendar, which commences with the sighting of the moon. The occasion marks the death anniversary of the Prophet.

Celebrations: It is traditional to listen to the hymns recited in the Prophet's praise to get both earthly and heavenly rewards. There may be prayer gatherings for the Sunni population. There are often large-scale public processions and house decorations. Community prayers, teachings about the Prophet's life are delivered in addition to prayers and donations of candy and clothing to the poor. People hold green banners or flags on this day and dress in green or wear green ribbons to symbolize Islam and heaven.

Additional Information: The holiday honors kindness, compassion, and teachings of the holy Prophet and is recognized as a major day for Muslims everywhere.

Holiday/Observance: Ganesh Chaturthi*

Date: Commences on September 19, 2023

Explanation: Ganesh Chaturthi is a Hindu festival dedicated to Ganesh.

Background: Dedicated to Lord Ganesh, revered as the deity of wisdom, prosperity, and good fortune.

Celebrations: The festival lasts 10 days with the most significant celebrations occurring on the 4th day. Devotees display clay idols of Ganesh in their homes and community pandals, offering prayers for his blessings.

Additional Information: Lord Ganesh goes by at least five other names. It typically occurs in August or September.

Created by the NDEP DEI Committee. We want to be inclusive of all holidays and observances, so if our research missed any, please feel free to contact Michael Holik, Ed.D., MS.Ed., NDEP DEI Committee Chair. mholik@wcupa.edu.

A decorative border of small globe icons surrounds the entire page. The globes are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with a row of 20 globes at the top, a row of 20 at the bottom, and vertical columns of 10 on the left and 10 on the right. Each globe shows a different view of the Earth, primarily focusing on the Americas.

October 2023

NDEP Inclusive Events & Observances Calendar

Holiday/Observance: Hispanic Heritage Month*

Date: September 15th-October 15th

Explanation: Hispanic Heritage Month is a time to recognize and celebrate the contributions, culture, and history of Hispanic and Latino Americans, who have roots in Mexico, Central America, South America, and Spain. The celebration begins on September 15th because it marks the anniversary of the independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Mexico's Independence Day is on September 16th, and Chile's is on September 18th.

Background: The holiday originated after the American Civil War to honor Union and Confederate soldiers who died in the conflict. It was later expanded to include all American military personnel who have died in any war or military action.

Celebrations: During Hispanic Heritage Month, many events and activities are held across the country to celebrate the diverse traditions, customs, and achievements of Hispanic and Latino Americans. These may include parades, festivals, concerts, art exhibits, and educational programs.

Additional Information: The observation of Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity for people to learn more about the rich and varied history and culture of Hispanic and Latino Americans and to celebrate their contributions to American society.

Holiday/Observance: LGBTQAI+ History Month

Date: October

Explanation: LGBT History Month is an observance started in 1994 to recognize lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history and to learn about the significant contributions that LGBT people have made to art, science, politics, and other fields, as well as the challenges they have faced throughout history. It is also a time to celebrate the diversity and richness of the LGBT community and to raise awareness about issues affecting LGBT people today.

Background: The month of October was selected to coincide with National Coming Out Day, which falls on October 11.

Celebrations: May include educational programs, cultural events, pride parades and festivals, historical exhibits, community gatherings, and allyship events.

Additional Information: The goal of these celebrations is to foster understanding, acceptance, and celebration of the LGBT community and its diverse history.



Holiday/Observance: St. Francis Day

Date: October 4, 2023

Explanation: Also known as the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, it is an annual Christian feast day that commemorates the patron saint of animals and the environment, celebrated by many Catholic denominations.

Background: Feast Day was established on October 4th, the day after his death, to honor his memory and celebrate his remarkable life and contributions to Christianity and the world.

Celebrations: Many Christian denominations and communities hold special services, blessings of animals, and other events to honor St. Francis and his teachings. It is a time to reflect on the values of love, humility, and care for creation, as exemplified by St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis Day is often associated with the "Blessing of the Animals" ceremony, where pets and other animals are brought to churches, schools, or public spaces to receive blessings as a symbol of gratitude for the joy and companionship they bring to people's lives.

Additional Information: Over the centuries, St. Francis of Assisi has become an iconic figure, admired not only by Catholics but also by people of different faiths and backgrounds, for his profound spirituality, love for nature, and dedication to the well-being of all living creatures.

Holiday/Observance: Canadian Thanksgiving

Date: October 9, 2023

Explanation: Canadian Thanksgiving is a national holiday celebrated in Canada. It takes place on the second Monday of October each year.

Background: The origins of Canadian Thanksgiving can be traced back to early European settlers in Canada and their traditions of giving thanks for a successful harvest season.

Celebrations: It's often celebrated with family gatherings and feasts, like the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States.

Holiday/Observance: Indigenous People's Day

Date: Oct 11, 2023

Explanation: Indigenous People's Day celebrates the heritage, cultures, and contributions of Indigenous peoples of North America. It recognizes the history and contributions of Native American, Alaska Native, and Indigenous peoples across the Americas, and to promote greater understanding and respect for their cultures and traditions. It also acknowledges the long history of colonialism, genocide, and forced assimilation that Indigenous peoples have faced and continue to face.

Background: The background of Indigenous Peoples' Day can be traced back to the early 1970s when Native American activists and organizations began advocating for an alternative to Columbus Day and call for a day that recognizes the true history and resilience of Native American communities.

Celebrations: The celebrations on Indigenous Peoples' Day vary depending on the location and the specific community observing the holiday. Since Indigenous Peoples' Day is intended to honor the cultures, histories, and contributions of Indigenous peoples, the festivities often focus on showcasing their traditions, art, music, dance, language, and other aspects of their heritage.

Additional Information: The exact date and name of the holiday vary depending on the region and local government decisions. Some places celebrate it on the same day as Columbus Day, while others choose alternative dates or names to focus on Indigenous peoples' heritage and struggles more directly.



Holiday/Observance: Sikh Holy Day

Date: October 20, 2023

Explanation: the day Sikhs celebrate Sri Guru Granth Sahib, their spiritual guide.

Background: conferred October 20, 1708

Celebrations: Sikhs treat the Guru Granth Sahib with utmost respect and reverence. It is kept in the gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) and carried in processions during special occasions and festivals. Sikhs bow before the Guru Granth Sahib as a sign of respect and seek guidance from its teachings in their daily lives. It is considered a source of spiritual wisdom and a guiding light for Sikhs on their journey of devotion and understanding of the divine.

Holiday/Observance: Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah*

Date: Shemini Atzeret 2023 begins at sunset on October 6, 2023. It is immediately followed by Simchat Torah, which begins at sunset on October 7, 2023, and ends after nightfall on October 8, 2023

Explanation: Shemini Atzeret, which means "the eighth day of assembly," is traditionally a day of rest and reflection, with special prayers and rituals that mark the end of the Sukkot festival. It is also seen as a day of transition, as Jews prepare to leave the holiday season and return to their daily lives. Simchat Torah marks the completion of the annual cycle of reading the Torah in weekly portions.

Background: These two Jewish holidays are celebrated in close succession at the end of the annual holiday cycle.

Celebrations: On Shemini Atzeret, Jews traditionally gather in synagogues to pray for rain in the upcoming year and to seek God's blessing for the agricultural season. It also serves as a day to memorialize the departed by reciting Yizkor, a special prayer of remembrance, during the synagogue service. On Simchat Torah is a day of celebration in which communities hold special events, parties, and activities for children.

Additional Information: Emphasize themes of spiritual reflection, gratitude, and the continuation of Jewish learning and tradition.

Holiday/Observance: Samhain

Date: October 31, 2023

Explanation: A pagan religious festival originating from an ancient Celtic spiritual tradition; in modern times, a Gaelic word pronounced "SAH-win."

Background: Usually celebrated from Oct. 31 to Nov. 1 to welcome the harvest and usher in the "dark half of the year." Celebrants believe the barriers between the physical world and spiritual break down during Samhain, allowing more interaction between humans and denizens of the otherworld.

Celebrations: Druid priests light community fire using a wheel that would cause friction and spark flames. The wheel was representative of the sun and used along with prayers. Cattle was sacrificed and participants took flame from the communal bonfire back to their home to relight the hearth.

Additional Information: Some historical documentation mentioned six days of drinking alcohol to excess, typically mead or beer, along with gluttonous feasts.



Holiday/Observance: All Hallows' Eve (Halloween)

Date: October 31, 2023

Explanation: All Hallows' Eve is a celebration observed in several countries on the eve of the Western Christian feast of All Hallows' Day.

Background: The background of Halloween can be traced back to ancient Celtic (Samhain) and Roman (Feralia) festivals, as well as Christian traditions.

Celebrations: It begins the three-day observance of All Hallowtide, the time in the liturgical year dedicated to remembering the dead, including saints (hallows), martyrs and all the faithful departed.

Additional Information: Halloween has evolved into a fun and widely celebrated holiday, combining ancient folklore, religious customs, and modern cultural elements.

Created by the NDEP DEI Committee.

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November

2023

NDEP Inclusive Events & Observances Calendar

Holiday/Observance: Transgender Awareness Month

Date: November

Explanation: Transgender Awareness Month is an annual observance in November that aims to raise awareness about issues faced by transgender and gender non-conforming people, celebrate their contributions to society, and advocate for greater acceptance and inclusion. Overall, Transgender Awareness Month is an important observance that seeks to promote greater understanding and acceptance of transgender people, while also highlighting the challenges they face and advocating for their rights and protections. It serves as a reminder of the ongoing fight for equality and justice for all people, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

Background: Transgender people face a wide range of challenges, including discrimination, harassment, violence, and lack of legal protections in many parts of the world. Transgender Awareness Month serves as an opportunity to raise awareness of these issues and promote greater understanding and acceptance of transgender people.

Celebrations: During the month, people and organizations around the world participate in various events and activities, such as workshops, film screenings, rallies, and art exhibits, to celebrate the diversity and resilience of the transgender community.

Additional Information: The month also includes Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20, which honors the memory of transgender people who have lost their lives to violence or discrimination.

Holiday/Observance: Native American Heritage Month

Date: November

Explanation: Native American Heritage Month is a time to celebrate and recognize the rich culture, traditions, and contributions of Native American peoples in the United States. It is observed in November each year, with a goal to increase awareness of the history, culture, and contemporary issues facing Native American communities. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the ongoing struggles and challenges faced by Native American communities, such as preserving their languages and cultures, protecting their lands and resources, and addressing health and social issues.

Background: The month-long celebration was first recognized in 1990 by President George H.W. Bush, and each year the president proclaims November as National Native American Heritage Month. Native American Heritage Month is an opportunity for all Americans to learn about the significant role of Native Americans in the history and culture of the United States.

Celebrations: The celebration includes cultural events, powwows, and educational programs that highlight the customs, history, and challenges of Native American people.

Additional Information: Originally, American Indian Day began in the early 1900s and took place on the second Saturday in May in 1916, in New York, which evolved into a week, which evolved into a month. Columbus did not discover the Americas. Millions of Native Americans and Indigenous people already lived in America.



Holiday/Observance: Diwali (Festival of Lights)

Date: Nov 12, 2023

Explanation: Diwali is a major festival celebrated in Hinduism, Sikhism, and some branches of Buddhism, usually in late October or early November. The festival is also known as the "Festival of Lights" and is celebrated for five days.

Background: Diwali is a celebration of good over evil and is primarily celebrated in India; It is observed by Hindus, Sikhs, and some Buddhists.

Celebrations: During Diwali, people decorate their homes with colorful lights and rangolis, create elaborate designs using colored powders, and exchange gifts and sweets. Fireworks displays are also common, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Additional Information: The festival has many different traditions and customs depending on the region, but in general, it is a time for reflection, forgiveness, and new beginnings. It is a time to strengthen family bonds and to renew relationships with friends and loved ones.

Holiday/Observance: All Saints Day

Date: November 1st.

Explanation: All Saints' Day is a Christian holiday that is celebrated annually to honor and remember all the saints and martyrs of the Christian faith, including those who are not officially recognized by the church.

Background: The holiday originated in the 4th century in honor of the martyrs who had died for their faith, and later evolved to include all saints, both known and unknown.

Celebrations: In many Christian denominations, All Saints' Day is considered a holy day of obligation, meaning that attendance at Mass is required. It is often celebrated with special church services, prayers, and hymns.

Additional Information: In some countries, such as Mexico, All Saints' Day is celebrated alongside Dia de Los Muertos, which also honors the deceased but has its roots in indigenous traditions.

Holiday/Observance: Dia de Los Muertos

Date: November 1st-2nd

Explanation: Dia de Los Muertos, also known as Day of the Dead, is a Mexican holiday. It is a time for family and friends to come together and honor their loved ones who have passed away. It is believed that during this time, the souls of the dead return to the living world to visit their loved ones, and the ofrendas serve to welcome them back and provide them with the offerings they need for their journey.

Background: The holiday is rooted in indigenous Mexican traditions and beliefs and is a celebration of life and a way to remember and honor those who have passed away.

Celebrations: This holiday is often associated with brightly colored decorations, elaborate costumes and makeup, and altars or ofrendas that are created to honor the deceased. People gather with their family to remember and celebrate loved ones; food, music and art are plentiful.

Additional Information: What do sugar skulls, marigolds, and monarch butterflies have in common? They are all essential to Dia de Los Muertos just like pumpkins, witches, and black cats are to Halloween. The ofrenda or altar including water, wind, earth, and fire, is a temporary way for families to honor their loved ones and provide them what they need on their journey.



Holiday/Observance: Veterans Day

Date: November 11th

Explanation: Veterans Day is observed in the United States to honor military veterans who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Background: The holiday originated as Armistice Day, which marked the end of World War I on November 11, 1918. It was renamed Veterans Day in 1954 to honor all veterans, not just those who served in World War I.

Celebration: On Veterans Day, ceremonies and parades are held across the country to honor and thank veterans for their service and sacrifice. It is also common for individuals and organizations to show their support for veterans by displaying American flags or wearing patriotic clothing. Many businesses and organizations also offer discounts or special deals to veterans-on-Veterans Day to show appreciation for their service.

Additional Information: The 624-acre Arlington National Cemetery is home to the final resting place of more than 400,000 military service members and their families. On Veterans Day in 2020, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., unveiled the National Native American Veterans Memorial. Veterans Day without an apostrophe is not a grammatical error since according to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, the holiday does not belong to the veterans, but a day to honor all veterans.

Holiday/Observance: Thanksgiving

Date: It is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November, and in Canada, it is celebrated on the second Monday of October.

Explanation: Thanksgiving is a national holiday celebrated annually in the United States and Canada as a day of giving thanks for the blessings of the year, including the harvest.

Background: Thanksgiving has been celebrated in the U.S. since the late 1700's but started to be celebrated on the 4th Thursday of November in 1941. For some, Thanksgiving is a painful reminder of colonization and abuses to indigenous peoples.

Celebrations: In the United States, the holiday is typically celebrated with family gatherings, feasting on traditional foods such as roasted turkey, mashed potatoes, and pumpkin pie, and parades in some cities. It is also a time to express gratitude for the good things in one's life and to reflect on the historical and cultural significance of the holiday.

Additional Information: Venison, duck, goose, oysters, lobster, eel, and fish were likely the first traditional food items of Thanksgiving along with pumpkins and cranberries. JFK was the first president to let a Thanksgiving turkey go, followed by Richard Nixon who sent his to a petting zoo. Then George H.W. Bush is the president who formalized turkey pardoning tradition in 1989.

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