



Preserving, promoting and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.

Our Cultural Moment for December celebrates International Christmases

Diversity may refer to many attributes such as language, cultural differences, traditions, religious beliefs, and more. This is what makes both Canada, and our own municipality an interesting place to live.



Christmas is approaching and we see decorations for the season that are typically the same: Christmas trees, decorations, Santa's, food, and gifts. This may not be the case in homes where some people have come from a variety of countries and will be celebrating Christmas in different ways and possibly at different times. Or they may not be celebrating at all, depending on their faith and/or beliefs. In Canada, we sing Christmas carols before and on December 25th but in Portugal they sing while strolling the streets in early January (holiday time called Janeiras).

Portugal's traditional Christmas Cake is called Bolo Rei (King Cake). It is round with raisins and crystalized fruit. In Germany, it's called Stollen and though it has fruits, it is rectangular with a ridge down the centre symbolizing Baby Jesus in swaddling clothes.

In Germany, the Christmas tree (Tannenbaum) originated in the 16th century and is usually put up on Christmas Eve and traditionally decorated with live candles. The glass balls and tinsel are German inventions. Every year Norway gives a huge Christmas tree to the UK as a 'thank you' for UK's help during World War II. It stands in Trafalgar Square in London and the lighting of it attracts thousands of people.

Cookies, especially a shortbread-type, are popular with many countries but each has a different name and unique characteristics.

Santa Claus is known in Canada, but is called Pere Noel in France, Grandfather Frost in Russia, St. Nicholas in England, and Noel Baba in Turkey. They each have a slightly different manner of dress and traditions.

Though each country's traditions are different and interesting, the reason for celebrating is the same. Countries in which Christians are a minority, may celebrate December 25th the same as any other day.

Knox Conn Presbyterian Church celebrates the diverse Christmas traditions of 20 countries with 200 nativities. With our diversity we can learn to trust, respect, and understand each other.



Submitted by Penny Renken; Wellington North Cultural Roundtable