

## Celebrating holiday traditions



By the Parent Resource Centre

Canada is a very large and multi-cultural country, where different traditions are shared during the holiday season. Celebrating these special occasions reinforces traditions, while sharing a part of one's culture and identity.

Establishing traditions can also bring communities together; we can learn a lot from each other's observances and educate others about different cultures.

- In Canada, many holiday celebrations come from French, English, Irish, German and Aboriginal influences. For example, the French- Canadians celebrate with a huge feast called a *Réveillon* after midnight mass on Christmas Eve.
- The Inuit celebrate *Sinck Tuck* a festival started that consists of dancing and gift exchanging.
- An interesting Canadian tradition that happens on a yearly basis is that we send the biggest Nova Scotia fir tree to Boston as a thank you for their help during the Halifax Explosion.
- Another fun fact about Canada is that in 1985 the National Capital Commission began a Christmas Lights across Canada program to liven up the winter months. It began with only decorating Parliament Hill with lights. Now, sections of Confederation Boulevard are lit up every winter, as well as certain areas in Canada's 13 provinces and territories.

Holidays are also an important part of family history. Family traditions give the family a sense of belonging and help to foster a value and belief system that can be carried on into adulthood. Traditions also define a family's identity and uniqueness. Celebrating birthdays or graduations or weddings and creating new rituals in your family help to define who you are. Did your parents read a story to you every night before going to bed? Do you tuck heart-felt notes into your

children's stockings? Or do you wear funny homemade party hats at family birthday celebrations?

Rituals are special ways of doing things over and over and more importantly for children, having rituals makes them feel special and unique.

With the holidays fast approaching, the craze of gift buying, baking, and preparing for the kids being off from school, we often forget to take time for ourselves and to remember the traditions of our youth. Often when there is something that your family does every year to prepare for the holidays, children will want to do it again the next year. Just like routines, traditions help children to anticipate what comes next. They encourage memory development, help with the understanding story or event sequencing, and reinforce specific roles that members of the family play. This also helps children to feel reassured and safe in their family environment. Budding traditionalists love the thrill of unpacking Christmas ornaments or the old menorah that has been passed down from generation to generation. These moments should be cherished, so why not share your memories by turning them into a gift that celebrates your family tree?

**For more suggestions on holiday traditions and craft ideas please see the web links below:**

- <http://familyfun.go.com/crafts/10-new-holiday-traditions-710162/>
- [http://genealogy.about.com/od/holidays/tp/family\\_tree.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/od/holidays/tp/family_tree.htm)
- <http://toytester.todaysparent.com/2009/toys>

**Here are some activities to help quick start your own holiday traditions:**

- Help your child to make this quick and easy handmade gift and give to a special friend:

#### **Home Made Honey Bath Oil:**

Mix together a cup of light baby or olive oil with 1/2 a cup of honey, add 1/2 a cup of liquid soap with a drop of your favourite essential oil. Mix together gently and decant into a pretty squirt bottle.

- Allow your child to be involved in the making of special foods for the Iftar meal following the fast of Ramadan.
- Get the children involved in helping create your family's traditions – polishing or putting the candles into the Menorah, making Christmas cards, or try burning a CD with your children singing and send it to the family.

*For further information on routines and or traditions contact the Parent Resource Centre at 613-565-2467 or visit the website at [www.parentresource.on.ca](http://www.parentresource.on.ca)*

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