



Government
of Canada

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National Indigenous Peoples Day



June 21, 2021

***How will you
celebrate?***

WHAT IS NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY?

This is a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Although these groups share many similarities, they each have their own distinct heritage, language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.



WHY IS IT CELEBRATED ON JUNE 21?

June 21, the summer solstice, was chosen because for generations, many Indigenous peoples and communities have celebrated their culture and heritage on or near this day due to the significance of the summer solstice as the longest day of the year.



June 21: National Indigenous Peoples Day

1982

National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) called for the creation of National Aboriginal Solidarity Day.

1995

The Sacred Assembly called for a national holiday to celebrate Indigenous Peoples. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended a National First Peoples Day.

1996

Governor General of Canada Roméo LeBlanc declared June 21 of each year as National Aboriginal Day.

2017

Event renamed National Indigenous Peoples Day.

What is the Summer Solstice?

It is when the sun reaches its highest and northernmost points in the sky.

Currently, it shifts between June 20, 21, and 22.

The sun appears to stop "moving" as it reaches its northernmost point. After the solstice, the sun appears to go backward in the opposite direction.

Indigenous people across the land gather to celebrate the Summer Solstice.

It marks the start of summer and is the longest day of the year.



An arrangement of stones built by the Plains Indians several hundred years ago is said to be a tribute to the summer solstice. This Medicine Wheel on top of Big Horn Mountain in Wyoming is said to align with the sunrise and sunset on the summer solstice.

"Between 70 and 150 wheels have been identified in South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. It is believed that the Bighorn "observatory" is simply one part of a larger configuration of interrelated archeological sites that represent 7,000 years of Native American cultural adaptation to their landscape" (Scutti, 2013).

How is it celebrated?

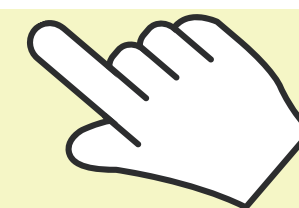
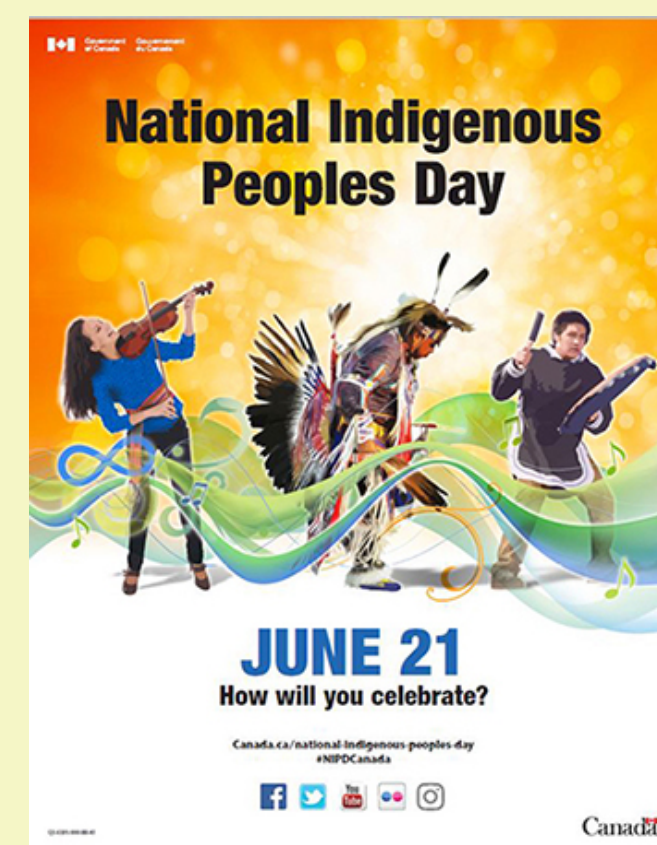
"Many, if not all, of the native American tribes performed ceremonies focused on summer solstice. The Sundance, believed to have originated with the Lakota tribe, is a ceremony that lasted 28 days, with a final four to eight days of intense festivity.

Although the ceremonies varied in form from tribe to tribe, many had features in common, such as dancing, singing and drumming, prayer, meditation, the experience of visions, fasting, and skin-piercings. The Arapaho, Arikara, Asbinboine, Cheyenne, Crow, Gros Ventre, Hidutsa, Sioux, Plains Cree, Plains Ojibway, Sarasi, Omaha, Ponca, Ute, Shoshone, Kiowa, and Blackfoot are among the tribes that celebrated" (Scutti, 2013)

A sun dance is a tribute to the rebirth of cycles on earth. For example, the beginning of summer.

How can we celebrate?

- "1) As our ancestors did, celebrate by gathering plants and healing herbs, its long been believed that they are at their most potent on the Summer Solstice.
- 2) Gather with others to create a circle or spiral. Exchange songs, stories, and poems with others. Dance, drum, sing and celebrate.
- 3) Create a Sun Wheel or mandala (a symbol of the circle of life and connectedness) made from flowers or things found in nature" (Rain, n.d).
- 4) Play outside
- 5) Go on a nature walk
- 6) Nature scavenger hunt
- 7) Make a sun dial
- 8) Shadow art
- 9) Play traditional games



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