

Exploring Immigration through Cultural Events

Looking at integration of Egyptian, Ukrainian, and Latin American immigrants through the celebration of cultural events.



Group 7 Creating Public History

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Canada is known as a mosaic country. It's built up by the identities and experiences of immigrants. People come to this country with an established identity, and the celebration and continuation of their traditions here ensures they can remain connected to their roots, no matter how far away they are. The three groups explored in this page each have rich cultural identities that make Canada what it is.

Ukrainians first began coming to Canada at the beginning of the 1900s. Canada encouraged them to move to the prairies and establish communities. Thus, the first wave was mostly farmers, people who came seeking economic growth and opportunity.

Egyptians came to Canada in the 1940s, they fled dangerous circumstances and political unrest. Many faced religious persecution in their home country, Coptic Christians and Jewish Egyptians were heavily affected, and hoped to find safety.

The Latin American community began to grow in the 1970s. The visa laws changed and the country adopted an open door policy, tourists were able to apply for permanent residency. Many came as refugees, seeking safety and a better life for their families.

These communities maintain a strong connection to their heritage, and bring their holiday traditions to Canada. These events strengthen community bonds, and encourage people from other cultures to learn from and celebrate with each other.

Ukrainian Migration

Ukrainians celebrate their cultural holidays proudly in Canada, the big cities have robust Ukrainian communities that keep their cultural connections strong. Ukrainians are primarily Eastern Orthodox Christian and Catholic, and celebrate all associated holidays. They maintain a strong connection with their non-religious roots as well, their religious celebrations reflect this aspect of their heritage.

January 13th: Malanka

- A combination of Christian and non-religious traditions.
- A celebration of the old new year, before the Gregorian calendar was standardized.
- In Ukraine it's celebrated with costumes, swimming in freezing rivers and all kinds of feasts and festivities.
- Ukrainian communities in Canada keep this event alive by celebrating this event with their communities.
- Parties are hosted in bars, ballrooms, and community centers.
- They sing and dance, and have musicians play Ukrainian music, similar to a New Years Eve party.



CYM Mississauga Malanka has the best KOLOMYKA hour!

Ukrainians celebrate Malanka in Mississauga

June 23rd: Ivana Kupala

- The Ukrainian celebration of the summer solstice.
- Outdoor festivities are held, and traditions focus on love and bonds between people.
- “Fire jumping” a lighthearted tradition where couples jump over a fire with hands clasped, testing the strength of their relationship.
- Girls will weave wreaths, and set it out on water with a lit candle, if it floats, they are destined to find love soon.
- Celebrations are held across Canada, hosted by local Ukrainian institutions.
- The Ukrainian Museum of Canada hosts the event yearly, partaking in the usual festivities, and bringing an educational factor into it. They give a lecture about the holidays' history, so Ukrainian Canadians can strengthen their understanding of their heritage.
 - The Museum was established by a group of Ukrainian women who immigrated to Saskatchewan. They wanted to

improve their communities' relationship to their home country, and create a positive identity for Ukrainians in Canada.

- Hosting events and celebrations is important to the institution, having fun together strengthens their community, and builds bonds between generations.



Ivana Kupala 2015 Hawkeston Ont. Canada

A Ivana Kupala celebration in Ontario

December 25th: Christmas

- Christmas is celebrated in Ukraine similarly to Canada, but the Ukraine has its own unique food and traditions associated with it.
- Koliada is their name for caroling, music is incredibly important this time of year. In the Ukraine, Koliada can last all day, for several days past Christmas.
 - In Canada, communities will rehearse Koliada performances, and partake in the tradition at their holiday celebrations.

- In the wake of Russia's invasion, Christmas can feel very somber for Ukrainians in Canada.
 - Ukrainian establishments encourage refugees to connect with others like them, celebrate the holidays, and feel empowered even when they're separated from family.
 - A CBC Saskatchewan reporter says "Cooking traditional dishes helps keep their memories alive.", Olena Tarasenko adds "It brings back the sweetest memories from your childhood (...) It actually brings us back home."



Ukrainian newcomers celebrate first Christmas in Canada, wishing for peace back home

August 24th: Ukraine's Independence day

- considered to be one of the country's most treasured holidays, Ukraine has a difficult history, and its people continue to fight for their independence.
- In Canada, Ukrainians will hold parades, street parties and concerts in celebration.
 - The holiday, no matter where it's held, is a reminder of the strength of their people, and the love of their culture.

- In the wake of violence, the independence day was celebrated in Toronto by immigrants, Ukrainian-Canadians and neighbours alike.



Ukrainian independence celebrations in Toronto

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Latin American Migration

Jose Antonio Valverde is a Spanish immigrant who has lived in various countries, including Colombia- but settled in Canada. In an interview with the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, he talks about the difference of experiences for immigrants in Canada compared to other countries like the States.



**Canadian
Museum of
Immigration
at Pier 21**

“But Canada is different. Canada you have—even if you come from Ukraine you have—you are allowed to keep your own passport, you know. You're—you are allowed to maintain your own culture. And sometimes at the same time they—they don't—

it's not like melting pot. It is a melting pot, in the sense that, you know, but you still practice your own cultures which is the great appeal, you see."

Keeping and sharing your culture in a new place can help connect people, and reinstate their cultural pride. Something as simple as music can help people feel at home. Cristy Sosa discussed hearing salsa music at her gym during a Zumba class and immediately felt happy, prideful, and at home.

"When that happened to me, I was join one gym here where it was my personal trainer and everything. I start to listen salsa, like somebody was playing salsa in one of the studios. I went, and it is, was these people dancing salsa, here, in "the Soo" (the Sault). And they were singing like in Spanish. And I was like, amazed about like, oh my god, I want to do this, I want to dance. And then it's like, I can do this because I love it. And it makes me feel so good, have this little thing that reminds me my culture, my, my home, my country."

A Mexican community in Winnipeg strives to connect new Mexican immigrants, vetted immigrants, and other individuals in the community who are interested in Mexican culture, to create an open, supportive, and integrated environment. Zuher Almusre, a reporter for Civic Journalism was able to interview attendees to a Mexican event hosted by this association while they were celebrating "Dia de los Reyes Magos" and the "Guadalupe Magos Marathon". During the interview, the president of the organization- Aline Tezcucano- talked about this specific celebration, the other events that the organization hosts, the services that they offer, and the importance of creating this community.

Mex Y Can Association of Manitoba, Ensuring the V...

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The Guadalupe Reyes Marathon begins on December 12th, which is the Day of the Virgin Mary in Mexico and ends on January 6th, which is the day of Epiphany as written in the bible. Between these days, many cultural events are celebrated in Mexico:

- December 12th: Dia de la Guadalupe/ Day of the Virgin Mary. Day to celebrate the Virgin Mary.
- December 16th - December 24th: Posada. Re-enacting and memorializing the journey that Mary and Joseph took before Jesus was born.
- December 25th: Christmas
- December 28th: Día de los Santos Inocentes /Day of the Holy Innocents. A day to play pranks and tell jokes (like April Fools).
- December 31st - January 1st: New Years.
- January 6th- Dia de los Reyes Magos/ Day of the 3 Wise Men / Epiphany.

This specific event was correlated to the Day of the 3 Wise Men, during which people of all ages and backgrounds were encouraged to engage with Mexican culture.

- Children were asked to write letters to the 3 wise men with an explanation of how good they had been and their wish lists for presents. This is very similar to the Santa Clause tradition.
- Music and dance play a large role in many Latin American celebrations, and this was no exception. The event had dance

demonstrations from a local salsa studio and a DJ playing Latin music.

- People participated in the cutting of the “Rosca de Reyes”. This round cake is only made for this holiday.

As the president of the Mexican organization said “The main mission is to promote Mexican culture, here in Manitoba.” One way they promote Mexican culture in their community is by celebrating significant cultural events like Cinco de Mayo in May, the Mexican Independence Day in September, and the Day of the Dead in November.

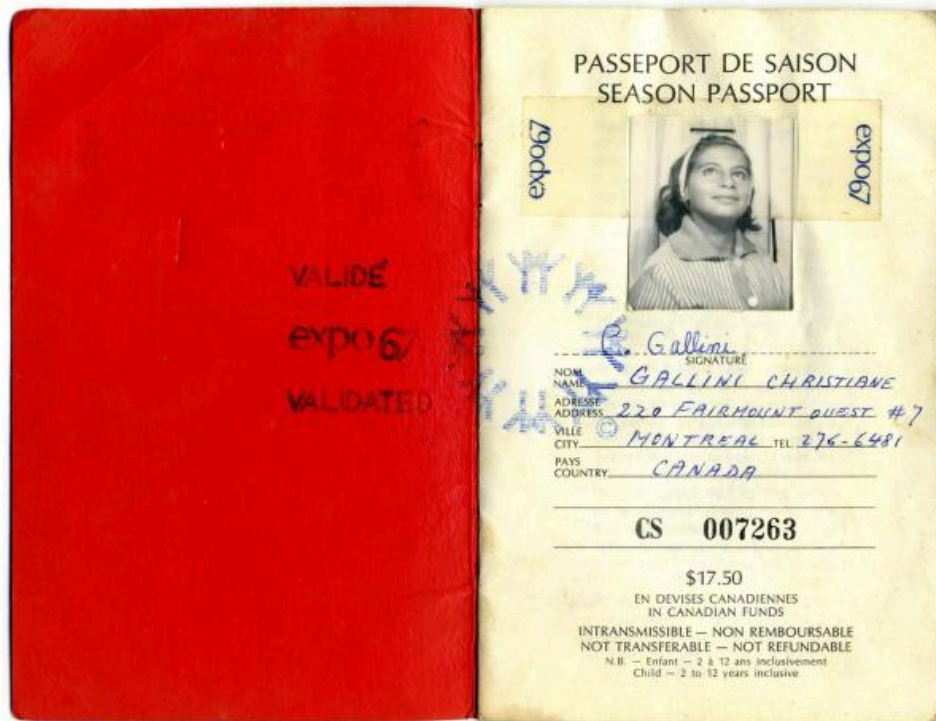
This organization also strived to teach new generations of Canadian-Mexican children about their culture and connect with their roots while being so far away. This event not only serves as a learning experience but also as a valuable networking opportunity. Vetted immigrants and other individuals in the community have the opportunity to share their experiences with newcomers and share contacts, advice, and friendships.

Egyptian Migration

Between 1945 and 1975, 18,939 Egyptian immigrants arrived in Canada, with 68% planning to settle in Québec. Montréal became home to the vast majority of these newcomers, most of whom were Coptic Christians and spoke French.

The first Egyptians to settle in Montréal were primarily members of minority communities that fled Egypt in the 1950s and '60s. This migration intensified after 1956, when Gamal Abdel Nasser became president and embarked on a major nationalization campaign. Facing increasing marginalization, the Copts—Egypt’s Christian minority—emigrated in large numbers. Egyptian Jewish families had begun leaving the country after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. During the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, however, many Jews were expelled by Egyptian authorities. Some of those forced to migrate settled in Montréal, including the family of Montréal

writer Victor Teboul. Although far fewer in number, wealthy Muslim Egyptians also left the country, fearing the impact of economic reforms introduced by Nasser's socialist government.



Christiane Khoury's personal collection

Egyptian migration to Montréal continued throughout the 1970s and early '80s. A major increase occurred between 1990 and 2009: these new immigrants sought better living conditions and job opportunities, and some hoped to join family members already living in Canada. This period saw an increase in the proportion of Muslims in the Egyptian immigrant population.

In Montréal, the Coptic community is divided into two main groups: the Coptic Catholic and Coptic Orthodox sects. Initially, the majority of the Coptic Orthodox immigrants became members of the Syrian Orthodox St. Nicholas Church, with a minority opting for St. Sauveur Church. Rafael Y. Nakhla was appointed as the first priest for the Coptic Orthodox in Montréal in March 1967, taking charge of services at St. Nicolas Church. By 1976, this community had purchased the Saint-Gabriel-Lalemant Church in the Villeray area, renaming it St. Mark Coptic Orthodox

Church, a name it still bears and under which it continues to serve its followers.

On the other hand, Coptic Catholics found a welcoming environment at St. Sauveur, a church following the Byzantine rite. This church, significantly influenced by its large Lebanese congregation that had settled in the city years before, offered a familiar worship style to the Coptic Catholics. Consequently, many from the Coptic Catholic community became active participants in its congregational life. The dedicated Coptic Catholic church, named the Coptic Church of Our Lady of Egypt, was officially opened in Laval in 1987.

21 year old Stephanie Alexander was born in Alexandria, Egypt. She immigrated to Canada with her family when she was 8 years old. Stephanie describes her family's migration and the role kin networks and the Coptic church played during the process of settlement and adaptation in Canada. "We're not just like ethical Christian, we're culturally Coptic which also includes a whole of traditions. We celebrate Christmas on the 7th according to the old calendar", she said. Coptic Easter is different from regular Catholic Easter too, and Stephanie shares some essential dishes when her family celebrate their Easter.



Feseekh, which is usually grey mullet but can also be mackerel or sardines, is the dish most associated with Sham El-Nessim. It is salted fish with spring onions.



Like many other Spring celebrations, eggs are a big part of Sham El-Nessim because they represent new life. In addition to painting and decorating eggs, one tradition is to write wishes on them and hang them in baskets from trees and houses in the hope that the gods will grant the wishes.

Other key celebrations that valued by Coptic community in Canada include the principal religious observances in the Coptic calendar include Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and the

Annunciation. Of these, Easter holds the greatest significance for Copts. Additionally, the commemoration of saints' days is a prominent tradition, celebrated with vibrant moulids similar to Islamic festivals.

- St. Damyanah's Moulid: Notable among the saints' days is St. Damyanah's Moulid, alongside the celebration of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and several feasts dedicated to the Virgin Mary and St. George, particularly in August.
- Sham an-Nessim: The Celebration of Spring: Sham an-Nessim, a spring festival, is observed by both Muslims and Christians. It features family outings with traditional foods like painted eggs and salted fish.
- The Coptic Year: The Coptic calendar, which guides the scheduling of many Coptic festivals, includes months based on the Julian system and others that follow the solar Coptic calendar, which consists of 13 months—12 months of 30 days each and an additional intercalary month of 5 or 6 days, adjusted for leap years.
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At the end of the day, Canada is known for valuing other people's differences and celebrating them. This welcoming environment can be achieved in many ways, but what better way to celebrate and learn from others than by going to events and interacting with others in person.

About the author



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