

Celebrating Kwanzaa

Celebration of African culture and Black ancestry.



- Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of African American culture and tradition that takes place from December 26 to January 1.

The history of Kwanzaa

- Rooted in the Black Freedom Movement and created by renowned Africana Studies professor and activist Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966.
- The word Kwanzaa derives from the phrase, “matunda ya kwanza,” in Swahili, which means “first fruits.” [Source](#)
- Kwanzaa, which has its origins in Africa's early harvest celebrations, is culturally significant to many African Americans and Canadian communities connected to the African diaspora.
- Kwanzaa is not a religious or African holiday, but a cultural celebration with an inherent spiritual quality and African cultural practices. [Source](#)
- During Kwanzaa, symbols of African heritage adorn homes. For instance, families often place a traditional woven mat known as a mkeka (muh-KAY-kuh) on tables to symbolize the holiday's foundational traditions, such as sharing and faith. [Source](#)

Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

- The mat is decorated with symbolic objects, including a basket of fruits and vegetables to symbolize the harvest and a corn ear for every family member and Kikombe cha umoja, or "unity cup" (kee-KOHH-bee cha oo-MOH-jah) is also placed on the table. [Source](#)

- Lighting a candle every night is a significant aspect of Kwanzaa celebrations.
- The seven principles of Kwanzaa include: nia (purpose), kuumba (creativity), imani (faith), kujichagulia (self-determination), ujima (collective responsibility and effort), ujamaa (cooperative economics), and umoja (unity). [Source](#)
- Out of the seven candles, three are red, signifying the fight; three are green, signifying the land and optimism for the future; and one is black, signifying those of African origin. Some Kwanzaa celebrations involve family dressing up or decorating their houses in those hues. [Source](#)

[Kwanzaa](#) (The Canadian Encyclopedia)

[The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa](#) (The National Museum of African American History and Culture)

[Kwanzaa — celebrating Pan-African culture, community and history](#) (CBC Kids)

[Kwanzaa - African-American](#) (Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto)

Learn more about Black Holiday Celebrations Outside of Christmas

- [Did You Know About These Black Holiday Celebrations Beyond Christmas?](#)
- [How Kwanzaa Has Redefined The Winter Holidays For Black Folks](#)
- [The unique and heartfelt traditions of a Black Christmas](#)

Kwanzaa is a time for reflection, appreciation, and commitment to collective progress. It offers an opportunity to honour the past, celebrate the present, and envision a brighter future guided by unity, purpose, and cultural pride.

Holland Bloorview Resources

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

[The Black Employee Resource Group](#) is a voluntary, employee-led group made up of self-identified Black, African, Caribbean and Afro-Canadian employees, students, researchers and volunteers of Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, including the Holland Bloorview Foundation. It was created to provide a safe space and peer support, foster connection, share experiences and resources, and create a platform to discuss our needs and expectations within Holland Bloorview and with leadership.



Discrimination, Racism and Harassment Reporting Process (HB Connect)

- An independent and confidential process is available for reporting workplace discrimination, racism, and harassment. Please go to [HB Connect](#) for more information.

This resource was developed by the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Anti-Racism Office (IDEAA). If you have any comments or would like to suggest additional resources, please e-mail ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca

Happy Kwanzaa

