

Aurora launches Diversity, Equity and Inclusion calendar for 2024



From Eastern Orthodox Christmas last week to Chanukah this December, there are several events and observances on the docket this year that reflect the diversity of our community and now the Town of Aurora has published a new online calendar focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Published to coincide with the dawn of a New Year, Aurora's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) calendar notes not only faith-based holidays and observances, but heritage milestones for Indigenous, Black and other racialized groups, initiatives centred on mental health, as well as events designed to increase accessibility for persons of all abilities.

"Aurora is committed to recognizing the diversity we have within our community. By creating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Calendar we are hoping to foster inclusivity, cultural awareness, and positive relationships in our community and organization," said Town of Aurora CAO Doug Nadorozny. "The calendar allows us to further engage on a deeper level and recognize significant dates that are important to our residents, businesses, cultural partners, and our staff. It also gives us a chance to share this knowledge with our residents who want to learn more about diversity and cultural dates that are important to their peers."

The development of the DEI Calendar was spearheaded by the Town's Communications Department.

Carley Smith, Manager of Corporate Communications for the Town of Aurora, told *The Auroran* that it was a "huge undertaking" by the department and one which they approached from many angles.

"It had been on our radar for some time as something we'd wanted to create as an Aurora-specific staff resource, but also for the public to utilize as well," said Smith. "While we were regularly acknowledging different faith observances and other inclusion dates and events, it was important to us to take the time to create a detailed calendar that represented the unique demographics of our Town."

"The initial thought was to strictly focus on faith dates, but this blossomed to include accessibility and other inclusion event dates that are regularly celebrated by staff and stakeholders. We knew it would be impossible to celebrate and acknowledge every faith date and inclusion event, as calendar dates would also be acknowledged on our Town social media and through other communications avenues as well. As such, we had to devise a list of criteria for selecting which faith and awareness dates would be listed in the calendar. For faith dates, selection was based on the top five religious affiliations in our community, as identified in the 2021 Statistics Canada Survey. Awareness date selection depended on criteria such as: Dimensions of Diversity, alignment with the Town's Strategic Plan, and traditional events historically recognized and programmed by the Town."

"The DEI calendar encompasses and represents the diversity of the Town of Aurora but is by no means an exhaustive list of observances. We did consult several calendars in the creation of our own, such as the York Region DEI calendar and YRDSB

calendar. What we tried to do differently is focus on our Town and the faiths represented here and use this calendar as a tool to educate our staff and community members on the observances of their neighbours, colleagues, and friends.?

The DEI Calendar is intended to be a living document and the Communications Department is open to any and all feedback on the document, including any events or observances that were missed, for potential further inclusion.

While the Calendar is available this year only as an online PDF document that may be printed out at home or at your place of business, Smith says print editions could be considered in future years, pending budget considerations at the Council table.

The Town celebrates and supports many of the dates highlighted in the calendar with public events and commemorations, says Smith. For instance, the Town has and continues to partner with local groups to celebrate Black History Month. The Town also has plans to continue putting on events and gatherings to commemorate Indigenous People's History Month, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Chanukkah. [In 2023], the Town began the promotion of the new Treat Accessibly Initiative that encourages residents to make small adjustments to their trick-or-treating station to allow children with disabilities a barrier-free opportunity to participate in Halloween. And of course, the Town celebrates its overall diversity in September through its Multicultural Festival.?

To access the 2024 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Calendar, visit www.aurora.ca/en/town-services/resources/Aurora-Diversity-Equity-Inclusion-Calendar.pdf.

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