

KWANZAA DEC. 26 TO JAN. 1

KWANZAA, ORIGINALLY AN AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL HOLIDAY, HAS NOW BEEN ADOPTED AROUND THE WORLD. IT IS A CELEBRATION OF AFRICAN COMMUNITIES, FAMILIES AND THEIR VALUES, and is a time for people of African heritage to celebrate their culture and its history. Kwanzaa was originally created to affirm African American culture and unite Black communities after race riots in the United States in 1965.

During Kwanzaa, families and communities gather to share food, honour ancestors and light a candle each day for seven days on the kinara, a seven-branched candle holder used in Kwanzaa celebrations. On Dec. 31, an African feast called a karamu is held.

Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa is dedicated to one of the seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. There are also seven symbols of the holiday: a straw mat, fruits, vegetables and nuts, ears of corn, gifts, a communal cup, a candle holder and seven candles (red, green and black). By focusing on these principles, people who celebrate Kwanzaa aim to help restore the roots of African culture and strengthen bonds with their families and community.

Connection to Doctors Nova Scotia's Work

December is a month of many celebrations, with some taking up more space than others in the media, in retail spaces and workspaces. Physicians and staff can support the communities we serve by recognizing and honouring multiple celebrations throughout the month of December, including Kwanzaa. Many African Nova Scotians and Nova Scotians of African descent may be celebrating Kwanzaa this month, providing further opportunity for physicians and staff to engage in meaningful conversations about race and culture, and their impacts on health outcomes.

Resources

- Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia – Seven Days of Kwanzaa video series: tinyurl.com/BCCNS-7days
- History of Kwanzaa: tinyurl.com/kwanzaa-history
- Teaching kids about Kwanzaa: tinyurl.com/CBC-kwanzaa



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