

**MULTICULTURALISM – Diversity / Equality / Respect**

Multiculturalism is our national character. It embodies shared values — openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, to be there for each other, and to search for equality and justice. Indigenous people and newcomers from all over the world who have settled here bring different pasts to create a common future.

Canada's Multiculturalism Policy was introduced in 1971 in recognition of all the people who have contributed to building this country.

In 1977, the Canadian Human Rights Act was passed to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities without being hindered in, or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon or suspension has been granted.

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed in 1988 to reaffirm our commitment to equal opportunity, equal access and equal participation in all aspects of Canadian life.

In 1966, the United Nations declared March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This was to commemorate a tragic event when peaceful demonstrators against apartheid in South Africa were massacred at Sharpeville in 1960. Canada signed on to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1969.

On December 20, 1983, the General Assembly of the UN called upon all states and organizations to participate in the Program of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

On March 21, 1986, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney proclaimed in the House of Commons "Let us all work toward the day when racism and racial discrimination become history and when every Canadian can participate fully and equally in the life of our country."

On September 1988, ministers attending a federal/provincial/territorial ministerial conference on human rights agreed to commemorate March 21 across Canada. The first national March 21 campaign against racial discrimination was launched by the Government of Canada in 1989.