

Chatterbox #39 – Canadian Holidays

Transcript

Happy New Year everybody!

Maura: Hello everyone! This is Maura.

Jessie: And Jessie.

Maura: And we're wishing you a happy New Year from Culips.

Jessie: We hope your 2011 is going very well so far.

Maura: So, today we're going to do the Chatterbox episode. And in our Chatterbox episode, we always chat about something new that's happening. And it's the New Year, so that's what we're chatting about.

Jessie: You know, I always feel a little bit sad after January 1st, because leading up to **Christmas** time and **New Year's**, it's so exciting, everything's so colourful, we have vacation. But when that's all over, I feel a little sad. There's a long winter stretching before us.

Maura: Right. And we're back to work.

Jessie: Exactly. So, that's why today we're going to look forward to our holidays throughout the rest of the year. I think that'll **cheer me up**.

Maura: Yes, I think so. So, like you said, we're going to look at the holidays that we have in Canada throughout the year where most people don't have to go to work.

Jessie: Yeah, and we'll tell you about our own memories, our own experiences with some Canadian holidays.

Maura: **New Year's Day** is a holiday across our country. Most people who work in an office or a business don't work on that day. A lot of stores are closed on **New Year's Day**.

Jessie: Right. Now, **New Year's Eve**—the day before—that's not an official holiday, but a lot of companies finish early or give their employees the day off anyways.

Maura: Right. So, some people are lucky and they don't have to work on

December 31st, or they only have to work part of the day. But almost everyone gets January 1st off. Just the **essential services** stay open of course. And most people take advantage of this holiday; they don't do much, they stay home with their families, they eat, they relax, they take it easy.

Jessie: Yeah, it's usually a very quiet holiday day.

Maura: Mmhmm. Now, the next holiday ... well, it depends where you live in Canada.

Jessie: Yeah. I know this is a bit of a **sore spot** with you, Maura.

Maura: It is, Jessie. Because only a few years ago, Saskatchewan and Ontario, two provinces in Canada, got **Family Day**. And the province of Alberta has had **Family Day** since 1990.

Jessie: Right. And **Family Day** is just an early Monday in February—different depending on the year—when you have the day off from work and you spend time with your family.

Maura: Right. You're supposed to spend time with your family. And, like I said, it's a really new holiday, a day off in February because the winter is so long. Like you said, after **New Year's**, there are no holidays right away and the winter can be a little bit depressing, so it's nice to have a holiday in February.

Jessie: So Maura, what's the problem that you have with this holiday?

Maura: Well, as you know, Jessie, we live in the province of Quebec and so we do not get the **Family Day** holiday, along with most of the other Canadian provinces. So I think that **Family Day** should be a holiday across Canada.

Jessie: Yeah, we should make it a national holiday.

Maura: Definitely. One day in February—a cold, cold month—and it's just a day to warm our hearts. Now, if you're a student, you have a special holiday, which is **March break** or **Spring break**. Those are the two usual names, and it refers to the week off from school that you get around the month of March or February.

Jessie: Yeah, and pretty much all students, of all ages, from little kids to university students, have one week off during this time.

- Maura: Now, when you're in university, they like to say that you're supposed to use this week to study and catch up on all your assignments and projects, but a lot of people don't do that.
- Jessie: Right. For university students this holiday is called **reading week**, but a lot of people don't do any reading.
- Maura: Yeah. A lot of people buy a ticket to a warmer place and go lie on the beach for a week.
- Jessie: Now, once you're finished school, you don't get this holiday anymore, unless—Maura—you're a teacher.
- Maura: You're right! Teachers are pretty lucky because if a student gets March break, then a teacher does.
- Jessie: I'm so jealous of you.
- Maura: It is pretty nice, I can't argue with you. And then after that we have a holiday for everybody, where **the Easter Bunny** comes to town.
- Jessie: Right, and that's **Easter**.
- Maura: Exactly. So, **Easter** is a little bit different every year; sometimes it's in the month of March and sometimes it's in April. This year it's going to be in April.
- Jessie: Yeah. In my family, when I was a kid, I loved **Easter** because we had a tradition, which I think is common in Canada, of **Easter** baskets. So on **Easter** morning, we would go out in the living room and find these baskets that **the Easter Bunny** had left us. And they had chocolate and we would also usually get a toy that we could play with in the spring, so something like skipping rope, or marbles, something you would play with outside.
- Maura: Yeah, nice. And I remember sometimes **the Easter Bunny** would hide things around my house. So we had to go looking to find our chocolates and candies.
- Jessie: Oh, like **an Easter egg hunt**!
- Maura: Exactly.
- Jessie: **Easter** eggs are very traditional.
- Maura: But now, to be honest, I don't do much to celebrate **Easter**. When you grow up, you don't get candies from **the Easter Bunny** anymore, unfortunately.

So, it really counts as a nice day off and usually, or hopefully, the weather is starting to get a little bit warmer.

Jessie: Now, for some people, **Easter** is a religious holiday, so they'll go to church on that day and spend time with their family and friends.

Maura: Yup, right. Everyone celebrates it a little bit differently. So, not too long after that, we have **Victoria Day; the Victoria Day long weekend** as it's known, because we always get a Monday off, which makes **a long weekend**. So technically, Queen Victoria's birthday is May 24th, but we want make this holiday **a long weekend**, so we move the day around to the closest Monday. So, every year this holiday is a little bit different. It might be on May 23rd, or 22nd; it depends.

Jessie: Right. And that holiday was originally to celebrate the birthday of Queen Victoria, one of the Queens of England.

Maura: Right. And every time I think about where this holiday comes from, it reminds me that Canada is still connected to England.

Jessie: Right. But the holiday itself doesn't have much to do with Queen Victoria anymore.

Maura: It really doesn't. When I was growing up, I remember spending time outside on **Victoria Day** and watching the fireworks with my family.

Jessie: Yeah, a lot of people go camping on **the long weekend**.

Maura: You're right, that's really popular. I also spent a lot of **Victoria Day weekends** camping.

Jessie: OK, so now this brings us to the summer. And on July 1st we have a very special day to our country: **Canada Day**.

Maura: Right. Every country's got one: the one day that they celebrate their own country. And ours, luckily, is in summer. So, on July 1st every year, Canadians go outside, maybe they go camping, they watch fireworks. They just relax and enjoy the day.

- Jessie: Yeah, it's a nice vacation day because it happens in the summer. Some work places, instead of giving July 1st off, they'll give the Friday or the Monday closest to July 1st, so that you can have a **long weekend**.
- Maura: Yeah, we like **long weekends** in Canada!
- Jessie: I think everyone likes **long weekends**.
- Maura: You're probably right. And you can also attend different events where people are celebrating Canada. So, there could be fireworks or, in Ottawa, they have a big concert all day and lots of things going on around the city to do with celebrating Canada.
- Jessie: Right. Ottawa is the capital city of the country, so they usually have the biggest **Canada Day** celebration.
- Maura: The next holiday that we're going to talk about is the one that—for me—signifies the end of summer.
- Jessie: Yeah, it's kind of **bittersweet**, because you do get a vacation day but it also means that summer is over and the fall is here.
- Maura: Right. It's the last **long weekend** of the summer, and that is Labour Day.
- Jessie: Right. And the purpose of **Labour Day** is to take a break from your labour—to take a break from work.
- Maura: Yeah. **Labour Day** has a really interesting history associated with workers' rights. But now, like many of our summer holidays, Canadians like to take the day off, lie around, go to the beach, go camping, enjoy their time off.
- Jessie: A lot of students have to start school right after **Labour Day**, but some schools start the week before.
- Maura: Yup, right. That's another way that that time of year symbolizes the end of summer. School is starting again and people are getting a little bit busier at work, coming back from their vacations.
- Jessie: Yeah, as a kid I didn't like **Labour Day** at all, because I already had all summer off, so the vacation wasn't a big deal to me. But it was nice that my parents had it off, so we could all spend time together.

- Maura: And as the fall starts, then of course we have our Canadian **Thanksgiving** in early October. And on that holiday, we give thanks for everything in our lives that we're grateful for.
- Jessie: **Thanksgiving** is one of my favourite holidays, and sometimes it falls on the same day as my birthday. So it was always really special to me growing up because we would have a big birthday party and Thanksgiving celebration all together.
- Maura: Yeah, I can see why it's your favourite.
- Jessie: I got to eat great food and birthday cake and I got presents and I got to see my family. It was **the best of both worlds**.
- Maura: Great. And after Jessie's birthday, I mean Thanksgiving, what other holiday do we have before the year is ending?
- Jessie: Well, the one that's still **on everyone's minds** is **Christmas**.
- Maura: Yeah. So, around **Christmas**, a lot of people take extra days off from work to kind of extend the holiday.
- Jessie: Yeah, a lot of businesses close down between **Christmas** and **New Year's** to give their employees extra vacation.
- Maura: Right. But if you're not lucky enough to work at one of those places, or you don't have any extra personal holidays to use, then you might have to work **Christmas Eve**, because **Christmas Eve** is technically not a holiday.
- Jessie: Right. But some employers will let you go at noon or 1 o'clock on **Christmas Eve**.
- Maura: Yup. It all depends. Every place is different. But one thing that is sure is **Christmas Day** is a holiday.
- Jessie: Yeah, that's true across Canada and in a lot of other countries too.
- Maura: It's nice, because everyone is in the same spirit and **in the same frame of mind**. But you know, I always feel a little bit bad for those people who are working on **Christmas Day**, the people who are working in convenience stores or some other **essential services** like hospitals.
- Jessie: Yeah, somebody has to do it and I'm thankful that they do.
- Maura: At least they're getting paid extra to work those days.

- Jessie: Yeah, and then they probably get a different day off instead.
- Maura: So it all works out. And we're back to **New Year's**. So we did it; we did the whole year holiday review.
- Jessie: Yup, and we didn't mention all the vacations or all the holidays, but those are some of my favourites.
- Maura: Right. Those are some of the big ones that many people get the day off for. So depending where you live in Canada, you might get between eight to ten **statutory holidays**.
- Jessie: Right. And a **statutory holiday** just means a holiday that ... it's mandatory that you either have that day off or another day in exchange.
- Maura: And if you're lucky, you have some additional vacation time that you can use, and take extra days off throughout the year to extend your holidays.
- Jessie: Yeah. A lot of companies give their employees two weeks off, and usually you can pick when you take those days.
- Maura: So, if you're still enjoying the holiday season, we hope that you're relaxed and having a good time.
- Jessie: And if you're back at work, just remember all of the vacation days and the holidays that are ahead of you.
- Maura: So don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and check out becoming a member, because there's a lot of good stuff that can only help with your comprehension of all of our episodes.
- Jessie: And if you have any unique or special holidays in your country that are different from those in Canada, we'd love to hear about it.
- Maura: We'll talk to you next time. Bye!
- Jessie: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

New Year/New Year's

Happy **New Year**! When we wish people well at this time of year we say *Happy **New Year***. Because we are wishing people well for the new year ahead, there is no S on the end.

At this time of year people will also be talking about **New Year's** with an S at the end. The actual holidays are **New Year's Eve** and **New Year's Day**, and so you may also hear people wishing people well for **New Year's**. In this case, people are wishing others well for the celebration on those days. People shorten the names of the holidays by only saying **New Year's**.

The salutation of *Happy **New Year*** is not said with an S, but if you are wishing someone well for the New Year's holidays then the S is said.

Here is an example of each being used:

Ted: Hi, how's it going?

Jackie: Good, good. Happy **New Year**!

Ted: Happy New **Year** to you too.

Vern: What are you doing for New Year's?

Lila: I'm going to Florida!

Vern: Oh wow! Have a great **New Year's** then.

Lila: I will!

Essential services

The phrase **essential services** refers to the services that the government has decided must be available all the time. Anything that is an essential service never stops or closes down, even for national holidays. **Essential services** often include public transportation and health services like hospitals.

To cheer up

To cheer someone up is to make them happy! If someone is sad or not feeling good, they probably need **cheering up**. When someone feels better or happier after feeling sad, they have **cheered up**.

In this episode, Jessie says that she feels sad after Christmas and New Year's are over. But thinking about the upcoming holidays **cheers her up** (makes her feel better).

Here is another example with **to cheer up**:

Sabrina: You look like you need some **cheering up**!

Yvonne: Yeah, I've been feeling down lately.

A sore spot

If someone has a **sore spot**, it means that there is a topic that makes them mad or sad, or some other negative feeling. **Sore** is an adjective that describes something that feels bad or painful. When someone has a **sore spot**, they react to that topic whenever it is mentioned. If you know about someone's **sore spot**, you can be sure they will react negatively when it is talked about.

Imagine an actual sore (physically painful) spot on someone's arm. If another person touches that spot, the first person is going to react to the touch, probably by saying **ow** or feeling pain. This is just like someone's negative reaction to a topic that is their **sore spot**!

Maura's **sore spot** is the Family Day holiday. Maura believes that this holiday should be national, and it bothers her that only certain provinces get this extra holiday. Since this is her **sore spot**, every time someone talks about Family Day, Maura talks about how frustrating she finds it that all the Canadian provinces don't have this holiday.

Here are a couple more examples with a **sore spot**:

Joseph: Henry got so mad last night.

Oscar: I know, but talking about the war is a **sore spot** for him. He always gets really upset when we talk about it.

Jenn: I can't get over the high divorce rate in our country today. It makes me so sad for the state of marriage.

Luke: It sounds like that's a **sore spot** with you.

Jenn: It is!

Family Day

This holiday is on the third Monday in February in the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. **Family Day** is the newest holiday in Canada, which was introduced with the idea of spending more time with our families and remembering the importance of family values. This is how some people chose to spend the holiday, but others do whatever they like on this day off in February.

Maura is still upset that Family Day is still not a national holiday!

In the province of Manitoba, they have a holiday at this time also, but it is called Louis Riel Day. He is an important historical figure in Canada, and especially for Manitoba.

In Prince Edward Island they also have a holiday around the same time, called Islander Day. This began because other provinces were getting a holiday at this time of year, and the citizens of PEI wanted one too.

March break/Spring break/reading week

These are the names given to the week-long break from school that students receive early in the year. The exact week is different depending on the school. Elementary and high schools call this holiday **Spring break** or **March break** and it usually happens in the month of March. Universities generally take this vacation in February and refer to it as **Spring break** or **Reading week**.

In many American movies, they refer to this holiday time as **Spring break**, and it is a time when students go to a warm part of the world and party together!

Easter

Easter is a holiday at the beginning of spring. There are specific religious holidays around this time: the most well known being Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Easter Monday. The actual holiday that most people get a day off from work for is Good Friday. In addition to Good Friday, federal government employees don't have to work on Easter Monday either.

The Easter Bunny, eggs, and baskets

Like many holidays in North America, Easter has Christian origins and many modern traditions that are not connected to any religion. These Easter traditions are largely for children and families. Jessie and Maura talk about a few of these traditions in this episode.

The Easter Bunny is similar to Santa Claus. **The Easter Bunny** is believed to visit the homes of children the night before Easter, bringing **Easter eggs**, chocolates and candies, and sometimes other toys. The origin of the **Easter Bunny** goes back to pre-Christian times, and the bunny a symbol of fertility and the beginning of spring.

Easter eggs are another part of the modern traditions of Easter. People decorate **eggs** by colouring them with bright dyes, and they also eat candies and chocolates in the shape of **eggs**. **Eggs** are another symbol of fertility. All of these goodies are often put in an **Easter basket**. Children leave out their **basket** for the **Easter Bunny** to fill with goodies on Easter morning.

Victoria Day

The **Victoria Day** holiday was created in honour of Queen Victoria's birthday. This has been an officially recognized day in Canada since 1845! Most people nowadays do not

think much about Queen Victoria, but use this as a holiday to enjoy fireworks or go camping with the family.

Many people in their 20s consider this holiday a long weekend to go camping and party. This holiday is sometimes called May two-four weekend. This is in reference to the date May 24th and also to the size of a case of beer. Cases of 24 bottles or cans of beer are also called two-fours.

This holiday is the Monday before or on May 24th.

Long weekends

Official **long weekends** are weekends that have a holiday either on a Monday or Friday. Having three days off makes the weekend longer, so we call it a **long weekend**. We can also be specific and say a *three-day weekend*.

People can also make their own **long weekends** by taking personal holidays on a Monday or Friday or both! In this way, people might say that they have a **long weekend** when others don't, or if they take both Monday and Friday off, they could say they have a *four-day weekend*.

People don't usually say *five-day weekend*, because when you have five days off, it's not just a weekend anymore but vacation time!

Canada Day

Canada Day marks the day that Canada officially became a country. Canada became a country on July 1st, 1867. Canada is such a new country compared to many others!

We have done episodes on Canada Day in the past at Culips, so if you're interested in learning more about it, go to our website and check it out.

Bittersweet

Bittersweet is an adjective made up of two words: *bitter* and *sweet*. If we look at the meaning of these two words separately, we can understand the word **bittersweet**. *Bitter* describes a strong unpleasant taste and *sweet* is a sugary taste, so they are opposites. You can get **bittersweet** chocolate that has both of these tastes at the same time.

We can also describe things other than food as **bittersweet**, which means that they are pleasant and unpleasant at the same time. Jessie describes the Labour Day holiday as **bittersweet**. This is because it is a holiday (sweet), but it also signifies the end of summer (bitter).

The end of a vacation can also be **bittersweet**: the vacation is finished but you get to return to friends and family. A **bittersweet** ending to a movie might be that two lovers are finally together but they are in prison.

Labour Day

This holiday is celebrated all over the world with many different names. **Labour Day** began as a time to celebrate and remember workers' rights. Nowadays, Labour Day in Canada is known as a day to relax and enjoy the last of the summer weather!

We have also done an episode at Culips about Labour Day. Check it out if you want to know more about it!

Thanksgiving

Check out our episode about **Thanksgiving** on Culips if you want to know more. Canadian **Thanksgiving** is very similar to American **Thanksgiving** in how we celebrate it by gathering with family and enjoying a turkey dinner.

But there are also some differences. Canadian **Thanksgiving** is the second Monday in October, while the American **Thanksgiving** is in November. The Canadian Thanksgiving is also much smaller than the American one. This is arguably the biggest holiday in the United States, but in Canada the biggest holiday celebration is Christmas.

The best of both worlds

This expression, **the best of both worlds**, is used to talk about experiencing the best of two different things at one time.

Jessie uses this expression to talk about celebrating her birthday and Thanksgiving at the same time. She got to see her family and eat a great Thanksgiving dinner, some of the best things about Thanksgiving, and she also got to open presents and celebrate her birthday with family, some of the best things about a birthday. In this way, Jessie was able to experience **the best of both worlds**.

There is a song by Miley Cyrus called *Best of Both Worlds*. The lyrics are about experiencing the best things about being a celebrity, like receiving expensive gifts, and also the best things about being a regular person, like spending time with friends. This song is about getting **the best of both worlds**: the world of celebrities and the world of regular people

People also often use this expression in a negative way, for example, you can't have **the best of both worlds**. Sometimes people have to make a choice between two things and cannot have both; this is when the negative form of this expression is used.

On everyone's minds

If something is **on someone's mind**, it means that they are thinking about it constantly or repetitively. If something is **on everyone's minds**, it is something that society is thinking about. Near the end of December in North America, Christmas is **on everyone's minds**.

Here are a couple more examples with **on everyone's minds/on someone's mind**:

Karl: Did you hear about the earthquake?

Olivia: Yeah, I think it's **on everyone's minds**.

Rebecca: You look like you have something **on your mind**.

Paul: Yeah. I keep thinking about something that happened at work today...

Christmas Day/Christmas Eve

Check out one of our Christmas episodes to learn more about these holidays!

Statutory Holiday

A statutory holiday is a mandatory holiday that most everyone gets, like the ones we talk about in this episode! People also say *stat holiday* as a short form.

Quiz

1. What is Maura's sore spot?

- a) that people have to work on New Year's Day
- b) that the Easter Bunny doesn't bring her chocolate anymore
- c) that Family Day is not a national holiday
- d) that Valentine's day is not a holiday

2. What are some of the essential services in Canada?

- a) public transportation, health services
- b) restaurants, cafes
- c) grocery stores
- d) malls and other shops

3. In which months do the week-long breaks for students usually happen in Canada?

- a) February and March
- b) March and April
- c) April and May
- d) May and June

4. What creature do children believe brings them chocolates on Easter morning?

- a) The Tooth Fairy
- b) Santa Claus
- c) The Spring Chicken
- d) The Easter Bunny

5. Which items are associated with Easter?

- a) eggs and baskets
- b) ice cream and cones
- c) turkey and stuffing
- d) bells and whistles

6. What do Canadians often do on Victoria Day?

- a) go skiing
- b) go camping
- c) go dancing
- d) open presents

7. Samantha: The end of school is always so bittersweet.

Manuel: Yeah. We don't have any more homework to do, but we have to say goodbye to our friends.

What is the meaning of *bittersweet*?

- a) sad and happy
- b) dangerous and safe
- c) crazy and calm
- d) mad and sad

8. Jane: I'm so happy about my homestay in Spain. I get to study Spanish in class, and also learn about the culture by living with a family. I'm really looking forward to having dinner with them and seeing the sights together.

How does Jane have the best of both worlds?

- a. She can study Spanish and learn about the culture.
- b. She can stay with a family and have dinner with them.
- c. She can have dinner with the family and visit the sites.
- d. She can learn about the culture and have dinner with the family.

Answers: 1.c 2.a 3.a 4.d 5.a 6.b 7.a 8.a