bgc Durham

bgcdurham.com

INCLUSION MATTERS

DECEMBER

NEWSLETTER

As we move into December at BGC Durham, our spaces fill with warmth, reflection, and celebration. This month invites us to slow down, appreciate our diverse traditions, and make room for everyone to feel seen and valued. Whether families are observing holidays, enjoying winter activities, or simply taking time to rest, December reminds us of the importance of community care and belonging. Together, we continue to build an environment where all children, youth, families, and staff feel welcomed, supported, and included—today and throughout the year.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

DEC 6 - NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

DEC 7 - 15 - HANUKKAH

DEC 10 - HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

DEC 21 - WINTER SOLSTICE

DEC 24 - CHRISTMAS EVE

DEC 25 - CHRISTMAS

DEC 26 - JAN 1 - KWANZAA

DEC 31 - NEW YEARS EVE

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

DECEMBER IS A BUSY AND EXCITING MONTH AT BGC DURHAM! WE'RE KICKING THINGS OFF WITH LIGHTING UP THE HOLIDAYS ON DECEMBER 2, FOLLOWED BY OUR FESTIVE BREAKFAST WITH THE ELVES ON DECEMBER 13. FAMILIES CAN ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO OUR HOLIDAY CAMP RUNNING DECEMBER 29, 30, 31 AND JANUARY 2. WE'RE EXCITED TO CELEBRATE THE SEASON TOGETHER WITH FUN, CONNECTION, AND COMMUNITY!

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HOW TO HAVE AN INCLUSIVE BREAK

The winter break can feel exciting—but also different for every child. Some kids enjoy holiday traditions, others prefer quiet time, and some need extra support with changes in routine. An inclusive break means creating space for everyone's needs, comfort levels, communication styles, and ways of celebrating. Here are some helpful ideas to make the break enjoyable, calm, and welcoming for all.

MAKE A BREAK PLAN THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Changes in routine can be hard. A simple plan can help.

- **Create a visual schedule for each day (symbols, or colour-coded lists)**
- **Add breaks throughout the day, especially after busy events**
- **Choose one or two special activities instead of trying to do everything**
- **Use timers or reminders for transitions if that helps**

CELEBRATE (OR DON'T) IN YOUR OWN WAY

Different families celebrate different holidays, or none at all

- **Explore traditions through stories, music, or simple crafts**
- **Let youth decide how much they want to take part in celebrations**
- **Offer a quiet space at home where they can rest when they need a break**
- **Choose sensory-friendly activities, like soft lights instead of flashing ones**

MOST OF ALL: TAKE BREAKS, HAVE FUN, AND BE YOU

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Let's Learn More About the Holidays!

Christmas

Christmas is celebrated in many different ways around the world. For some, it is a religious holiday that honours the birth of Jesus. For others, it is a cultural celebration focused on kindness, giving, family traditions, and community. No matter how (or if) families observe Christmas, it's a time where many people come together to share warmth, generosity, and connection.

Winter Solstice

The Winter Solstice marks the shortest day and longest night of the year. Many cultures view it as a time to welcome the return of light, reflect, and connect with nature. Some people celebrate with traditions like lanterns, candles, or time outdoors, while others simply enjoy the seasonal change. It's a reminder of rest, renewal, and finding warmth together during the winter months.

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Let's Learn More About the Holidays!

Hanukkah

Hanukkah is an eight-day Jewish celebration also known as the Festival of Lights. It honours a story of resilience and hope, symbolized by lighting the menorah each night. Families may play dreidel, enjoy foods like latkes, or gather for music and time together. While Hanukkah is a religious holiday, many traditions focus on community, gratitude, and the importance of keeping light alive in challenging times —values everyone can appreciate and learn from.

Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a week-long cultural celebration of African heritage, community, and identity. It's based on the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba), including unity, responsibility, creativity, and purpose. Families may light a kinara, reflect on these values, share stories, or enjoy music, art, and food connected to African traditions. Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday—it's a cultural one—making it a meaningful opportunity for youth to learn about Black history, pride, and community strength.

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MINDFULNESS

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

A way of paying attention to the present moment—our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings—with kindness and curiosity.

TAKE A "MINDFUL MINUTE"

Pause, take three slow breaths, and notice how your body feels. A quick reset for any age.

USE YOUR SENSES

Look around and name: 3 things you can see, 2 things you can hear, and 1 thing you can feel. It's a great grounding activity for busy moments.

MOVE WITH PURPOSE

Stretch, walk, or wiggle slowly and pay attention to how your body moves. Mindful movement helps release stress.

TAKE A DIGITAL PAUSE

Put down your device for a few minutes and sit, stretch, or breathe. A simple break refreshes your mind.

CREATE A CALM SPOT

Find (or make) a quiet space at home, at work, or in a program where you can take a quick break.

NOTICE YOUR FEELINGS

Name the feeling you have—happy, tired, frustrated, excited. Naming emotions helps children and adults manage them.

Winter Craft

SNOW DOUGH WINTER PLAYDOUGH

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 Tablespoons cream of tartar
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 Tablespoons cornstarch
- Blue food coloring optional
- Instant Snow
- Glitter optional

INSTRUCTIONS

1. To Prep: Make one batch of instant snow according to package directions. Set aside.
2. Add flour, water, salt, cream of tartar, oil, cornstarch, and food coloring (if using) to a microwave-safe bowl and stir to combine.
3. If using glitter, stir in now. Microwave for 1 minute and stir. Microwave 30 seconds and stir. Repeat as needed until playdough is cooked and begins to clump together when you stir it.
4. Once playdough is cooked, add half of the instant snow and fold into the playdough with a spoon.
5. Once playdough is cool enough to handle, finish kneading by hand.

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LOOKING TO GIVE BACK?

BACK DOOR MISSION FOR THE RELIEF OF POVERTY

- ADDRESS: 66 SIMCOE STREET SOUTH, OSHAWA (RED DOOR FACING STREET)
- THEY ACCEPT CLOTHING (ESPECIALLY WINTER CLOTHING: COATS, BOOTS, SNOWPANTS, GLOVES, ETC.) AND OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS.
- DONATION DROP-OFF HOURS: MONDAY–FRIDAY, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM.
- IT'S A WELL-KNOWN SHELTER/RELIEF AGENCY SERVING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY/HOMELESSNESS IN OSHAWA.

DURHAM CHILDREN'S AID FOUNDATION

- ADDRESS: 1320 AIRPORT BOULEVARD, OSHAWA, ON
- ACCEPTS MONETARY DONATIONS, GIFT CARDS, NEW TOYS, NEW CLOTHING, BABY SUPPLIES — OFTEN USED FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY SUPPORT OR HOLIDAY DRIVES
- DONATIONS SUPPORT CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES ACROSS DURHAM REGION.

THE SALVATION ARMY – OSHAWA COMMUNITY & FAMILY SERVICES

- ADDRESS: 45 KING STREET EAST, OSHAWA, ON (FOOD BANK ENTRANCE TYPICALLY ON ALBERT STREET)
- ACCEPTS FOOD DONATIONS, HYGIENE ITEMS, MONETARY DONATIONS; SEASONAL SUPPORT (E.G. DURING HOLIDAYS), POSSIBLY CLOTHING/HOUSEHOLD GOODS (VIA THRIFT STORE)
- OFFERS FOOD-BANK AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES TO PEOPLE/FAMILIES FACING INSECURITY.

DURHAM OUTLOOK FOR THE NEEDY

- ADDRESS: 227 SIMCOE STREET SOUTH, OSHAWA, ON
- ACCEPTS CLOTHING, HOUSEHOLD GOODS, SMALL APPLIANCES; FOOD FOR MEAL PROGRAMS / SOUP KITCHEN; ITEMS SUITABLE FOR RESALE IN THRIFT STORE
- THEY OPERATE A "STORE & SOUP-KITCHEN" MODEL — THRIFT-STORE STYLE DONATIONS HELP FUND MEAL SERVICES.