



BLUE OAK MAY FAIRE

The May Faire is an annual outdoor festival that ritually welcomes the Spring, which is traditionally celebrated by Waldorf schools throughout the world. This event engages the students with the larger community and celebrates the spirit in which Waldorf schools nourish and support the child's connection to nature and the seasonal cycles. May Faire activities range from face-painting to child-made crafts, music & singing performances, storytelling and more. The most iconic element of May Faire is the children's maypole dance that evokes community pride and joy and continues a tradition that was started by celebrants performing in May festivals centuries ago. At Blue Oak we enjoy these traditions as well as a play that welcomes Spring and says goodbye to Winter performed by students.

Historically

Spring has often been considered the beginning of the year and many cultures continue to celebrate the spring equinox. People gather at many of the Mesoamerican pyramids and temples, such as the pyramid of the sun in Teotihuacan and the Kulkulkan temple in Chichin Itza (where the sunlight creates the illusion of a shadowy serpent moving up the pyramid steps), to welcome the sun at the spring equinox.

European Countries

May first is also known as May Day, has a long history in Europe. Some traditions seem to date back to the Roman festival of *Floralia* which is linked to myths associated with flowers and was celebrated over several days in late April and early May. Many modern May Day traditions seem more directly linked to the Celtic traditions celebrated since at least the early Middle Age as Beltane by Celtic people which was actually considered to be the first day of summer. Similar holidays were celebrated throughout a large portion of Europe and many of the old traditions such as dancing around a Maypole continue to this day. May Day is frequently celebrated in Waldorf schools, often including traditional maypole dancing. It largely serves the functions of bringing the community together and acknowledging the rhythms of nature and seasonal changes.

Shifting Traditions

Many holiday traditions have shifted from their original spring equinox dates. Some of these traditions are now incorporated in modern Easter celebrations such as Sham el-Nessim which marks the beginning of spring in Egypt and now coincides with Easter Monday. It is thought that many of the modern holiday traditions such as eating, lettuce, onions and salted fermented fish come from ancient *Shemu* traditions in which the arrival of spring was celebrated by making offerings of these items. Sham el-Nessim can be translated as something like "smelling the Zephyrus" and is a reference to the seasonal breezes of the spring and summer months.

Traditions that mark the seasonal changes
from the winter to the warmer spring and summer seasons
are popular in cultures throughout the World.

In Japan

Hanami, or the cherry blossom festivals take place when the cherry blossoms, or *Sakura*, come into bloom (generally around April and May).

In Thailand

Songkran occurs in mid-April celebrating the solar New Year. In many parts of Thailand there is a tradition of people soaking each other with water.

In the southern hemisphere

Spring and summer arrive at different times of the year. One celebration is the Floriade festival in Canberra Australia celebrating the arrival of spring, which in this case starts in September. The arrival of spring is apparent due to the month-long blooming of around a million flowers in Commonwealth Park. People celebrate with music, sculptures and by decorating gnomes.

In Walker Bay South Africa

Another spring celebration that takes place in the southern hemisphere is the Hermanus festival which marks the arrival of Spring in September. People gather to watch as the Wright Whales migrate back to the area and celebrate with music, food, parades and marine themed activities.

In the Middle East-

In parts of Iraq, Syria and Turkey many people celebrate Khab b-Nisan on the first of April. This holiday has roots in the Babylonian New Year's celebration of Akitu which was originally celebrated on the equinox.

In Roseville California

The Nisenen Maidu celebrate the arrival of the "flower season" or springtime as a time of natural renewal with the *Yomen* celebration and craft fair which takes place around the end of April, and is open to the public. It includes singing, dancing and storytelling, as well as activities for children, and traditional craft making demonstrations.

A contemporary holiday

Around this time of year the modern Earth Day is celebrated. Here in Chico this day has been celebrated for several decades with the local Endangered Species Faire which is a free outdoor event in Bidwell Park, with music, food, puppet parades, educational crafts, games and entertainment.