



An eggs-cellent time

Easter traditions in Canada and around the world are based not only in religion, but in a celebration of spring

By Lisa Evans

This month, stores will be stocked with colourful chocolate eggs, bunnies and pastel-coloured wicker baskets. To a newcomer, the image of a life-sized hopping bunny carrying a basket of colourful eggs might seem a strange repre-

sentation of a Christian holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus, from Good Friday (April 22) to Easter Sunday (April 24) and Easter Monday (April 25). But, similarly to the images of Santa Claus and his reindeer at Christmas, many of the symbols and

traditions associated with Easter in Western culture do not actually have their origins in religion.

The Easter Bunny

While the fertile rabbit has long been a symbol of springtime from Pagan times, the bunny as an official representation of the Easter holiday appeared in German literature in the 1500s. German children eagerly awaited the arrival of *Oschter Haws*, a rabbit who delighted young girls and boys on Easter morning by laying colourful eggs in nests built by the children using their caps and bonnets.

German settlers brought the Easter Bunny with them when they migrated to Pennsylvania

in the 1700s. The bunny and his basket of eggs are now the most recognized symbols of Easter in the Western world.

Egg painting

Canadian children love to dye eggs in a variety of springtime colours. Egg painting kits can be purchased at supermarkets across the country. The tradition of egg painting dates back many years and is considered an art form in some countries.

The Ukrainian painted Easter eggs are among the most famous in the world. Called *pysanky*, these birds eggs are painted with hot wax in colourful, intricate geometric patterns and images symbolizing nature. 🌿

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Traditions from around the world

Some other interesting Easter traditions from around the world, include:

Polish watering

For many little boys in Poland, Easter Monday is the most highly anticipated day of the year. Armed with buckets and water pistols, they eagerly await the arrival of their sisters, girlfriends, female teachers and any other woman brave enough to leave her house on this day, to participate in the Polish tradition of watering. While being splashed with water is considered to bring good health, most women who dare to venture out on this day wrap themselves in raincoats and hats for protection.

Norwegian crime

While Easter is often associated with new life, Norwegians enjoy

celebrating the holiday with a good murder mystery. All major television channels broadcast crime and detective stories, magazines print mysteries inviting readers to guess the culprit, even milk cartons change their covers to print murder stories around this time of the year.

Czech whips

In the Czech Republic, boys make a special handmade whip of willow twigs called *pomlázka*, and decorate it with coloured ribbons at the end. On Easter Monday, boys walk from door to door to spank the girls on the legs with their whip. It is believed that the freshness, youth and strength of the twigs is passed to the women on this day to keep their health and beauty during the whole next year.