

## Emancipation Day



On March 24, 2021, the House of Commons officially recognized August 1 as Emancipation Day for the first time. This date commemorates the day in 1834 when the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 came into effect throughout the British Empire. Many Canadians may not be aware that Black and Indigenous Peoples were once enslaved on the land that is now Canada. Those who fought against enslavement were crucial in shaping our society into today's diverse nation. ([Government of Canada](#))

### Emancipation in Canada

- The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 abolished slavery across the British Empire starting on August 1, 1834. This legislation paved the way for the emancipation of over 800,000 enslaved Africans and their descendants in regions such as the Caribbean, Africa, South America, and Canada. [Source](#)
- The Act resulted in only partial liberation for most enslaved people in British North America. **Only slaves below the age of six were freed.** Enslaved people older than six years of age were re-designated as “apprentices” and required to work, 40 hours per week without pay, as part of compensation payment to their former owners. [Source](#)
- Full emancipation was not achieved until midnight on July 31, 1838.

### Emancipation Today

This DAY is not just about honouring the past. It continues to influence the lives of African Canadians today.

- This day is dedicated to understanding Canada's collective history — not altering it but providing a more comprehensive account that includes the history of slavery in Canada.
- The recognition of the Act to Abolish Slavery marks a significant step in acknowledging African Canadian history as an integral part of Canada's narrative. [Source](#)

## Emancipation Resources

- [Celebrations of Emancipation Day: National Historic Event](#) (Government of Canada)
- [Learn about Black enslavement in Canada](#) (Canadian Museum for Human Rights)
- [Underground Railroad](#) (Canadian Encyclopedia)
- [Enslavement of Indigenous People in Canada](#) (Canadian Encyclopedia)
- [History of Black communities in Canada](#) (National Film Board)
- [Emancipation Day around the World](#) (Office Holidays)

## Emancipation Events in the GTA and Ontario

- [Emancipation Day “Underground Freedom Train” Ride- hosted by TTC \(July 31\)](#)
- [City of Toronto Emancipation Month flag-raising ceremony \(August 1\)](#)
- [Toronto Riverside Afraspektion 2024 \(August 11\)](#)
- [London Emancipation Day Celebration \(July 28\)](#)
- [Owen Sound Emancipation Festival \(August 2-4\)](#)
- [Halton Freedom Celebration Festival \(August 3\)](#)
- [Kingston Emancipation Day Celebrations \(August 3\)](#)
- [Brampton Caribbean Festival \(August 5\)](#)

This resource was developed by the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Anti-Racism Office (IDEAA). If you have any comments or would like to suggest a resource, please e-mail [ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca](mailto:ideaa@hollandbloorview.ca)