

# Emancipation Day 2023 in Oakville

Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton

Jul 31, 2023 12:00 PM

Updated Jul 31, 2023 4:13 PM



*Emancipation Day | Adriana Aceves on Unsplash*

Oakville’s historical legacy will be honoured on Emancipation Day with a proclamation by the mayor and the opening of a memorial garden at the [Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre](#).



*June's peaceful demonstration at George's Square. | Thomas Desormeaux*

The Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton's ([CCAHA](#)) Community and Harmony Garden is dedicated to Icilda Bailey and Veronica Tyrrell and is supported by the Oakville Community Foundation.

Bailey founded the CCAH in 1977. Tyrrell was a tireless advocate for the association, leading it for 30 years, and her son Andrew has been CCAH president since 2019.

Mayor Robert Burton will attend to give an Emancipation Day Proclamation at the Aug. 1 event at the Q.E. Park at 2302 Bridge Rd. from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Town residents can also sign up for free garden plots to grow flowers, fruits and vegetables. Organizations with plots include the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, the Oakville Community Foundation, the Oakville Hospital Foundation, The Happy Space, and the Summer & Grace Gallery.

The event is presented by the CCAH, the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, and sponsored by Sheridan College, Cogeco, and Your TV. Chef Romaine Newell will provide refreshments.

[Registration is required for free tickets](#) to attend the event.

The CCAH is also hosting its annual Emancipation Day Picnic between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. on Aug. 5, with a rain date of Aug. 6, at the Oakville Museum grounds of [Erchless Estate](#) at Navy and Front Streets.

It's an open event serving 300 meals created by Chef Newell.

There will be children's activities, and the John Campbell Jazz trio will provide entertainment.

Oakville has a strong historical link to the Underground Railroad in James Wesley Hill, who fled Maryland and entered Canada in a box. "Canada Jim," as the man who was wanted dead or alive became to be known in Montgomery County near Washington, D.C., led more than 700 fugitive slaves to Oakville as a conductor in the Underground Railroad.

He employed many of them at his 100-acre strawberry farm. Hill's 1850 home still stands on Maple Grove Drive.

Burton said Oakville's place in the history of the Underground Railroad offers the community a unique role in supporting inclusion in Canada.

"Emancipation Day serves as a reminder of how our town participated in the Underground Railroad, as well as an opportunity to recommit annually to promoting more diversity, inclusion, and equity," Burton said.

Emancipation Day acknowledges the enactment of the Slavery Abolition Act on Aug. 1, 1834, which abolished slavery in the British colonies, including Canada, and began honouring the day in 2021.

Andrew Tyrrell says the organization focuses on the four pillars of education, culture, community and harmony in its programs and events.

"Emancipation Day is but one opportunity to recognize the impact that generations of Black families have had in building Oakville and Halton Region to what it is today," he said. "We embrace the celebration but will continue throughout the year to ensure we shed light on all aspects of Oakville's history and strive for understanding and harmony within the community."

The CCAH was established in 1977 as a non-profit organization and has provided programming for seniors, youth, youth-at-risk, students of all ages, seniors and families, Halton-wide with a focus in Oakville. Its activities are inter-generational and garner support from community volunteers, with strong support through partnerships with local organizations, individuals and institutions.

These activities also address the legacy of Black history in the community, the arts, issues of race, youth leadership, and educational needs, Tyrrell said.

CCAHA organized events to mark Emancipation Day since 2007. It began as a "bring your own food" picnic at George's Square, a historically significant location as the town's oldest park where former slaves who arrived in Oakville celebrated Emancipation Day.

The CCAH's annual celebration moved to nearby Erchless Estate to accommodate growing crowds, Tyrrell said. It provided free entertainment, drumming lessons and face painting, and people brought picnics. Oakville was supportive of the event, and it proclaimed Aug. 1 as Emancipation Day in Oakville, he said.

Tyrrell said COVID-19 restrictions forced the closure of the area by the Museum in 2020. Instead, the CCAH hosted a drive-thru barbeque at Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre's

parking lot. He said it was a huge success as 210 people arrived for the meal, which included jerk chicken, rice and peas, coleslaw, Jamaican patties, corn on the cob and coconut water.

The 2020 Emancipation celebration also hosted a one-hour pre-recorded show that was filmed at a Burlington recording studio. It was broadcast on Cogeco and simultaneously ran on the CCAH's YouTube page.

Tyrrell said the idea was that people could grab a meal and then return home to enjoy it while watching the entertainment online and on their local cable network. He said the event fostered a sense of community despite people being encouraged to remain apart to combat COVID-19.

The format was repeated in 2021 but with added access to a permanent underground railroad museum exhibit and a screening of a [YourTV Halton story](#) at the adjacent Oakville Museum, Tyrrell said.

### Emancipation Day CCAH August 1st



"With RBC, Visit Oakville, Sheridan and Cogeco as sponsors, we're continuing with the celebration in 2023 with 300 free Caribbean meals created by Chef Romaine Newell, jazz trio entertainment, and children's activities and entertainment on the grounds of Erchless Estate," Tyrrell said.

He said the event stresses Oakville's historically rich and dynamic Black history and its diversity and inclusiveness that is celebrated by its municipal government, regional police, educational institutions, agencies and residents.

Volunteers from Oakville Town Council, the CCAH Youth Leadership program, Visit Oakville, Oakville Hospital Foundation and RBC will be on hand. Proceeds raised go towards the CCAH \$25,000 pledge to the hospital's diabetes program, of which \$20,000 has already been raised.

*We can't keep Oakville News free for those who can't afford it without your support. If you are already donating, thank you. If not, please click here to donate: <https://oakvillenews.org/donation>*

---

---

## Trending

**1099**

Town spends \$350,000 on new, busy traffic light

---

**770**

LCBO employee threatened with pepper spray during Oakville robbery

---

**518**

Cartoon of the Day: Up in Smoke

---

**430**

Oakville among Ontario's top 10 places for work-life balance

---

**372**

Events in Oakville this weekend: May 24-26, 2024

---

**Have a story idea?**

**Letter to the editor**

**Report a mistake**