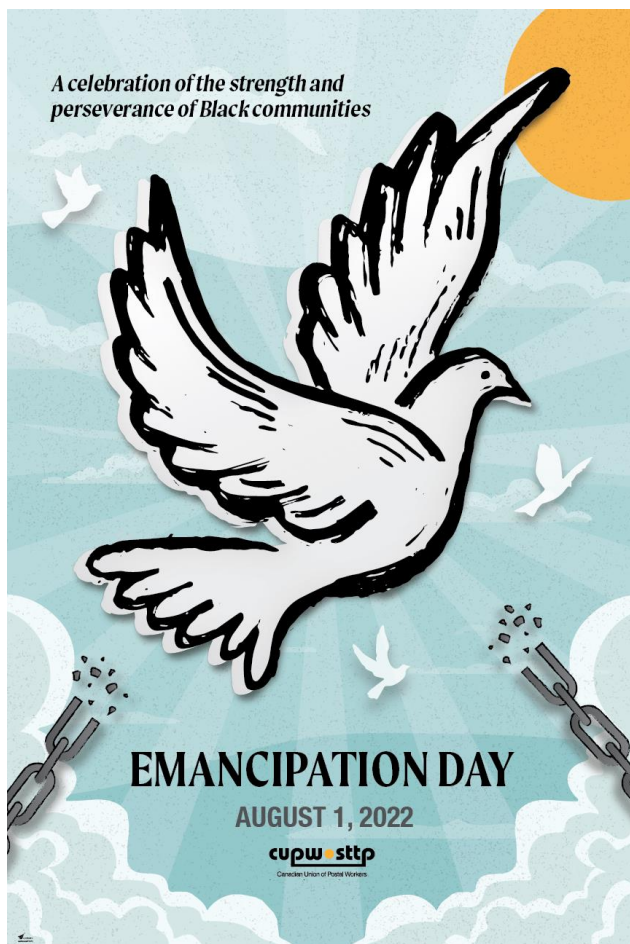




July 20, 2022

## Emancipation Day: *A celebration of the strength and perseverance of Black communities*



Emancipation Day is the day when the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 became law across the British Empire, including Canada. On August 1, 1834, the practice of slavery officially ended for millions of African people and their descendants in Canada and around the world.

On March 24, 2021, members of parliament unanimously voted to designate August 1 as Emancipation Day in Canada. Every year, on the first day of August, we are invited to reflect, educate, and engage in the ongoing fight against anti-Black racism and discrimination.

### History of Slavery in Canada

The transatlantic slave trade caused the deaths of millions of African people and their descendants. Many lost their lives before

reaching the colonies by resisting and fighting, during the long treks to the slave ship, or from mistreatment and malnourishment during the journey across the Atlantic. It is estimated that over two million African people died during that journey. In the end, most of the 12.5 million African captives were transported to Latin America and the Caribbean, while six percent were brought to North America.

In North America, enslaved Africans and their descendants were forced to work in fields, do manual labour, and domestic work in homes. They were forced to change their names, to abandon their faiths, reject their culture and prevented from speaking their native languages.

They were exposed to the most brutal forms of torture and abuse, all enforced by law.

It is estimated that 3,000 enslaved men, women and children of African descent were brought into British North America and eventually outnumbered enslaved Indigenous Peoples.

### The Underground Railroad

Prior to the abolishment of slavery by the British Empire, the Upper Canada, in 1793, passed an act that granted the gradual abolition of slavery and any enslaved person arriving in the province was automatically declared free. As a result, over 30,000 enslaved African Americans came to Canada via the Underground Railroad until the end of the American Civil War in 1865. They settled mostly in southern Ontario, but some also settled in Quebec and Nova Scotia.

Other migrations of Black people from the United States occurred during the War of 1812, when over 2,000 African American refugees came to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

## Observing Emancipation Day

The transatlantic slave trade is part of our legacy as a country, whose effects continue to linger today. Participating in Emancipation Day events is an opportunity to learn more about the history of African people in our community, and to continue to address and eradicate systemic anti-Black racism. We can use this day to create, and then maintain, meaningful dialogue around race relations in our society and how to build an inclusive community.

In solidarity,



Jan Simpson  
National President

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