

From: **"Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>**

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 7/30/2021 10:26:04 AM

Subject: Upcoming news release: Emancipation Day (July 30, 2021)

Attachments: PROC - Emancipation Day, August 1, 2021 - signed.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to inform you that the City will be issuing the below news release today recognizing Emancipation Day on August 1st, which speaks to the history of enslavement in Canada, and calling on all citizens to take action to end anti-Black racism. Please keep this news release embargoed until it goes live from the City media email account at approximately 11:00 AM on July 30. Attached is the proclamation linked in the NR, as that link is not yet live.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətəł (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

City of Vancouver
News release
July 30, 2021

City marks Emancipation Day and invites residents to join fight against anti-Black racism and discrimination

This Emancipation Day the City of Vancouver is calling on all residents to honour, celebrate and give thanks to the Black and African Diasporic communities for their achievements, investments and contributions to Vancouver, and to take action to eliminate anti-Black racism.

To mark this day, Mayor Kennedy Stewart issued a proclamation on behalf of the City declaring August 1, 2021 Emancipation Day in Vancouver, which you may [read in-full here](#).

“On this day, I join with everyone in our city to recognize the lasting and destructive legacy of slavery and the injustices visited on black communities in Vancouver and throughout the country,” said Mayor Kennedy Stewart. “Together, we are called upon to fight anti-black racism in all its forms and to work towards a more humane and just future for all.”

The City acknowledges the impacts of anti-Black racism and the intersectionality with anti-Indigenous racism, along with the intersections of ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status,

physical and/or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, and class of persons. Our current systems were built on and grew from historic colonial foundations of anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism and ongoing policies and practices continue to negatively impact Black and Indigenous peoples today.

The City is committed to addressing the historic and ongoing discrimination against the Black and African Diaspora and Indigenous communities and responding to the community's call for the City to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. [Visit our website for a full overview of the work the City is doing in this area.](#)

On this Emancipation Day, while celebrating and honouring Black and African Diaspora communities in Vancouver, the City continues to stand with and mourn alongside Indigenous peoples in Canada during this difficult, heart-breaking and emotional time as truths about residential school atrocities continue to be confirmed.

History and significance of Emancipation Day

For more than 400 years, millions of African people were victims of the transatlantic slave trade, where they underwent legally enforced enslavement. They were denied their basic human rights and were considered property that could be bought and sold. The buying and selling of Black Africans was practiced in North America, including Canada, Europe and the Caribbean for two centuries starting in the early 1600s. Indigenous people including Inuit, Metis, and First Nations were enslaved in Canada alongside People of African descent.

The passage of the *Slavery Abolition Act* took effect on August 1, 1834, ending slavery for many Africans and Indigenous people throughout the British Empire, including Canada. While this change encouraged hope for people of African descent who could now live without fear of enslavement, full emancipation of enslaved Africans did not take effect until four years later. This is because all enslaved Africans over six years old were required to work without pay for four years to repay losses to their slave owners.

We are only able to mark Emancipation Day because of the efforts of many enslaved Africans and their Abolitionist allies who fought tirelessly, some to their deaths, for freedom against this unjust system that regarded them as sub-humans.

For Black and African Canadians, and Indigenous peoples, Emancipation Day is a day of celebration, and remembrance. It also stands as a reminder of the challenges that Peoples of African descent have overcome in the last 200 years, and is a solemn recognition of the work that still needs to be done to dismantle systems and structures of anti-Black racism in our country.

Federal recognition

In March 2021, [the federal government voted unanimously to officially recognize August 1st as Emancipation Day across Canada](#). This acknowledgment was a step towards recognizing the heritage of people of African descent in Canada and the many contributions they have made and continue to make across these lands. This action reflects the efforts of members of the Black and African Diaspora communities across Canada, including Vancouver who work tirelessly to advance social, political, economic and cultural development in their communities.

Anti-Black racism resources

The City asks all residents to reflect, educate and engage in the ongoing fight against anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination, and colonization. Below is a list of resources to support you in this work.

- [Learn about the story of slavery in Canadian history](#) from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.
- Explore topics like the transatlantic slave track, Black and Indigenous enslavement in Canada, abolition and more with [the *Enslaved* reading list from CBC](#).
- Review the [Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action](#) and consider how your personal and professional work can contribute to advancing them.
- Educate yourself on the important contributions made by people of African descent to our societies and how to promote their full inclusion and to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through [the United Nation's International Decade for People of African Descent \(2015-2024\)](#)
- Read about the current measures taken to prevent racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent in Canada in the [Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent](#)
- Engage with the City's interactive photomap, [Give Them Their Flowers](#), which centres the experiences, hopes and wishes of 10 Black residents who have made impactful contributions to life in Vancouver.
- [Download the City's bystander intervention guide](#), so you can do your part to protect your friends, neighbours and community members when you witness discrimination, harassment or acts of hate.
- Stay up-to-date on the City's work to address anti-Black racism, with quarterly email updates by [joining the Anti-Racism and Cultural Redress mailing list](#). Read the [first issue here](#).



Office of the Mayor
CITY OF VANCOUVER
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Proclamation

"EMANCIPATION DAY"

- WHEREAS** Between the 16th and 19th century, an estimated 12.5 million Africans were forcibly removed from their homes, separated from their families and communities, transported as slaves to the Americas, Europe and Caribbean, and Black Canadians have been a part of Canadian society for generations;
- AND WHEREAS** The City of Vancouver recognizes that People of African descent have been a part of Canada since the early 1600's prior to the abolishment of slavery in 1834, and have been part of British Columbia's history since 1858; and this resilient community continues to contribute to the vibrant cultural, economic, political, and social development of the Province even in the face of the continued injustices of Anti-Black racism and colonization;
- AND WHEREAS** In 2008 the Province of Ontario declared August 1st as Emancipation Day and in March 2021, the Government of Canada declared August 1st as Emancipation Day across Canada;
- AND WHEREAS** The UN General Assembly proclaimed 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent, The City of Vancouver is striving to affirm the rights and eliminate barriers to the full and equitable participation of people of African descent;
- AND WHEREAS** The City of Vancouver acknowledges the historical and current work of the local Black and African diaspora communities towards increasing public awareness of the impacts of slavery, erasure and discrimination, and the importance of redress;
- NOW, THEREFORE,** I, Kennedy Stewart, Mayor of the City of Vancouver, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM Sunday, August 01, 2021 as

"EMANCIPATION DAY"

in the City of Vancouver.



Kennedy Stewart
MAYOR