

EMANCIPATION DAY EVENTS CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE USED TO GATHER IN LAKESIDE PARK FOR THE EMANCIPATION DAY PICNIC

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Although Canada abolished slavery in 1834, this year marks the first time Emancipation Day, Aug. 1, will be a federal holiday.

In honour of the occasion, #Emancipation-DaySTC will be held the weekend of July 29, leading up to the official holiday.

The Emancipation Day Picnic was once a major annual event in Port Dalhousie. Last year, the theme was resurrected in St. Catharines with a virtual celebration which saw more than 12,500 members of the community participate online.

Mutsa Charamba from Matter of Black said the group was inspired to bring the events back to St. Cath-

arines last year following the protests that were happening in support of Black Lives Matter.

"We needed to start celebrating our history and our culture," she said. "We need to teach people about the rich Black history that is in St. Catharines."

From 1924 to the early 1970s, as many as 8,000 people would gather in Lakeside Park in Port Dalhousie for the "Big Picnic" on the first Thursday of August.

The City of St. Catharines' website explains the event was originally organized by BJ Spencer-Pitt who created the event to "foster greater solidarity and pride among members of the Black Canadian community in memory of its remarkable achievements and in face of persistent racism."

Charamba said the last emancipation picnic was held in 2003, and was organized by Ruth Harper Bell, the grandmother of Natasha Bell, who owns BlackOwned905 and helped to plan the emancipation weekend events this year.



Abby Green/Metroland

This marks the second annual celebration of Emancipation Day at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre.

"We're actually living at a site that is so rich in Black history, and no one knows about it," she continued. "We need to start celebrating it like we celebrate other holidays."

Charamba said the goal of the weekend is to teach.

"We were hosting all of these protests, and there was nothing coming out of it," she explained. "We wanted to make an impact for our community. This

past year a lot of people were asking 'How can we help? How can we be allies?' So we planned the anti-racism, anti-oppression workshop. On Friday we're screening the Harriet Tubman movie, and then following that we'll host a discussion about the movie and what actually happened within St. Catharines."

On the Sunday, TD Niagara Jazz Festival will be

hosting a concert featuring performances by Black artists, including music, spoken word, dance, and more.

Juliet Dunn, executive director of the jazz festival, said the event is an opportunity to showcase young Black artists.

"The music of jazz and blues is about freedom, and historically comes from people who were enslaved," said Dunn. "I didn't grow up in a Black neighbour-

hood, I didn't have a lot of Black mentors to look up to in my community in British Columbia, so it's really exciting to show other young Black artists that there are options out there. We're so excited to present a whole roster of Black artists all day."

Dunn explained that, being in Niagara for almost 20 years, she feels people don't know about the area's Black history. "I'll never forget looking at all the photos at Lakeside Park and learning about the Emancipation Day picnic. It was such a big event and thousands of people would come. When we learned about the history, we thought 'wouldn't it be great to bring that back?'"

Although they had hoped to host in-person events this year, due to COVID-19 they've decided to keep it virtual and hope to host live events and bring the picnic back next year.

All events are free, with some being streamed on social media.

To see the full list of events, and to register, visit firstontariopa.ca.

■ NEWS

NIAGARA HEALTH FOUNDATION HOST THIRD COMMUNITY LOTTERY

THE GRAND PRIZE IS GUARANTEED TO BE \$20K

Niagara residents have an opportunity to win a large cash prize as Niagara Health Foundation begins its third 50/50 community lottery.

Participants have the chance at one of five \$1,000 early-bird prizes, as well as the grand prize of a guaranteed minimum of \$20,000.

"Our last winners were 11 staff from the Welland Hospital, and they split \$148,975," said Chris Green, director of communications for the Niagara Health Foundation. "Our lottery is giving people a chance at life-changing money all while helping vital needs for local health care at Niagara Health."

In a release, foundation chief executive and president Andrea Scott said the lotteries are exciting to be a part of.

"We receive so many comments from participants who are so happy to have a way to support Niagara Health, all while trying to win great cash prizes," she said. "To date, lottery ticket sales have supported the Mental Health Family Resource Centre as well as other urgently needed equipment for the hospital."

Tickets are three for \$10, 40 for \$20 and 200 for \$50.

They can be purchased online at

Niagara Health Foundation photo

Jim Mate and 11 other EVS staff members at the Welland hospital won \$148,975 in the Niagara Health Foundation's lottery.

Lottery.com as of July 26, with the lottery ending on August 26.

The deadline for the

first early bird-draw is August 3, and the second early-Bird deadline will be August 17.

Between the previous two draws, the Niagara Health Lottery has given away \$269,000.