



## Emancipation Day Celebration - A Day to Celebrate the Freedom of Slavery! Celebrated during National Tree Week.

Saturday, September 30th, 2017 The Whole Community of London is invited for a day of Celebration!



Held at Westminster Ponds from 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Westminster Ponds Environmentally Significant Area (enter from Commissioners Road via Parkwood Hospital original entrance) Look for the "Meeting Tree" signs to direct you to the Celebration.

All are welcome to celebrate London's rich history and heritage. A day to bring everyone together; to unite all as a family...which is what we are!

Parkwood Hospital is located at:

801 Commissioners Rd East, London, ON., N6C 5J1 (Please follow the signs to the picnic area and to the Meeting Tree)

A day of celebration for the freedom of slavery!

**Organized by Justine Turner, the great granddaughter of the originators of the Emancipation Day Celebration, Christine (Jenkins) Howson, and Frank Howson. The first Emancipation Day Celebration was held at Springbank Park in 1948 the beginning of August. The celebration continued for 38 consecutive years. The celebration was "re-birthed" by Justine Turner in 2013 at Westminster Ponds.**

## What is it all about...?

The Emancipation Day Celebration is a special celebration about the freedom of slavery. The Fugitive Slave Act was passed by the United States Congress on September 18, 1850. This was one of the most controversial elements of the 1850 compromise and heightened Northern fears of a "slave power conspiracy". It required that all escaped slaves were, upon capture, to be returned to their masters and that officials and citizens of free states had to cooperate in this law. Abolitionists nicknamed it the "Bloodhound Law" for the dogs that were used to track down runaway slaves. Slavery technically remained legal in most of Canada until it was abolished for the entire British Empire in 1833, though slavery as an institution declined steadily after 1793, when John Graves Simcoe challenged the legality of slavery for Upper Canada in 1863.

There will be a tour to The Meeting Tree, the oak tree that was a home; as legend has been passed down... where the slaves who fled to London via the Underground Railroad for freedom and a rebirth of life! It was a beacon as to where the run-away slaves knew to come to and hide from their kidnappers who were bent on returning them back to the United States. It is hidden deep in the forest; which was an ideal place for them to settle and rest and eventually create a home for themselves here in London.

On Saturday, September 22, 2012 the Meeting Tree was made a heritage designation.

## Itinerary and Contact:

You will find a celebration of soul food, races and games for the children, teens and the adults.

Everyone is encouraged to bring something to the celebration picnic table.

Move with the sweet music of gospel singing and historians.

- Jill-Anne Spence, Manager, Urban Forestry will give speak about the type of tree the Meeting Tree is and education about forestry in Westminster Ponds.
- Justine Turner will speak about the history of slaves who fled to London; using the Meeting Tree as a beacon and safe refuge.
- Barry Howson, son of Frank and Christine Howson will speak about the history of his parents who first started the Emancipation Day Celebration here in London.
- ReForest London will provide trees to hand out.

△ For more information about the Emancipation Day Celebration you can contact Justine Turner at 519-697-3430 or email Justine at [Justine@emancipationdaycelebration.com](mailto:Justine@emancipationdaycelebration.com).

You can log onto: [www.emancipationdaycelebration.com](http://www.emancipationdaycelebration.com) and click on the black history page on top of the website.

