

Mayor Wade Mills proclaims February as Black History Month in the Town of Shelburne

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A proclamation recognizing and honouring the impact of Black Canadians, past and present, was made at Shelburne council's Jan. 26 meeting at Town Hall.

Mayor Wade Mills read out the proclamation to kick off Black History Month, which takes place every February.

"Black History Month is an opportunity to acknowledge and honour the historical and present contributions of Black Canadians, and recognize their significant contributions made to Canada," he said. "During Black History Month, we celebrate the many achievements and contributions made by Black Canadians to our collective economic, cultural, spiritual, social and political development."

Black Canadians have been at the vanguard of monumental societal developments throughout Canada for well over a century.

Viola Desmond's stand against segregation helped spark civil rights progress in post-Second World War Canada, Willie O'Ree broke racial barriers in professional hockey, and Lincoln Alexander became Canada's first Black MP. He later served as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

Going back even farther, Canada's Black history spans more than 400 years. The first recorded person of African heritage in what is now Canada was interpreter Mathieu Da Costa. He arrived in 1604 with French explorers, and his language skills were invaluable for communicating with the indigenous peoples they encountered.

The 1700s saw the reality of enslavement and the perseverance of free Black communities, notably the Black Loyalists who settled in Nova Scotia after fighting for the British during the American Revolution.

In 1793, Upper Canada passed one of the first anti-slavery laws in the British Empire, limiting servitude and positioning the region as a refuge for people escaping bondage.

Throughout the 1800s, an estimated 30,000 people travelled the Underground Railroad into Canada, founding settlements across Ontario and Nova Scotia.

In support of this history, legacy and ongoing struggle against discrimination and racism, Shelburne continues to recognize Black History Month.

"The Town of Shelburne recognizes and values the significant contributions and advances that Black Canadians have made, and continue to make to Canadian society, and recognize the quest of Black Canadians for equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination in Canada," Mills said. "Therefore I, Mayor Wade Mills, do hereby proclaim February 2026 as Black History Month in the Town of Shelburne and encourage all residents to celebrate our diverse heritage and culture and continue our efforts to make Shelburne an inclusive community for all."

Following the proclamation, council announced that the town will host a Black History Month celebration on Feb. 22 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., with more details to follow.