



# TALKING DRUMS

## SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER



**Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO)** 

65 MAYALL AVENUE, NORTH YORK, ONTARIO, M3L 1E7  
CONTACT: [INFO@GCAOCANADA.ORG](mailto:INFO@GCAOCANADA.ORG) • [WWW.GCAOCANADA.ORG](http://WWW.GCAOCANADA.ORG)

### INAUGURATION OF THE GHANAIAN COMMUNITY RESOURCE HUB



On May 21st, 2022, GCAO launched the opening of the community resource hub located at 65 Mayall Ave. The GCAO hub is an important first step in bringing the Ghanaian-Canadian community together under one roof. It serves as a strategic presence that will position us to fulfill our ultimate goal of creating a greater Ghanaian-Canadian Community Centre. It will help serve the needs of the Ghanaian-Canadian community, and enable us to continue our history of helping our fellow Canadians whenever we can.

We were pleased to see many community members in attendance with their children and families, with about 160 in attendance total. They enjoyed a variety of raffles all funded by various community businesses and food from a variety of local vendors. Three children from the GCAO Homework Club: Elijah Mensah, Joana Opong, and Kayla Awuku-Larbi read the land acknowledgments to the delight of the crowd gathered.

Ghana Consul General Hakim Bolugun honoured us by performing the sod-cutting. Hon. Bolugun then used the occasion to congratulate the leadership of the GCAO for their foresight and effort in establishing the Resource Hub. Recognizing the hard work of the community, Hon. Bolugun promised to make available immigration resources relevant to friends of Ghana and new Ghanaians in Toronto. The GCAO was also thankful to receive a donation towards our Heritage Centre Project by the Mini Association. In attendance were associations leaders, clergy and friends of Ghanaians.

Many dignitaries were also present, including: Marilyn Raphael, Consul General Hakeem Bolugun, Tom Rakocevic, Mr. Benjamin Osei, many Ghanaian cultural associations leaders in Ontario and dignitaries from Ghana also honoured us with their attendance.

#### WHO WE ARE

The Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario is a non-profit umbrella organization for all Ghanaian-Canadian individuals, faith-groups, professional and social organizations in Ontario established to promote and improve the well-being of its members.

#### MISSION STATEMENT

To provide social, cultural and educational programs to Ghanaian-Canadians in Ontario to enhance the living standards of members.

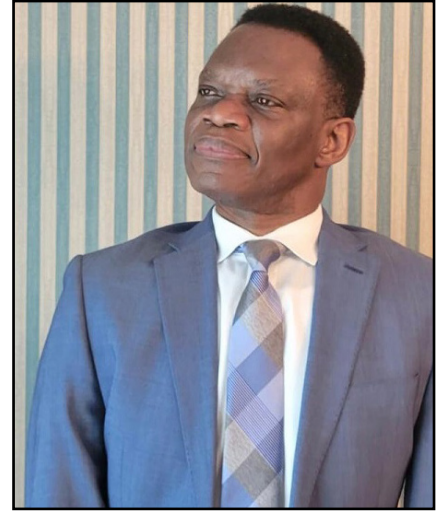
#### VISION STATEMENT

A strong, inclusive, vibrant and sustainable community that provides support services to enhance the well-being of Ghanaian-Canadians in Ontario.

# MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Let me take this opportunity to thank our community members, associations, churches, and faith-based groups for uniting in an unprecedented way in supporting each other for the past two years in the heat of the pandemic.

We are not completely out of the woods yet, but there is hope in the horizon. During this pandemic, one thing I have learnt repeatedly is having people around you to lean on, talk to, interact with, is beyond monetary value. The beautiful coinage in South African language 'UBUNTU' comes to mind...humanity to others or 'I am what I am because of who we are all are'. The world would continue to have disasters, viruses, wars and economic down turns impacting lives. We cannot predict the future but what is within our control to some extent is to strive to prepare the best we can by saving for rainy days, immerse yourself in the community, build relationships and participate in your community programs.



The Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO) aka Ghana Union which I happen to have the privilege to serve humbly is growing and thanks to you; community members, our talented and amazing young people, our immovable and dynamic women, our resilient and powerful men, our enduring and relentless seniors and faithful and all encompassing faith-based groups.

We are now at an inflexion point to either leave an enduring legacy for generations to come or leave nothing for posterity. I think we have one in a lifetime here in Canada, for first time, to stand up and be counted in realizing our Ghanaian-Canadian Heritage Center (GCHC) aka Community Center. We need every available resource to realize this goal –knowledge, money, time - and I am counting on you to do your bit. A little sacrifice from our strong 70,000 Ghanaian-Canadians will get us there. In the coming months you will be called upon to contribute a little bit and I am counting on you to respond for the goal of leaving something for our children to call home. Nobody is going to do for us Leading our community is a privilege to serve our fellow man and there many volunteers and leaders working many hours weekly serving to make things happen. With their commitment and dedication, we re able to deliver programs.

The GCAO Resource HUB is now open, and we invite you all to make use of the space for programs and services offered – Seniors Engagement, Youth Services, Women Programs, Homework Club, Language Services and many more. It is going to be a rewarding and fun summer of re-igniting our strategic vision.

Let the positive vibes reign louder. We can do this!

Let me leave you with our mantra – 'Together We Build, The Time Is Now'  
God Bless!

E. Duodu  
Your Humble Servant aka GCAO President



# MEET YOUR NEWLY ELECTED GCAO EXECUTIVES



**Emmanuel Duodu  
(President)**



**Juliet Opoku  
(1st Vice-President)**



**Mary Akuamoah-Boateng  
(2nd Vice-President)**



**Gabriel Odartei  
(Executive Secretary)**



**Dan Amankona Jr.  
(Assist. Secretary)**



**Suleman Damile  
(Organizing Secretary)**



**Abeeku Van-Dyck  
(Organizing Secretary)**



**Mavis Tekpeki  
(Financial Secretary)**



**Victor Adarquah  
(Youth Organizer)**



**Ibrahim Larchie  
(Projects Coordinator)**



**Mary Adarkwa  
(Communications Coordinator)**



**Maud Cole  
(Women's Group Lead)**



# GHANA INDEPENDENCE FLAG RAISING CEREMONY IN MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO



This year was the first our community in Toronto happened to have had an in-person Flag Raising event since the pandemic. It took place at Mississauga City Hall to commemorate Ghana's 65th Independence Celebration. We were represented by community members, the Ghana Consul General – Honorable Hakeem Balogun and Consulate staff. Both the Ghanaian and Canadian national anthems were sung, and The Consul General reminded us about the sacrifices of our forebears leading to independence and how it behooves us to build on their legacy.

On that same day, we had a virtual Independence celebration with The Ghana High Commissioner Canada- His Excellency Mr. Ransford Anselm Sowah, as the Guest of Honour. Both His Excellency Mr. Sowah and the Consulate General -Honorable Mr. Balogun conveyed messages of the President of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to the community of hearty felicitations to the Ghanaian community in diaspora. They both appealed to the community members to take advantage of investment opportunities in Ghana and to strive to be good citizens of Canada and Ghana. Riveting poems were recited, and community youth demonstrated their talents in culture and traditions. Live music was played and the community danced and celebrated the occasion.

## 3RD ANNUAL SPRING CLEANUP EXERCISE



The Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO) led by its President Emmanuel Duodu embarked on a cleanup exercise at the Chalkfarm Park on 2230 Jane Street in North York. It was a Spring Cleanup Project in collaboration with the City of Toronto. The cleanup was held on Saturday 7th May, 2022 and marks the third instance of the GCAO helping to maintain cleanliness and curtail environmental damage in our community.

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We have displayed to the City of Toronto and all those we are privileged to call neighbours, that the Ghanaian community will always be ready to help wherever it can. We were honoured by the presence of The Councillor for Ward 7 Councilor Anthony Perruzza, who was on hand to show his gratitude to GCAO. After the exercise, there were light refreshments offered by GCAO and the Office of Councilor Anthony Perruzza. The Ghanaian Community looks forward to our next community cleanup and encourages all those available to lend their support in maintaining a clean and safe city.

## SENIORS PROGRAM VISIT TO THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM (ROM)



Earlier in the year, our Seniors were delighted to spend a day of relaxation and learning at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). Many of our elders have spent their entire lives in Canada diligently working and devoting themselves to family and our community. As a result, many have not seen the world's beautiful cultures and history. The trip to the ROM was the perfect opportunity to explore such avenues, while simultaneously combatting the social isolation caused by the pandemic. The Aboriginal and Roman Exhibits were a key highlight, but the truly beautiful experience was witnessing our own Ghanaian culture on display. Kente cloth and Ashanti stools were elegantly displayed, and in the view of our elders symbolize how far they and the Ghanaian community as a whole have come.

Our Seniors have plans to visit the Peterborough Lift Lock and the Aga Khan Museum at some point this summer. A trip to the 1000 Islands National Parks and Toronto's Centre Island are also in the works. The Senior's Wing is open to everyone in our community, -not just our elders. In fact, the help of some of our younger community members is sometimes necessary. So feel free to come and join us whenever possible!

# YOUTH WING UPDATES

The GCAO's Youth Wing has been and will continue to be a space where events aimed at opening up dialogue in the broader Ghanaian community, events focusing on mental health and well-being, and events focused on capacity building are curated. Since we are navigating the pandemic, things like isolation and reduced social interaction with other like-minded individuals has negatively affected the mental health and well-being of so many individuals and has guided our approach. From the December 2021 period, there has been a shift in our approach in terms of how events will be offered. We have created spaces that allow youth to engage with each other as much as possible in the most productive of ways. Some events that we have organized more specifically include the following:

1. The two-part mental health series: Layers – Ghanaian Youth Stomping Out Stigma (SOS) for both men and women
2. Operation Anuanum: A GCAO-wide initiative seeking to rally the community together over the holidays in the form of a food drive
3. The exam de-stress fest: a two-part event series that gave the youth a space to drop in as they pleased to navigate how to work through exam season, relax and unwind and enjoy each other's company
4. Jump starting Your Journey: A Financial Literacy program by GCAO Youth to give youth the opportunity to be more intentional about planning their financial journeys.
5. Sankofa Mmomudwan Instagram Live Series: where leaders in our community share success strategies and stories with the youth

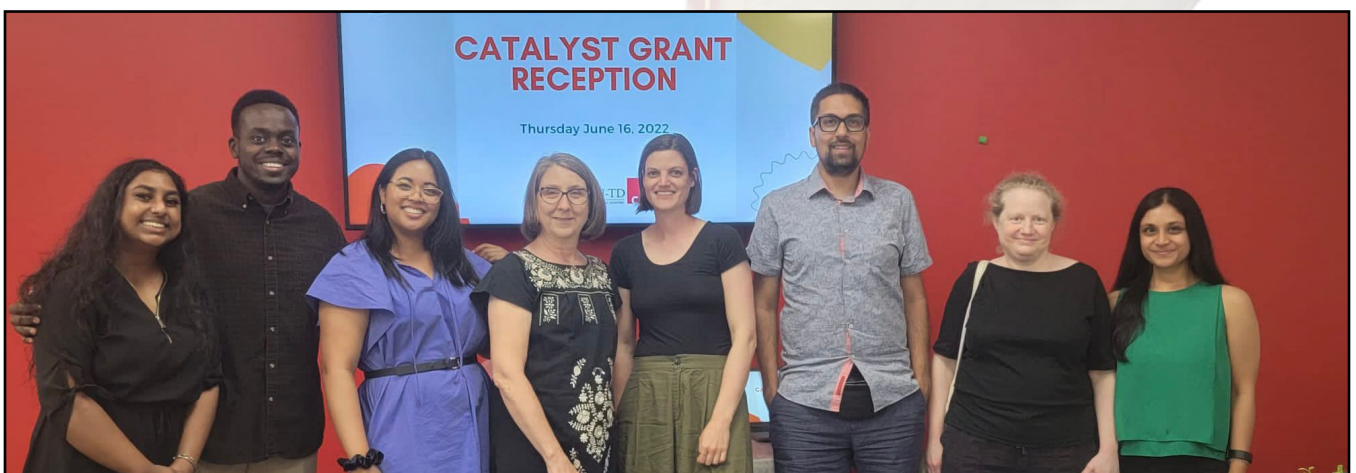
Our goal as a society is one that understands and accepts mental health and mental illness. Understanding and acceptance occur as a result of continuous discourse. Mental health discourse in Ghanaian circles remains relatively low which is why the Youth Wing has taken and continues to take initiatives to combat the stereotype that stigmatizes those who communicate their mental health difficulties. Going back to the earlier sentiments that we are navigating the end of the pandemic, there is fatigue that people are experiencing with virtual events. We will navigate this by offering more in-person and hybrid-style events so that community members can leave the virtual engagement strategy behind. The benefits of seeing each other's faces more regularly do a world of good for morale and encourage engagement.

As a collective, the youth wing is looking to continue the conversation around acknowledging and improving mental health in our community and is looking to establish a few things for the remainder of the year:

A mentorship program

Reimagined version of the food and clothing donation drive

This is so that we can continue to rally our young people in the most productive ways possible while celebrating the richness and beauty of our diversity and culture.





# WOMEN'S GROUP UPDATES



The GCAO Women's Wing is the largest wing in our organization. Our focus and goal going forward is to strengthen and equip our women to break through all gender-related barriers. One of our core goals is to raise awareness surrounding abusive relationships and empower our women to rise above these issues. Prior to the pandemic our community, like any other, was faced with domestic violence and gender-based violence issues. The pandemic has only exacerbated these concerns, with many of these issues reaching record numbers during the last two years. This has propelled us to seek solutions based on quantitative or data-based research. Through the generous donations from the community and the funding received from our successful grant applications, we have been empowered to help our women and young adults facing these injustices. We have been able to offer free counselling to younger adults who face depression and anxiety.

Legal fees, transportation, food accessibility, and other amenities have also been made available to women facing challenging family circumstances. Recognizing these aforementioned issues, we believe that our women should first understand the nature and prevalence of gender inequality exacerbated by the pandemic. Through collaborative projects with other stakeholders and allies, we are striving to educate our women about self-empowerment through leadership, self-care, and other therapeutic programs. We believe this will enhance self-confidence and encourage them to be well-rounded women in their community.

The opening of our new Ghanaian Resource Hub will enable us to organize in person and create a relaxing and safe environment for facilitating our programs. The Hub will also be a haven, where our women can take a break to rethink and develop calm and stress-free ways to handle their challenges. Going forward, we are planning a "Set Free" retreat for our women in July, which will help us discuss and learn more about self-care and its importance. This August we have the privilege of hosting the second lady Mrs. Samira Bawumia, as a guest of honour at our two-day Women's conference. During the winter months, our monthly self-help and self-care programs will continue, while we seek more effective strategies to help our women in crisis.

## THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDER



# PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

GCAO offers supportive services and programs for the Ghanaian community within the GTA and beyond. Services include settlements/welfare related issues, newcomer, homework/after-school programs, seniors and women's programs.

We also provide support in the following areas: Translation/interpretation services and help with preparing government and other official applications. Our team is fluent in various Ghanaian languages including Twi, Fante, Ga, Hausa, Ewe, Dangbe. Information/referral services, including supportive, advocacy services /guardians.

## **Homework/After-School Programs**

The Homework Club, one of GCAO's first programs, is an after-school program that is designed to provide elementary to high school students (aged 6 years to 18 years) support in completing their homework as well as developing other skills. The program is run by registered teachers, as well as retired teachers and community members who have experience working with children and youth.

**For more information, contact [education@gcaocanada.org](mailto:education@gcaocanada.org)**

## **Youth/Young Adult Group**

GCAO's Youth Wing oversees the initiatives for both the youth and young adult generations. Our mission is to elevate, cultivate, and inspire the strengths and collaborative efforts of the young generation, encouraging them to take charge as positive change agents, while leaving an impactful and lasting footprint in local communities.

**For more information, contact [youth@gcaocanada.org](mailto:youth@gcaocanada.org)**

## **Seniors Programs**

The "Golden Agers" Seniors Group, was created to give the seniors in our community a space to learn and laugh, but also share knowledge and experiences with others. Our goal is to enable our aging population to remain vital, healthy, and connected to their community. We seek to enhance the lives of all seniors who need assistance to live safely and independently in their own homes.

**If interested, contact [seniors@gcaocanada.org](mailto:seniors@gcaocanada.org) or 647-202-2594.**

## **Women Programs & Services**

The Women's Wing is aimed at supporting Ghanaian women of all ages, working together to eradicate poverty, violence, lack of self-confidence, and foster creativity, cultural heritage, and leadership among women. The Women's Wing is committed to empowering women, thereby strengthening families and transforming our community and beyond.

**For more information, contact [women@gcaocanada.org](mailto:women@gcaocanada.org)**

## **Health & Wellness**

The Health Education Team offers a wide range of education and strategies to increase the lifespan among the community, as well as connecting various people to resources and support programs. This program is led by Ghanaian health professionals as well as partnerships with existing healthcare services that specialize in healthcare among Ghanaians

**If interested, contact [health@gcaocanada.org](mailto:health@gcaocanada.org) or 647-202-2594**

## **Welfare and Compassionate Group**

Our mission is to listen, empathize, assess, and triage our members to the appropriate services, doing so in a culturally-sensitive and non-judgmental manner. We aim to serve as instruments of solace and relief to the Ghanaian community.

**For more information and resources, contact [welfare@gcaocanada.org](mailto:welfare@gcaocanada.org)**



### GCAO Youth Advisory and Action Council (GAYAC)

The purpose of this council is to develop strategies in partnership with Ghanaian youth and their families, to assist youth in need of support, and to advise the GCAO executives on current youth issues in the community. It's core values and principles are predicated on the belief that Ghanaian youth (aged 13 to 29) are best served when they are surrounded by positive peer influences and able to develop strong, stable and positive relationships with adult role models.

**If interested, contact Mr Duodu: [president@gcaocanada.org](mailto:president@gcaocanada.org)**

### Ghanaian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Ghanaian Canadian Chamber of Commerce is to assemble and create a platform of Ghanaian professionals and business entrepreneurs across Canada, to collectively engage and address business and other public issues, that results in opportunities for success. The Chamber of Commerce plays an integral role in the economic growth and development in Ghana and Canada.

If interested, contact Mr Odoi Yemoh: [gccc@gcaocanada.org](mailto:gccc@gcaocanada.org) | website: [canadagcc.ca](http://canadagcc.ca)

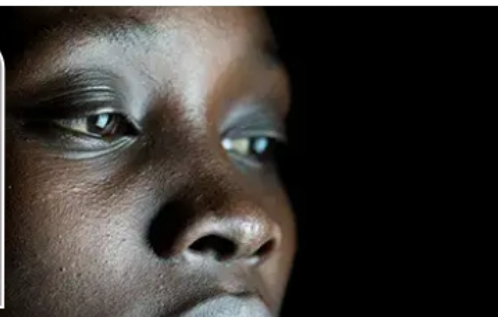
### Diaspora Engagement Think Tank

An anchor of GCAO that promotes critical analysis of policies and community challenges, advocating to support Ghanaian Canadians to meet the growing needs of different population demographics, residing in Canada or wishing to return to Ghana.

If interested in joining, contact Dr. Victor Awafo: [info@gcaocanada.org](mailto:info@gcaocanada.org)

## FREE COUNSELLING SESSIONS

The Women's Group is aimed at supporting Ghanaian women of all ages, working together to eradicate poverty, violence, lack of self-confidence, and foster creativity, cultural heritage, and leadership among women.



**We are here to help and listen.**

Are you a woman or young girl experiencing any of these challenges?

- Anger and Stress Management
- Substance or Sexual Abuse
- Domestic or Work Related Abuse
- Physical or Psychological Abuse
- Neglect, Bullying or not sure...



Call TODAY for a free consultation!

**289-946-2687**  
**289-946-1886**

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# PRESS CONFERENCE: GHANAIAN-CANADIAN RESOURCE & HERITAGE CENTRE



Architectural concept design of the proposed GCHRC building



With the need for a place to highlight the rich and diverse culture of our Ghanaian heritage, the GCAO is pleased to announce the first steps in a historic project that will achieve this goal, and have a positive generational impact on the Ghanaian-Canadian community forever. Our elders, predecessors, and pioneers have achieved so much for our community. We are eternally grateful to those who came before us, and we truly stand on the shoulders of what they have accomplished throughout the decades. We owe it to their memory to build upon the legacy we have inherited. The Ghanaian-Canadian Heritage and Resource Centre (GCHRC) is the perfect opportunity to do just that. The GCHRC project will provide Ghanaians and Africans in the diaspora a place to reflect on their lived experiences, formulate solutions to our unique problems, and unify all of us towards affecting change in our community.



UPCOMING EVENT: **HERITAGE CENTRE**  
**FUNDRAISING CONCERT - AUGUST 6TH 2022**



**GHANAIAN-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO**  
**PRESENTS:**

**THE TIME**  
**IS NOW CONCERT**

**THE GHANAIAN CANADIAN HERITAGE CENTER FUNDRAISER**  
**SATURDAY AUGUST 6 2022**



**KUAMI EUGENE | MR DREW | SEFA**

**FUSION BAND | DJ SHORTY & CLASSIKO P | MC BIG DOUGLAS | MC APPIAH KUBI & HOSTED BY D-BLACK**



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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

**VISIT: [WWW.GCAOCANADA.ORG](http://WWW.GCAOCANADA.ORG)**

**OR CALL: 416.725.2000 | 647.895.5073**



# UPCOMING EVENT: ANNUAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE AND GALA - AUGUST, 27 & 28



GHANAIAN-CANADIAN OF ASSOCIATION  
WOMEN'S WING PRESENTS

## DIASPORA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE



*Special Guest  
of honour*

**H.E. MRS. SAMIRA BAWUMIA**  
(Second Lady of the Republic of Ghana)

THEME:

IGNITING THE GHANAIAN-CANADIAN  
DIASPORA DREAM: THE ROLE OF WOMEN

**SATURDAY**

**AUGUST  
27, 2022**

**TIME: 12 - 3 PM**

**VENUE: GHANAIAN PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH AUDITORIUM**

51 HIGH MEADOW PL. TORONTO, ONTARIO



**Dr. Silvia Bawa**  
Associate Professor  
of Sociology at York  
University



**Maame De-Heer**  
Policy Analyst at  
Government of Canada



**Marilyn Raphael**  
Vice President,  
Business & Product  
Governance at TD



**Lois Brown**  
President of Health  
Partners International  
Canada



**Janet Brakohiapa**  
Family Law  
Practitioner

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

**Juliet - [vp1@gcaocanada.org](mailto:vp1@gcaocanada.org) | Maud - [info@gcaocanada.org](mailto:info@gcaocanada.org)**

**ROYAL DURBAR & DINNER DANCE - AUGUST 28TH 2022**

**VENUE: 10 BELFIELD ROAD, ETOBICOKE**



THANK YOU FOR READING THE SPRING 2022 EDITION OF OUR NEWSLETTER.  
PLEASE SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MAILING LIST FOR MORE NEWS AND UPDATES

This Spring 2022 Edition of this newsletter is published by Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO).

**Comments, articles & suggestions should be directed to the editors.**

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