

2024 GCAO Annual Report



It is with great pride and gratitude that we present this comprehensive report, highlighting the vibrant activities and impactful initiatives undertaken by the Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO) in 2024. Our commitment to fostering community engagement, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development has driven us to create diverse programs that cater to the unique needs of our members.

This report encapsulates a year of remarkable achievements, from educational and cultural events to health and wellness programs, all aimed at empowering our community. The unwavering support of our members, volunteers, and partners has been instrumental in making these initiatives successful, and we are excited to share these milestones with you.

As we reflect on the progress made, we remain steadfast in our mission to uplift and connect the Ghanaian-Canadian community, ensuring that our rich heritage and collective aspirations continue to thrive. We look forward to building on this foundation in the coming year, with renewed energy and a shared vision for a brighter future.

GCAO currently have the following groups open to the community to join

- Homework Club (Ages 17 and below)
- Youth and Young Adult Wing (Ages 18 +)
- Women's Wing
- Men's Wing
- Golden Ages Group (Ages 60 +)

To get information about GCAO, contact us at 416-243-2003 or by email gcaocanada@gmail.com or gcaocanada.org for more information.

2024 Report Updates

Community Support from Oyerepa



On January 22, 2024, the Oyerepa Association, chaired by Madam Gloria Prempeh, generously donated funds to support Paa Kwesi, a young father who tragically lost his three children in an accident in Ghana. The Oyerepa Association, dedicated to the welfare of families, once again demonstrated its commitment to helping those in need. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Oyerepa Association for their constant and compassionate support of the community.

Employment Law with GCAO

On Friday, February 4th, GCAO held an engaging and informative session on employment law. Many community members are often unaware of their rights as employees, leaving them vulnerable to workplace discrimination and abuse. Tahir Khorasanee, Senior Associate at Steinbergs LLP, provided valuable insights on key topics, including ESA notice and severance, common law severance, terminations with cause, employee rights under the OHSA and OHRC, and the right to disconnect. The session was highly interactive, with participants actively participating in discussions and asking relevant questions. We look forward to hosting another session soon to explore more aspects of employment law.

**EMPLOYMENT LAW (PLEI) WITH
GHANAIAN-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF
ONTARIO (GCAO)**

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2024
TIME: 6 - 8 PM
LOCATION: VIRTUAL ON ZOOM
MEETING ID: 891 8650 5190
Passcode: 712171**

**MODERATED BY:
JANET BRAKOHIAPIA**

TOPICS INCLUDE

- ESA notice and severance
- Common law severance
- With cause terminations
- Employee rights within OHSA and OHRC
- Right to Disconnect and Electronic Monitoring Policy

Presenter

Tahir Khorasanee
(Senior Associate at Steinbergs LLP)

Free

TUTORING PROGRAM

SUBJECTS

- * Twi: For Children & Adults
- * Mathematics: For Grades 1 - 12

DAYS: SUNDAYS

LOCATION: VIRTUAL

TIME: 3:00 - 5:00pm

CALL TO REGISTER!

GCAO Tutoring Program

GCAO on Sundays host a tutoring program for young people from grade 1 – 12. This is an opportunity for the young people to get tutoring in Math and also get the chance to learn Ghanaian language. We also offer the language to adults as well. The program serves over 30 children each week on various homework support. This program is free and parents are welcome to enrol the children by contacting the GCAO Hub to sign up.

To participate in the homework club as a student or as a volunteer tutor, kindly contact our office at 416-243-2003 or education@gcaocanada.org

Ghanaian-Canadians celebrating Black History Month – Empowering our families and communities to tell their life stories through the arts.



On February 24, 2024, the Ghanaian-Canadian community gathered to celebrate Black History Month with the theme, "Empowering Our Families and Communities to Tell Their Life Stories through the Arts." The event was a vibrant showcase of cultural pride, featuring an African book show, powerful spoken word performances, poetry, and a fashion show highlighting traditional and contemporary Ghanaian attire. Cultural dance and drumming filled the space with energy, honoring the rich heritage of the African diaspora. This celebration not only uplifted the community but also encouraged individuals to share their personal stories, connecting generations through the arts.

Black History Month – Special Lecture Series

GHANAIAN-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO (GCAO) MEN'S WING PRESENTS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL LECTURE SERIES

JOIN US AS WE DIVE INTO A THOUGHT-PROVOKING DISCUSSION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ACKNOWLEDGING AND TEACHING AFRICAN HISTORY TO CANADIAN LEARNERS.

JOIN US ON ZOOM
MEETING ID# 882 1467 8883
PASSCODE: 309377

29TH
FEBRUARY | 7:00 - 8:30PM

R.S.V.P
YOU MAY REPLY TO: 416-899-0563

GUEST SPEAKER

PROFESSOR GEORGE SEFA DEI
A renowned globally-celebrated African-Canadian scholar.

In celebration of Black History Month, the Men's Wing hosted a special session on the significance of acknowledging and teaching African history to Canadian learners. Teaching African history fosters a more inclusive educational environment by recognizing the contributions and experiences of people of African descent. This approach broadens perspectives and ensures that the histories of all communities, not just those traditionally centered, are included, helping build a more equitable society where diversity is valued and celebrated.

On February 29, 2024, Professor George Sefa Dei, a renowned and globally celebrated African-Canadian scholar, delivered an insightful lecture on the importance of teaching African history. He emphasized that schools play a vital role in helping students understand the roots of systemic racism and the long-lasting impacts of colonialism, slavery, and segregation. This education is crucial for fostering anti-racist attitudes and promoting social justice, enabling future generations to work towards a more inclusive society. Professor Dei

also highlighted how teaching African history provides a broader understanding of global events, emphasizing Africa's influence on economics, culture, and politics throughout history. Over 100 participants attended the Zoom event, actively engaging in discussions and sharing their experiences and knowledge. It was a powerful and enlightening session for all involved.

B'Well Clinic – Mental Health Awareness & Education



The B'Well Clinic kicked off the year with a focus on Mental Health Awareness, an important but often overlooked topic in the Black community. The program aimed to raise awareness and encourage open conversations about mental health, helping community members feel comfortable discussing their challenges and seeking support. Each month the program was offered, it featured nurses and healthcare professionals offering blood pressure and glucose checks, while a massage therapist provided relaxing massages. The African Food Basket generously provided brain-healthy groceries that were culturally appropriate for the Black community. Additionally, attendees enjoyed raffles for grocery store gift cards, and the event wrapped up with a lively Zumba dance session led by our fitness team. With over 300 community members were present for each session held and each participant left with food, groceries, and various giveaways. This event, held in collaboration with the Black Physicians Association of Ontario, Black CAP, Rexdale Community Centre, Black Health Alliance, and African Food Basket, was a great success. We look forward to continuing this impactful program.



Ghana Independence Week

On March 7, 2024, the Ghanaian-Canadian community gathered at Queen's Park for the ceremonial raising of the Ghanaian flag in celebration of Ghana's 67th Independence Day. This special occasion honored Ghana's rich history, cultural heritage, and the resilience of its people. It was a time for the Ghanaian-Canadian community to reflect on the significance of independence while celebrating the vibrant traditions that make Ghana unique.



Community members proudly wore traditional attire representing their various regions, coming together to celebrate the history and culture of Ghana and the contributions of Ghanaians in Ontario. The event provided a wonderful opportunity to showcase Ghana's rich heritage to younger generations and to share the pride of this important day with the broader Canadian community.

The week's festivities culminated on Saturday, March 9, with the Ghana Independence Solidarity Concert, headlined by legendary highlife superstar Ofori Amponsah. Hundreds of fans came out to enjoy a night of music and celebration. Local artists, including Silla, Bugatti Bonsu, Nina Ricchie, Yandji, Sly B, Mr. S., and Nana Yaa, kicked off the night with dynamic performances. The event was hosted by MCs Ebone, Afro, and Big Douglas, making it an unforgettable evening.

A special thank you to our dedicated planning team for organizing such a memorable Ghana Independence Week!



Mental Health First Aid for Africans in the Diaspora

The Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO), with generous support from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), embarked on a vital mission to address the mental health needs of African diaspora communities across Canada, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the establishment of a culturally focused Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training program, we have taken significant strides to bridge the gap in mental health services for Africans and people of African descent.



Recognizing the profound impact of cultural barriers, stigma, and limited access to appropriate mental health resources, this initiative was crucial in addressing the pressing mental health challenges faced by our communities. Through the efforts of 24 trained Mental Health First Aid facilitators, over 400 community leaders were equipped with the skills to support their peers. This effort aimed to foster a nationwide network of culturally aware mental health first aiders, creating a more supportive and understanding environment for those facing mental health challenges.



These efforts underscore our commitment to enhancing mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and empowering our communities to provide compassionate, timely support to those in need. We are proud to share the outcomes of this transformative initiative, which not only builds resilience but also nurtures a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.



Inaugural Ghanaian-Canadian Business Marketplace



On May 25, 2024, the Ghanaian-Canadian community in Ontario gathered for a vibrant showcase of local businesses and entrepreneurs. The marketplace highlighted a diverse range of ventures, from food and fashion to technology and services, celebrating the entrepreneurial spirit within the community. Attendees had the opportunity to connect with industry experts and local entrepreneurs, fostering relationships that support business growth. Workshops and training sessions provided valuable insights into business development, strategies for growth, and how to access support for new and existing businesses. The event empowered entrepreneurs while strengthening community bonds, driving economic progress within the Ghanaian-Canadian community.

GCAO Seniors Retreat at Georgian Bay



On July 12, 2024, the Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario hosted a serene "Seniors Retreat" on the picturesque Georgian Bay. This retreat offered seniors a peaceful escape, surrounded by nature's beauty, while fostering social connections and relaxation. Attendees enjoyed a leisurely boat ride, engaging conversations, and light entertainment, all set against the stunning backdrop of the bay. The event provided a refreshing break from daily routines, promoting well-being, community bonding, and a sense of togetherness among Ghanaian-Canadian seniors. It was a memorable day of reflection, camaraderie, and joy.

GCAO Women's Mother Day Brunch



Women play a crucial role in society, and GCAO is dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of Ghanaian women and girls. This is also an opportunity to highlight the progress made in addressing gender-based violence, women's health, poverty, and other challenges related to gender equality, as well as the work that still needs to be done.

The Brunch was a successful event, offering relaxation, networking, and self-care opportunities for 67 women. The focus on mutual support, community resources, and networking resonated with attendees, who expressed interest in similar future events. Conversations and storytelling centered on self-care and coping strategies, with participants sharing personal experiences to inspire and empower one another.



Council Meeting

On Sunday, July 21, 2024, a pivotal community council meeting was held at the Church of Pentecost, bringing together leaders from various Ghanaian-Canadian organizations across the Greater Toronto Area. The gathering aimed to foster collaboration and share strategies for engaging the community through various programs and initiatives.

The meeting was attended by leaders representing different sectors, including youth, women, health, education, and cultural groups. The atmosphere was one of unity and purpose, as attendees discussed ways to enhance community engagement and address the pressing needs of the Ghanaian-Canadian population.

Key topics included youth empowerment, cultural preservation, health and wellness programs, and support for newcomers. Each leader shared insights into their organization's ongoing initiatives, highlighting successes and challenges. This exchange of ideas sparked lively discussions on best practices and potential collaborations to maximize the impact of community efforts.

A significant portion of the meeting focused on the importance of cohesive action, with leaders emphasizing the need to unite under a common vision for the betterment of the community. Plans for joint events, shared resources, and coordinated outreach efforts were proposed, reflecting the collective commitment to strengthen the Ghanaian-Canadian community.

The meeting concluded with a renewed sense of solidarity and determination among the leaders. Attendees left with actionable plans and a shared understanding of the importance of working together to engage, support, and uplift the community.

**GHANAIAN-CANADIAN
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO
(GCAO) PRESENTS**

**COMMUNITY
COUNCIL MEETING**

Urgent Council Meeting - Associations and
Churches Representatives

AGENDA

- a. Sankofa Square - Update
- b. Role of Council Members
- c. Update on various initiatives (Heritage, Programs, Services, HUB)
- d. Dialogue on late-night funerals
- e. Welfare matters

**Sunday:
July 21, 2024
Time: 3:00 PM**

**Church of Pentecost
Auditorium. (New Building)
3 Arrow Road North York**

For more enquiries:
✉ info@gcaocanada.org

**1 or 2 Representatives
416.357.7237**

This gathering at the Church of Pentecost marked a significant step towards a more integrated and collaborative approach to community building, laying the foundation for future initiatives that will benefit the entire Ghanaian-Canadian community in Ontario.

Supporting Refugees and Newcomers in Toronto



Early in the year, we observed an influx of newcomers arriving in Toronto seeking refugee status. Many of these individuals faced significant challenges, including homelessness and food insecurity. In response, we collaborated with other Black community organizations, led by Delta Family Resource Centre and African Food Basket, to provide crucial support.

Through this collaboration, we assisted over 100 individuals by supplying groceries from various Ghanaian markets in Scarborough, Etobicoke, and North York. Additionally, we partnered with a Ghanaian restaurant in North York to provide cooked meals for 40 people.

During this period, we also worked closely with several churches that generously provided housing for many of these newcomers. We are deeply grateful for the support and resources these churches offered, often at significant expense, to help refugees from Ghana and other African countries as they sought a better future in Canada.

Women's Wing Wednesdays Crush – Lets Talk Series

On July 24, 2024, the GCAO Women's wing held a talk series on "Understanding and Managing Hypertension for Better Heart Health". This session was designed for women in the Ghanaian community to address the growing concern of hypertension among women, providing them with essential knowledge and practical tools to manage and prevent this condition effectively.

During the workshop, Veronica Segbedzie (Nurse Practitioner) presented on the causes, risks, and complications associated with hypertension, emphasizing its prevalence in the Ghanaian community. Participants were educated on lifestyle modifications, including dietary changes, exercise, and stress management techniques, which are crucial in controlling blood pressure and promoting overall heart health.

The interactive session allowed women to ask questions, share their experiences, and receive personalized advice. This initiative was a vital step in promoting heart health awareness and equipping Ghanaian women with the knowledge and tools needed to lead healthier lives.

A poster for the "Women's Wing Wednesdays Crush – Lets Talk Series" event. The poster has a pink and purple background. At the top left is the GCAO logo. The text reads: "GHANAIAN-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO (GCAO) WOMEN'S WING PRESENTS #Wednesdays Crush: Let's Talk Series". Below this, it lists the moderator: "(MODERATOR) May Hughes, Retired RN (25+ years), Mortgage Agent". To the right of this is the text: "Understanding and managing hypertension for better heart health" with a heart icon. Below the moderator, it lists the speaker: "(SPEAKER) Veronica Segbedzie, Nurse Practitioner, PhD Candidate". At the bottom, it says: "JULY 24TH, 2024 @ 8PM (EST) ZOOM ID# 849-721-70395 PASSCODE: 870191". At the very bottom, it says: "MORE INFO CONTACT: WOMEN@GCAOCANADA.ORG" with an email icon, and "JOIN US ONLINE ZOOM" with a Zoom icon. A small note at the bottom left says: "This is to help and encourage community members to take care of their health and also provide resources where needed".

Ghanaian Festival of Art and Culture

The Ghanaian-Canadian community in Ontario celebrates Ghanafest each year, an annual Arts & Culture Festival highlighting the rich Ghanaian-Canadian culture through clothing, dances, music, arts, and foods. This cultural festival celebrates Ghanaian heritage, culture, and traditions in Toronto, Canada.

On August 4, 2024, GCAO collaborated with the organizers to expand the event, making it one of the largest gatherings of the Ghanaian community in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Over 1,000 community members attended this event.



The festival featured traditional Ghanaian drummers, dancers, and musicians, displaying the rich cultural heritage of Ghana. Ghanaian Royals, Nana Asare Baffour and Nana Nsiah as well as the Mawerehene from Sefwi and their entourage visited the event, and their engagement highlighted the beauty of Ghanaian culture, especially for young people who may have never had the chance to experience the presence of such royals.

The purpose of Ghanafest Toronto is to celebrate and preserve Ghanaian culture and traditions within the diaspora, especially for younger generations who may not have been born in Ghana. This year, the event successfully achieved that purpose, exposing many young people to Ghanaian culture and educating the broader Toronto community about the culture, promoting multiculturalism and diversity.



Erkoso BBQ- Youth Engagement

The Young Adult Group's BBQ collaboration with Erkoso Team on August 17, 2024, was a significant success. The event effectively brought together Ghanaian youth aged 18-25, providing them with a valuable opportunity to share experiences and network in a relaxed and informal setting. After the pandemic, this gathering was particularly impactful, with over 200 young adults from diverse backgrounds coming together to bridge cultural and social gaps. The participants expressed a strong sense of belonging, and the incorporation of games and sports not only encouraged physical activity but also contributed to their overall well-being. The positive, memorable experiences created at this event will play a crucial role in their development and highlight the importance of community involvement.

GCAO Homework Club Batik Program



On August 12, the Homework Club launched a Batik workshop designed to equip Ghanaian youth with entrepreneurship skills. Led by renowned Ugandan artist David Kabuuki, the two-week program at the GCAO Hub introduced participants to the art of Batik. Youth created intricate designs, which were transformed into framed artwork and decorative pillows. These handcrafted pieces were later sold at the Heritage event, raising funds for the Homework Club. This initiative not only provided a productive summer experience but also inspired many participants to continue exploring Batik as a creative and entrepreneurial pursuit.

Women and Men Social Engagement



August 24th, 2024, was a splendid day as the GCAO Women's and Men's wings collaborated on a delightful Summer Social Engagement event focused on self-care and the importance of family relaxation. Over 120 participants attended, engaging in activities such as listening to soothing music, reflecting by the lake, enjoying delicious cuisines, engaging in discussions, or dancing to unwind. The dance floor was alive with joy, creating lasting memories. The event provided a much-needed break from daily routines, contributing to mental health by offering a serene environment for relaxation, social interaction, stress relief, and reconnection with nature. Attendees reconnected with old friends and forged new relationships. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants praising the event as a refreshing experience that strengthened community bonds. The GCAO Men's and Women's wing planning committee is thrilled to have offered this opportunity for the community to de-stress, relax, and rejuvenate.



GCAO Partnership with City of Toronto for Emancipation Day

GHANAIAN-CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO IN
COLLABORATION WITH THE TORONTO PUBLIC
LIBRARY & THE CITY OF TORONTO PRESENTS

EMANCIPATION MONTH 2024
Continental Africa – Sankofa

**FILM
SCREENING
OF JOSEPH**

**23RD
AUGUST 2024**
5:30 - 8PM - Film Screening
8:00 - 10:00PM - Panel discussion

JOSEPH
WHO WOULD YOU BE IF YOU WERE TRULY FREE?

POST FILM DISCUSSION
After the screening of the film there will be a panel discussion between film makers and a panelists.
The panel discussion shall centre on the various understandings of the term Sankofa as it relates to the demographics that embrace it, and what it could mean to the wider Torontonians society.

Inviting all Black-Canadians of Caribbean and African Heritage
VENUE: Toronto Public Library
5120 Yonge St., North York ON

FOR MORE INFO
info@gcaocanada.org

tpi • toronto public library

BLACKHURST CULTURAL CENTRE **Toronto**

Quammie Williams (Moderator)
Dave Weekes (Film Producer)
Lindis Collins-Bucchus (Panelist)
Nina Aning (Panelist)
Prof. Joseph Mensah (Panelist)

On August 23, 2024, the Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO), in partnership with the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit and the Toronto Public Library, hosted an Emancipation Month event to commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The event aimed to educate the community through the screening of the film *Joseph* and a panel discussion on the theme "Continental Africa and the African-Caribbean Diaspora," exploring the meaning of Sankofa. The film tells the story of Joseph, a Jamaican doctor of Maroon descent, whose grandfather instilled in him the importance of their Ashanti heritage. A tragic event gives Joseph the opportunity to fulfill his grandfather's dream of reconnecting with their ancestral homeland. Following the film, a panel of community leaders shared insights and perspectives on the theme, enabling the audience to connect deeply with their shared history and cultural heritage.

The event was free and featured Caribbean and African food and drinks, along with cultural drumming by an African drummer and a steelpan performance by a Caribbean

organization, celebrating the unity and diversity of African heritage.

Held at the North York Public Library, the event attracted 120 attendees, who stayed until it concluded at 10 PM. Participants praised the program and expressed a strong desire for similar events in the future.

This initiative effectively fostered opportunities for community education and cultural connection. GCAO aims to organize similar events throughout the year to educate and empower young people about their roots and cultural heritage. The panelists also developed a deeper connection with the community and expressed hope for the continuation of this significant and impactful work.



Golden Ages Group



The **Golden Age Group** engages over 300 Ghanaian-Canadian seniors (ages 65+) by promoting social involvement, addressing loneliness through targeted support programs, and preventing isolation through weekly activities tailored to their needs. The group also focuses on ensuring seniors feel protected and valued within the community.

The following programs and activities were held:

1. **Fitness Program:** Supported by grant funding, the exercise program enabled seniors to stay active. Sessions are held every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, led by the Coordinator, with an average of 15 seniors participating per session.
2. **Education Seminars:** Seniors participated in Seniors activity day where they had discussion on retirement and aging. Also, seminars were held with partner organizations on topics such as Wills, power of attorney, pension, funeral planning, travel plans etc. Other education such as Social isolation and loneliness and its impact on health, culturally appropriate diabetes and chronic illness management for Ghanaian seniors, Tech education and support.
3. **Friendly Visitors Program:** This initiative paired seniors with volunteers to assist with daily living activities. Funding constraints limited participation to three seniors, the program provided essential support to those with the greatest need.
4. **Weekly Check-ins:** Volunteers conducted regular calls to seniors, checking in on their well-being and reminding them of upcoming community activities.
5. **Seniors Chat Time:** A virtual space for seniors to connect on Zoom and discuss current events, community topics, or shared interests. Each session drew 25–30 participants, fostering meaningful conversations and connections.
6. **Seniors Social Engagement:** The most attended event of the year was a field trip to Peterborough, ON, where over 100 seniors enjoyed exploring the lake, playing games, dancing, and engaging in social and recreational activities. This outing was a highlight for many, creating cherished memories with friends and loved ones. Followed by the Seniors end of year holiday party where 107 seniors came together to celebrate each other before the year ends. These gatherings help seniors connect with old friends, play games, dance and share stories to motivate each other.

The Golden Age Group continues to provide a vital support system for Ghanaian-Canadian seniors, addressing their physical, emotional, and social needs. Through diverse programs and activities, the group fosters a sense of belonging and improves the overall quality of life for its members.

GCAO Golden Ages Gallery of Activities



Ghanaian-Canadian Heritage Center Fundraiser and Dinner Dance

Each year, the Ghanaian-Canadian Association of Ontario (GCAO) hosts its annual fundraiser, and the 2024 event was a phenomenal success. The occasion drew substantial community support to raise funds for the Ghanaian-Canadian Heritage and Resource Centre project. Held at Chateau Le Jardin Centre in Woodbridge, ON, the event aimed to collect \$1 million in seed money for the center, which will serve as a vital resource hub addressing community challenges and promoting cultural engagement.

Attendees enjoyed an evening of cultural celebration, with proceeds contributing to the project's mission of supporting and empowering Ghanaian-Canadians and other minorities in Ontario.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous sponsors and community donors for helping GCAO achieve its fundraising goals to support the heritage center.

