



Backgrounder

What is Tirgan

“Tirgan” is an ancient Iranian festival that has been revived for modern times, and is hosted by the Iranian Canadian Centre for Art and Culture (“ICCAC”). The ICCAC is a not-for-profit, non-partisan and non-religious organization with a mandate to raise awareness about Iranian art and culture. The modern Tirgan festival is a biennial four-day celebration held in Toronto, Canada.

Tirgan 2013

In collaboration with the Harbourfront Centre, Tirgan 2013 will be the event of the summer as more than 150,000 enthusiasts are expected to gather on Toronto’s lakefront to celebrate art, culture and diversity. Transpiring from July 18 – 21, Tirgan 2013 will remain true to the festival’s ancient roots in showcasing the tremendous ethnic diversity within Iran by celebrating the country’s music, dance, theatre, cinema, literature, the visual arts and culinary cuisine. The events of Tirgan 2013 will be united by a new central theme of Hope.

The Evolution of Tirgan

The modern Tirgan celebration is not only a product of an ancient festival dating back millennia, it can also be attributed to a relatively recent evolution that was shaped over the last five years. The revival of the modern Tirgan has evolved out of two sister festivals that transpired in 2006 and 2008.

In 2006, nearly 25,000 visitors attended the first festival called, “Under the Azure Dome,” which celebrated the Iranian new-year of Nowruz and explored Iranian art and culture on a scale that was previously unprecedented in North America. In 2008, the second festival, called “Once Upon a Time,” which was held to commemorate the ancient Tirgan festival, drew upwards of 60,000 visitors internationally and across Canada.

After the great success of the 2008 festival, ICCAC announced the official revival of the ancient Tirgan festival and adopted the name Tirgan for its biennial festival moving forward. This new branding came with a new logo and a fresh and focused dedication to revive and restore the grandeur of the ancient Tirgan celebrations. With a budget of \$648,052.00, over 120,000 visitors, more than 70 performances by over 120 local and internationally renowned artists, and organized by 300 dedicated volunteers, Tirgan 2011 became the largest Iranian festival in the world making Tirgan Festival a true hallmark of Iranian art and culture.



The Legend of Tirgan

There are many legends on the origins of Tirgan. One is associated with the legend of the arrow (*Tir*), a reference to 'Arash of the swift arrow,' who was the best Iranian archer of ancient times. To settle a land dispute, it was stipulated that Arash should ascend Mount Damavand, and discharge an arrow whose landing location would determine the boundary between the two kingdoms, Iran and Turan. Arash climbed the mountain, and discharged an arrow, the flight of which continued from the dawn of day until noon. The arrow finally fell on the banks of the Jeyhun (*the Oxus*), and the boundaries of Iran expanded beyond all expectations, resulting in the inclusion of multiple cultures into the nation. This development led to the birth of Tirgan festival, a celebration of diversity.