



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 2011

In collaboration with the Harbourfront Centre, Tirgan 2011 will be the event of the summer as more than 100,000 enthusiasts gather on Toronto’s lakefront to celebrate art, culture and diversity. Transpiring from July 21 – 24, Tirgan 2011 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 2011 will be united by a central theme, which is “Visions of Eternity.”

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. This year, with a budget of over \$755,000.00, Tirgan 2011 is set to be the largest Iranian festival in the world.

The Legend of Tirgan

There are many legends on the origins of Tirgan, but the most common is associated with the story of the arrow (in Persian known as “Tir”) of the greatest Iranian archer of ancient times, Arash.



Legend has it that to settle a territorial dispute, it was decided that Arash should ascend Mount Damavand and discharge an arrow, the landing location of which would determine the boundary between the two kingdoms of Iran and Turan. Arash climbed the mountain and launched his arrow, the flight of which continued from the dawn of day until noon. The arrow finally descended on the banks of the river Oxus, and the boundaries of Iran were expanded beyond all expectations. The inclusion of multiple new cultures in the land of Iran was a cause for the celebration of diversity, and the Tirgan festival was born. Today Iran's population has retained its historic diversity as the nation is composed of over fifteen different ethnic groups, united as Iranians, but with their own dialect, outfit, music, dance, and cuisine.