



Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society

“CAA&CS Goes Alberta-Wide with the 2026 Arab Heritage Month Celebrations”

2026

Press Release

The Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society’s 4th Arab Heritage Month Celebrations are Month-Long & Alberta-Wide

April 13, 2026

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Calgary, AB. The Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society is proud to organize its 4th installment of the Heritage Month Celebrations. This year, it is province wide, having celebrations in 9 different Alberta cities/towns across the month. The main event will take place at the Patricia A. Whelan Performance Hall at the Calgary Public Library on April 18, 2026.

Background: Bill C-232, passed in November 2021, officially designates April as Arab Heritage Month. This legislative move opens up avenues for Arab Canadians to proudly exhibit the richness of their cultural heritage. The Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society looks to celebrate Arab Heritage Month by facilitating the sharing of Arab culture through music, dance, visual arts, and food every year.

With the encouraging unprecedented support from funders, artists, organizations across Alberta and the community at large, the Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society will go provincial during the month, beside the CPL main celebration, “We are having programming with partners in 9 different cities and towns across Alberta throughout the month, emphasizing Canada’s diversity and multiculturalism,” reiterated the Chairperson of the Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society, Mr. Moness Rizkalla.

“The support is increasing,” and “we received unprecedented funding from the Federal Government, the Government of Alberta, the City of Calgary, the Calgary Foundation, the Rozsa Foundation, Calgary Arts Development, as well as the Town of Canmore and the City of Airdrie, in addition to local businesses,” says Bassem Hafez, the Executive Director of the organization.

“Since the end of March, we have organized a multitude of events featuring artists and organizations from Toronto and Alberta; and the support from MLAs, Councillors and the Associate Minister of Multiculturalism marked the success of our events in Canmore, Red Deer, Cochrane and Airdrie. We are looking forward to more successful events planned in Edmonton, Okotoks, Banff, Lethbridge and Calgary. On the 18th, we have a strong lineup of artists at our Arab Heritage Night at the Central CPL”, added Hafez. We are having a creative collective performance, live painting, standup comedy, live cooking and Folklore Dances.

The event will start with music from the Indigenous artist, Wendy Walker. This is the addition to our Land Acknowledgement recorded in both Arabic and English languages. It will be attended by Associate Minister of Multiculturalism, Muhammad Yaseen; Calgary Deputy Mayor, Mike Jamieson; MLA Nagwan Al-Guneid; and MLA Joe Ceci. Premier Danielle Smith had issued the attached greetings.

To learn more about Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society, please visit:

<https://calgaryarabartsociety.ca/>

For more information, please contact Bassem Hafez, M.A. Executive Director: Bassem@caacs.ca

Calgary Arab Arts and Culture Society

The Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society (CAA&CS) has been organizing the Calgary Arab Film Nights Festival since 2013. For the past years, the festival has been growing and attracting different forms of arts and partners who want to savor a piece of Arab culture. As the festival grew, the society started bringing more artistic productions.

Over the past years, the society brought Arab standup comedians to Calgary, in partnership with the YukYuks, such as Ahmed Ahmed and Eman El-Husseini. Also, CAA&CS organized standalone events that brought poetry and provided the stage for rising talents in the community, like Dr. Ghada Al-Atrash, after releasing her new book “Stripped to the Bone: Portraits of Syrian Women”. CAA&CS also organized “Popcorn & Skype” events where the audience watched Arabic movies and chatted with the filmmakers. Distinguished speakers were accordingly invited to initiate conversations and dialogues with our festival audience, such as Luke Azevedo, Southern Alberta Film Commissioner this event gave voice to artists through old topics such as, 2SLGBTQ+ in the Arab world, Arab Jews, and Hijab.

By 2017, the Calgary Arab Film Festival expanded its offering by adding an extra night, calling it “Canadian Eye on the Arab World”, which showcased Canadian productions depicting Arab related issues. That led to the Cooperation with the National Film Board of Canada in screening “Things Arab Men Say” and “Arab Women Say What?!” by the Edmonton filmmaker, Nesreen Baqer.

Since 2023, the Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society acted upon Canada’s recognition of April as the “Arab Heritage Month” and organized an annual celebration that invited the community to celebrate with Canadian Arab artists, as well as cultural brokers and Canadian politicians from Ara origins to learn about the richness and diversity of Arab culture and how it adds to the Canadian mosaic.

For all these successes, the Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society decided to transform from a working board and initiate an administrative body to take care of increasing activities and repertoire. With this transformation, the Society issued its Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Statement/Policy, and started drifting towards institutional funding, which reached fruition in 2024 with partnership with and support from the Calgary Arts Development, The City of Calgary, The Government of Alberta and Heritage Canada.

Mission:

CAACS envisions a diversified arts scene in Canada in which Arab-themed arts have the opportunity, space and resources to tell a different story, the power to build bridges, deepen relationships, and accordingly advance a more equitable society.

Vision:

CAACS's vision is anchored in the belief that arts have the power to evoke emotions, provoke thought, and promote empathy.

The Calgary Arab Arts and Culture Society is a not-for-profit non-denominational organization whose objectives include:

- Presenting a positive view of Arab life and society as an alternative to what is portrayed in the media.
- Introducing audiences to the humanity, love and humour in daily Arab life.
- Showcasing the rich history and diversity of Arab culture.
- Highlighting the complexities of the region to challenge the simplified way of looking at Arab communities.

The society contributes to Calgary's thriving arts and cultural scene by actively promoting arts and culture events including:

- Cinema
- Visual Art
- Comedy
- Literature, Poetry and Spoken Word



MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER OF ALBERTA

On behalf of the Government of Alberta, it is my pleasure to send greetings in honour of Arab Heritage Month celebrations across the province. Arab Heritage Night at the Calgary Public Library is an exciting part of these festivities, with a showcase of arts and cultures through dance, music, comedy, storytelling, poetry and much more.

As Albertans, we find strength in our diversity. Arab Canadians are valued members of our communities, contributing to the prosperity and quality of life we enjoy and the bright future we are building together. I am honoured to convey my best wishes to everyone who is celebrating their heritage this month and taking time to share it with their friends and neighbours.

Thank you to the Calgary Arab Arts and Culture Society for your work to organize Arab Heritage Month programming in cities and towns all over Alberta. I appreciate your commitment to promoting Arab culture and building bridges through the arts.

Have a wonderful evening!



A blue ink signature of Danielle Smith, written in a cursive style.

Honourable Danielle Smith, Premier of Alberta



Calgary Arab Arts & Culture Society

Proudly Presents!



COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCE ART EXPERIENCE



Fadia Omar
(Lebanese Visual Artist)



Muhammad Fuad
(Palestinian Visual Artist)



Darin Dandash
(Syrian Visual Artist)



Reem Elserafy
(Egyptian Violin)



Josi Saba
(Lebanese Qanun)



Aya Mhana
(Syrian Oud)

ARABIC MUSIC



HAWA Music Ensemble
(Syria)

STAND UP COMEDY



Ahmed Ahmed
(Yemen)

Faris Hytiaa
(Sudan)

EGYPTIAN DANCE



Radwa Nasr & Egyptian Folklore Academy
(Egypt)

HENNA TATOO



Yazmine M'hamed
(Morocco)

PALESTINIAN KITCHEN SHOW



Mohammad Hajj Ahmad
(Palestine)

MURAL ARTWORKS



Ruba Al-Najjar
(Syria)

DELICIOUS BUFFET SPONSORED BY



ARAB HERITAGE NIGHT

18 April 2026 | 2:30PM - 9:00PM
Calgary Public Library - Central



Calgary



Canada



CALGARY FOUNDATION
FOR COMMUNITY. FOREVER



calgaryarabartsociety.ca