

Cultural ties take centre stage following Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to Doha

*Canadian media briefings held in Toronto and Ottawa on 29 and 30 January to kick off
Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture*

01 February 2026 - Toronto, Canada and Doha, Qatar: Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** visit to Doha this month underscored Canada's expanding partnership with Qatar, with culture positioned alongside trade, education, and innovation as a strategic driver of long-term bilateral cooperation.

The visit coincided with the launch of the Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture, a year-long programme designed to complement diplomatic momentum with cultural exchange across art, sport, education, and commerce.

The Canadian media launches were held over a lunch in Toronto at the Aga Khan Museum on Thursday, 29 January, and in Ottawa at the Embassy of the State of Qatar on Friday, 30 January. In Toronto, **Michael Bartlett**, Chief Executive Officer Canada of Basketball, presented a basketball to Qatari dignitaries.

During a press briefing in Doha on 18 January, Prime Minister Carney said: "When the people of different countries are familiar with each other's cultures and perspectives, they're enriched and they trust each other more. They also want to do more together, to build together. And to that end, Canada and Qatar are strengthening our people-to-people ties and our cultural ties. This year, Qatar begins its Year of Culture, building lasting relationships through cultural, educational, business and creative exchanges."

"Through the Year of Culture with Canada, Qatar is investing in connections to sustain a strong, forward-looking strategic partnership," said Qatar's newly appointed Ambassador to Canada, **His Excellency Mr. Tariq Ali Faraj Al-Ansari**. "These connections include skills-based development in sport sectors, creative exchanges, and bolstering the creative industries. By linking cultural exchange with economic opportunity and institutional cooperation, we are building relationships to endure beyond 2026."

The initiative reflects a shared approach to partnership that links cultural exchange with trade diversification, skills development, and market access, reinforcing cooperation beyond traditional state-to-state channels.

Gastronomy

Programming began in January in Doha with Canadian participation in the Qatar International Food Festival. Canadian chefs **Christian Gosselin**, **Eric Chong**, and **Andy Hay** took part in culinary showcases that highlighted innovation, craftsmanship, and Canada's growing presence in the global culinary scene.

Sport

Sport forms a key pillar of collaboration, building on a shared FIFA World Cup legacy. As part of preparations for the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027, Canada and Qatar are planning an international basketball friendly, linking the sport's Canadian origins with Qatar's expanding investment in global sport. Winter sport development is also a focus of the partnership with the Qatar Winter Sports Committee planning initiatives spanning youth participation, coaching development, and high-performance training. The committee will draw on Canadian expertise in ice hockey, curling, skating, and short track.

"At Canada Basketball, our ambition is not only to be the best in the world on the court, but the best for Canada in how we lead, connect, and contribute beyond it. That is why sports diplomacy matters now,



more than ever," said **Michael Bartlett**, CEO of Canada Basketball. "Basketball has a unique ability to build lasting relationships between young people, communities, and nations - relationships that strengthen trust, foster cooperation, and create impact that endures for decades."

Education and literacy

Education and literacy will also play a central role throughout the year. Qatar Reads, led by Qatar National Library, is set to expand to Canada in August 2026. The programme brings Arabic storytelling, children's literature, and creative workshops to Canadian audiences, while reciprocal programming will introduce Canadian cultural traditions to families in Qatar.

As part of the programme, a Doha Debates Town Hall will take place in Canada, focusing on football and identity in the context of the FIFA World Cup 2026™. The Town Hall series is a signature platform for youth-driven dialogue on global trends. Each event encourages open, respectful exchange in a Majlis-style format rooted in the Arab tradition of collaborative truth-seeking.

Public space and design

Photography and public art will further reinforce cultural and commercial ties between countries. *Under One Sky*, a touring exhibition reflecting on the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™, will tour to several Canadian cities, while the JEDARIART initiative will present large-scale murals by Qatari and Canadian artists in urban centres across both countries.

Economic partnership

The Qatar-Canada 2026 cultural partnership is designed to complement broader trade and investment objectives, positioning culture as a long-term platform for economic partnership, innovation, and sustained bilateral growth. Economic cooperation is embedded throughout the programme, with partnerships involving Qatar's Ministry of Commerce and Industry expected to create new opportunities for Canadian companies through platforms such as Project Qatar and Hospitality Qatar.

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About Years of Culture

The Years of Culture initiative, chaired by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, spearheads long-lasting cultural partnerships between Qatar and other nations. It exists to promote respect and understanding among diverse cultures and serves as a catalyst for bringing people together, nurturing connections, encouraging dialogue, and deepening understanding. At its core, Years of Culture is a portal for making connections across various sectors, including cultural heritage, creative industries, social and economic development, and innovation, which enriches Qatar's ties with partner countries beyond the dedicated year.

Each year is organised with support from Qatar and partner countries' cultural institutions, ministries, foundations, and private and public sector partners, with assistance from Embassies in Qatar and abroad. Programmes are tailored to explore the unique nature of each partner country.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Türkiye 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, Qatar-USA 2021, Qatar-MENASA 2022, Qatar-Indonesia 2023, Qatar-Morocco 2024, and Qatar Argentina and Chile 2025.



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