

Qatar Launches Summer Cultural Season Across Canada

20 May 2026 - Ottawa, Canada and Doha, Qatar: As Canada prepares to co-host the FIFA World Cup 2026™, Qatar's Years of Culture initiative is bringing a summer-long cultural programme to cities across Canada, featuring exhibitions, fashion, public art, film, literature, and dialogue to cities across Canada.

Marking the beginning of the Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture in Canada, the programme shows how the legacy of global sport can continue through cultural exchange, creative collaboration, and people-to-people connection.

Presented with support from the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Ottawa and in partnership with leading Qatari institutions including Qatar Museums, Doha Debates, M7, and Qatar National Library, alongside Canadian cultural partners like Fashion Art Toronto, MURAL Festival in Montreal, the season highlights the growing relationship between Qatar and Canada across the arts, education, sport and creative industries. The programme also reflects Qatar's wider vision of culture and sport as interconnected drivers of national development, international partnership and long-term social exchange.

"This initiative is rooted in the belief that cultural exchange creates lasting connections between people and communities," said His Excellency Mr. Tariq Ali Faraj Al-Ansari, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Canada. "Canada's rich diversity, vibrant creative landscape, and global outlook make it a natural partner for a cultural season that highlights the power of art, sport, and storytelling in bringing people together and strengthening mutual understanding."

Among the programme's headline moments is a collaboration with Formula One driver Pierre Gasly at the Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal this May. As part of a continuing partnership between Years of Culture and the BWT Alpine F1 Team, Gasly will wear specially commissioned helmet designs by artists connected to the initiative. The first design, created by Qatari illustrator Ghada Al Suwaidi, will debut during the Montreal Grand Prix from 22-24 May, using one of the world's most visible sporting stages to spotlight contemporary Qatari creativity and artistic talent.

Fashion will also play a major role in the programme. Doha's creative hub M7 will lead a delegation of emerging designers to Fashion Art Toronto, introducing Canadian audiences and industry leaders to a new generation of designers from Qatar and the wider region. Brands including Authentic Roz, LIN, and Denim will present collections during the festival's opening runway showcase on 29 May.

Designed as both a showcase and professional exchange platform, the initiative will connect designers with buyers, consultants, manufacturers, and fashion leaders across Canada. Organisers say the collaboration reflects Qatar's growing investment in its creative economy and its ambition to position Doha as a centre for global design and innovation.

Public art will arrive in Montreal through a collaboration between Qatar Museums' street art initiative JEDARIART and the internationally recognised MURAL Festival from 4-14 June. Qatari calligraphy and calligrapher artist Fatima Al-Sharshani will create new work as part of the festival, bringing Arabic visual language and contemporary Gulf artistic expression into one of Canada's largest public art events.

Toronto will host a major youth-focused Doha Debates Town Hall at Queen's Quay Terminal exploring the future of football fandom in an increasingly globalised game on 8 July. Timed to coincide with the World



Cup, the discussion will bring together students, academics, and voices from sport and media to debate questions of identity, loyalty, and commercialisation in modern football culture.

Later in the summer, Qatar National Library's Qatar Reads initiative will launch a literary exchange programme with Canadian families and schools. The project will distribute reading packages inspired by Canadian culture to families in Qatar, while Canadian students will receive English and French-language editions of *Kalila wa Dimna* alongside storytelling workshops and an exhibition of works by Qatari artist Wadha Al Athba whose illustrations appear in the book of fables.

The Canadian cultural season forms part of the broader Years of Culture initiative, established in 2012 to strengthen international partnerships through sustained cultural collaboration, dialogue and exchange across education, heritage, sport, design, and the arts.

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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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