

President's Report

Iranian Heritage Society of Edmonton

Annual General Meeting – September 30, 2023



Overview of the Year

The 2022-2023 fiscal year marked a significant period for IHSE, as we balanced our traditional cultural activities with our strong response to social movements, especially the #WomenLifeFreedom movement, which deeply affected the Iranian community. The newly elected board, as of October 9, 2022, was committed to:

1. Preserving IHSE's regular activities, including Yalda, Nowruz, International Women's Day, and our key project—the Edmonton Heritage Festival.
2. Advocating for Iranian human rights, particularly within the global Women, Life, Freedom movement.

Significant Events and Achievements (17 events in total):

1. Heritage and Traditional Activities:

- Chaharshanbeh Soori and Nowruz Bazaar: These highly successful events saw 600-750 attendees for Chaharshanbeh Soori at the Blue Quill Community Hall.
- Nowruz Gala: Held on March 25, 2023, at the Mirage Banquet, we welcomed around 586 participants.
- Yalda Night: On December 23, 2022, we celebrated Yalda at the University of Alberta, featuring cultural showcases and community gatherings.

2. Advocacy and Support for Women, Life, Freedom Movement:

- Freedom Rallies: IHSE organized multiple rallies, including a human chain demonstration on October 29, 2022, at Dr. Wilbert McIntyre Park, and a Freedom Rally at Edmonton City Hall on October 22, 2022.
- Lighting the High-Level Bridge: On November 28, 2022, the bridge was illuminated with messages supporting Women, Life, Freedom. On January 8, 2023, we commemorated the anniversary of the downing of Flight PS752 with a special lighting ceremony.

3. Community Outreach:

- We launched invitations for cooperation with IHSE members and encouraged community engagement through platforms like Google Forms.
- On International Women's Day, March 8, 2023, we highlighted global struggles for gender equality, focusing on the gender apartheid regimes in Iran and Afghanistan.

4. Cultural Projects:

- Baba Naan Daad: A theatrical play by Shiva Mobin, recorded over 10-12 hours, was presented in May 2023, portraying the resilience and cultural richness of Iranian society. This unique project illustrated the oppression in Iran through a simple yet powerful narrative. The project is ongoing (with editing and additional scenes in progress), and IHSE is proud to have partnered with an incredible group of volunteers, including Shiva Mobin (Director), Danial Asadi (Camera and Video), and Kamyar Pouyeh (Sound).
- Film Series at Metro Cinema: IHSE co-hosted a series titled "Expressing Resilience," showcasing Iranian cinema's impact on global discussions around freedom, gender, and human rights. This partnership strengthened IHSE's collaboration with Metro Cinema, positioning our organization as a key player in cultural and advocacy projects.

Financial Overview

The fiscal year ending August 31, 2023, was financially robust, thanks to our successful application for the Alberta Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Grant Program, which provided \$30,000 to support key cultural events, including:

- Yalda Night
- International Women's Day
- Nowruz Bazaar and Chaharshanbeh Souri
- Nowruz Gala

The next board must ensure detailed budget planning and accurate reporting for these funds to meet grant requirements.

During the Heritage Festival, we made valuable investments in operational items (stainless steel tables, a portable hot water boiler, electric wiring, and banners), which will serve the organization for years to come.

Looking Ahead: 2023-2024

Our focus for the upcoming year includes:

1. **Website Improvement:** Developing a request for proposal (RFP) and allocating a budget to enhance IHSE's online presence.
2. **Heritage Festival 2024:** We plan to improve operational efficiency and introduce new food items, aiming to increase revenue by \$15K-\$20K.
3. **Cultural Programming:** Ensuring the completion of the "Baba Naan Daad" project and continuing our successful collaboration with Metro Cinema for future cultural events.

4. **Event Mergers:** We plan to merge the Nowruz Bazaar and Chaharshanbeh Souri into a single-day event to streamline operations and improve the quality of both celebrations.
 5. **Focus on Heritage and Creative Activities:** Yalda and Nowruz are energy-intensive events for our volunteer board. Moving forward, we recommend outsourcing these to event planners or charitable organizations, allowing IHSE to focus on heritage-based, non-ticketed events like Chaharshanbeh Souri, Bazaar Norouz, and International Women's Day.
 6. **Grants and Revenue:** Actively seeking new revenue streams and grants to support future community projects.
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Conclusion

The 2022-2023 year was one of immense cultural preservation and advocacy for freedom and human rights. We are proud to have stood for human rights in Iran and supported the Iranian people through various artistic initiatives, from supporting the production of the "Baba Naan Daad" show to hosting artistic exhibitions. Our cultural tent at the Heritage Festival showcased the struggle of the Iranian people under a repressive, theocratic regime.

As Iranians living in the free world, it is our duty to speak out against oppression and celebrate our culture in a meaningful way. We ensure that our actions reflect the ongoing fight for justice in Iran, standing for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Finally, I conclude my report with hope for a prosperous future for the Iranian people. It is our responsibility not to remain silent in the face of continued oppression. There is no greater honor than advocating for Women, Life, Freedom through art and cultural expression, which forms the foundation of our heritage as proud Iranians.

Thank you,

Reza Akbari
President, IHSE