



History

2009 will mark the 13th annual year for the festival, but its history goes back even further than that. The Guelph and District Multicultural Centre was founded in 1977 and incorporated in 1978 for the purpose of a Multicultural Festival in celebration of Guelph's 125th Anniversary.

Between 1978 and 1988 the Guelph and District Multicultural Centre hosted a very successful Multicultural Festival in downtown Guelph. The event was a weeklong event and featured international food and entertainment. In 1988 it was decided to discontinue the Festival when a new venue was required to host the event, and no suitable venue was available at the time.

In 1996 the Centre conducted a community needs assessment which indicated that various cultural groups felt isolated and wanted to become more active in community based events. The cultural groups felt the return of the festival would improve their access to the community and give them a venue for sharing food, language, dance, music and other aspects of their culture.

The Centre decided to hold a Festival in 1997 to celebrate the year of Asia Pacific. Initially, the Festival was planned as a one-day event but as other cultural groups took interest, the event was extended to a second day and promoted as a Multicultural Festival.

As a result of the enthusiasm and support shown by community members at the 1997 Festival, the Board of Directors of the Multicultural Centre decided to formally revive the Multicultural Festival as an annual community event. In 1998, the Festival returned to Riverside Park and began to use the Band Shell as its main performance area.

The Festival became a separate incorporated non-profit organization in April 2007. Based on 2008 attendance estimates it's expected that over 25,000 people will attend the 2009 Festival.