

## Toronto Zoroastrian Camping Trip 2022

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There can only be one word to describe this camping trip - exhilarating. On the weekend of July 29, 2022 approximately 35 Zoroastrian Youth gathered together at Darlington Provincial Park in Bowmanville, Ontario for two nights, with an option to stay back for a third.

People came in from Canada and the United States banded together for some weekend entertainment.

It was great seeing the usual faces, and even greater seeing so many new faces! Everyone casually introduced themselves and started gossiping, the usual activity Parsi's thoroughly enjoy doing. By the time the sun started setting, the fire for the barbeque was being set up. We cooked some tender and delicious chicken and complemented that with some mouthwatering, buttery corn (of course including the typical spices), along with some roasted potatoes. Within seconds, the food was completely devoured.

As the evening turned into night, we all gathered around the campfire where Fravash Chothia delivered a speech and ended it with a short prayer of two Yatha Ahu Variyo's and one Ashem Vohu. In this moment, it truly felt like a Zoroastrian get together, and honestly, it felt great! As the night progressed, everyone was chatting, playing games and singing as if there was no tomorrow.

The next morning Pashin Patel started a high intensity work-out session planned for 9 am. Those of us who were up, started going around the tents and shouting to wake the night owls and lazy ones up. The work out lasted an entire hour with some of us sweating like crazy and hyped up to start the day on a positive note. This was followed by Spenta's yoga. The yoga felt like the calm after the storm and people were very relaxed. Those pristine moments in nature refreshed and recharged us - made us feel whole. At last, the most awaited moment had come - breakfast! The one activity every Zoro happily participated in. We were grateful to Danesh Patel's mother Arnavaz for already making the delicious akuri paste which needed some eggs, and within a few minutes, the tapeli was wiped clean!

According to our schedule, we were now supposed to head off for a hike, but we all opted to go to the beach instead, because honestly, who wouldn't want that? Some of us water bodies ran straight into the water, while some of us were tanning and taking full advantage of the Canadian sun. The rest of us went into competition mode and were playing a very intense game of volleyball, with one team standing out and winning all the games (mine)! Finally, everyone decided to go onto the sand and the whole bawa group was on the beach. We spent most of the afternoon there until finally everyone decided that they could not contain their hunger any longer. We went back to our camp site and had some tasty spaghetti and sauce.

We then headed for a rope tying session that was hosted by Sohrab Bhiwandiwalla. He taught us how to create various types of lifesaving knots including the Bowline, Sheepshank, and the Fisherman's knot. Later, Kimiya Shahzadi, who had specially come down from the States hosted a session that would help strengthen relationships. We enacted different scenarios and asked various questions that would open our eyes to different perspectives of a healthy relationship. It was already 7:30pm by the time the workshop ended and everyone's stomach was growling so we headed straight for dinner. Biryani was ordered and it was so tasty that we could not help but take seconds and thirds until we could not have any more physically (and we ran out).

We then gathered around the campfire once more and began our talent show. Surprisingly we were pretty talented! Some of the acts were Arman from Michigan singing, Kaizaad Tafti freestyle rapping, to Spenta Chothia live painting. The whole show was very heart warming and beautifully organized! After the talent show, some of us went back to the beach to star gaze and take in the last moments of the camp, while some stayed on the camp site and continued chatting.

The next morning, people slowly started packing their things and cleaning up, ready to go back home. Most of us were leaving Sunday afternoon while some of us stayed back an extra day.

The trip overall was a much-needed outing for us all! I am confident that each and every one present at the camp had the time of their lives and are eagerly awaiting next summer. A special thank you to Fravash who dedicated his heart and soul into planning this camping trip and bringing it to life. His months of planning were finally fruitful, and it could not have been better executed! We would also like to thank ZYNA (Zoroastrian Youth of North America) for helping sponsor the event.

These camps help to push people out of their comfort zones and explore nature where there are no certainties. The camp environment strengthens relationships among the attendees and are great opportunities for people to get to know each other on a more personal level. Many, who at the beginning of the camp may have been strangers, leave good friends. At camp, we talk about the past, present, and future of our religion and Zoroastrian community. Investing in the Zoroastrian youth of tomorrow is the most important way to keep our faith flourishing. Next year we hope to see even more Zoroastrians join the camp from all over the world.



*Hovering around the picnic table for breakfast*



*Post rope tying lesson*



*Kaizaad Tafti freestyling over the campfire*



*Figure 1: Pashaan toasting bread for breakfast*



*Acting out skits during Kimiya Shahzadi's couples' relationship workshop*