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Haiku Invitational in praise of cherry blossoms

BY SUSAN LAZARUK
STAFF REPORTER

*Writing short poems!
New Vancouver festival!*

Praise cherry blossoms

Organizers of a new Vancouver festival planned for next spring to honour the city's 36,000 spring-time cherry blossom trees have launched what they're calling the

Haiku Invitational.

They're inviting anyone who can write a haiku — a short poem of Japanese origin that follows a specific syllable pattern — to submit up to two unpublished English-language haiku honouring the trees that burst with pink and white blossoms every spring.

Selected haiku will be published online and on transit buses, and

readings by local poets will be held under a canopy of the blooms during the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival in March.

Submissions have come in from around the world, including from Canadian authors Joy Kogawa and Jane Urquhart.

The haiku is a poem that captures a scene or experience in just a few words. Some poets follow

the 5-7-5 syllable pattern but most view it as a poem in three lines of 17 or fewer syllables.

The festival, based on the Sakura festivals of Japan, will include a photo contest, outdoor painting sessions and self-guided blossom walks.

Deadline for submissions is Jan. 31. See www.vcbf.ca for details. slazaruk@png.canwest.com

New festival celebrates annual explosion of colour

Think cherry blossom pink while writing haiku

By Cheryl Rossi
Staff writer

DURING 12 YEARS abroad, Linda Poole missed one thing about Vancouver: the annual blossoming of cherry trees each spring. Returned to the city, her love for the blossoms spurred her to found the upcoming Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival.

"I had left Vancouver in 1992 to join my husband in the Canadian Foreign Service and we were always in hot climates so we would come back to Vancouver in the summer. So for 12 years I missed the blossoming of our trees," she said.

The festival is scheduled to kick off at the beginning of March under a canopy of pink at Burrard SkyTrain Station at Burrard Street near Pender and will culminate in an art exhibit of blossom-inspired paintings.

Poole wants people to get involved now in the festival by creating haiku celebrating the blossoms.

With the help of enthusiastic volunteers and the Pacific region of Haiku Canada, the festival society has received poems celebrating cherry trees from India, Ireland and Romania. Poole wants Vancouverites to get their submissions

in before the Jan. 31 deadline.

The festival will encourage people to have picnics, walk and paint among the cherry trees and share their favourite trees through a photo contest. A map of ideal picnicking and strolling spots, likely to include Queen Elizabeth and Stanley parks and the UBC grounds, will be distributed at the beginning of March.

Teaching artists will offer assistance to painters in local parks with easels erected under petal-laden boughs. Japanese bento box lunches will be available for sale to groups wishing to take time out under the trees.

Poole knows of two corporate groups already planning to hold picnics. One will sport bands tied around their foreheads like sushi chefs and will perform karaoke. The workers of another plan to picnic clad head to toe in pink.

A haiku poem captures a scene or experience in three lines of 17 or fewer syllables. Festival organizers are looking for individual submissions of up to two unpublished English-language haiku. Selected poems will be published online, read aloud at festival events, featured on local buses and included in an art installation by local

artists at Burrard Station. Poole envisions ribbons silk-screened with poems fluttering from the trees.

It's obvious the cherry tree has become almost sacred to her.

"It's become a symbol of life and certainly a symbol of friendship," she said, adding that depending on the weather, sometimes the blossoms last only three days. "They are to teach us, each and every one of us, to take time now to celebrate life, because it doesn't last long. You just have to stand under it and then you know."

See www.vcbf.ca for more information.

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THE VANCOUVER SUN

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Pink, as in
petals —
or gelateria



TRY YOUR HAND | Joy Kogawa (left) has written a haiku for the first-ever Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, coming this spring. Her three-line, 17-syllable poem goes: A window opens/ Cherry Blossom Festival/ Look! Friendship growing. Festival creative director **Linda Poole** invites submissions to the event's Haiku Invitational, which will see winning poems displayed in buses and other public places. Writers may submit up to two unpublished English-language haiku inspired by the cherry tree's beauty. Deadline: Jan. 31. See [Vcbf.ca](http://vcbf.ca).

CANADIAN CONTENT | La Casa Gelato, Vince Misceo's pink palace at 1033 Venables, gets a mention on page 88 of Ripley's Believe It or Not! Planet Eccentric! (Ripley Publishing, 256 pages, \$34.95). The entry, in the All-Consuming category, lauds the store's nearly 500 ice-cream flavours, including "garlic, vinegar, wasabi/green apple — and one that tastes like Guinness stout." Ripley Publishing being a Jim Paterson company, the compendium features three other B.C. phenomena, including **George Plumb's** no-longer-extant Glass Castle, in Duncan.

BOOKS

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