



## 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL LAUNCHES TODAY WITH INTERNATIONAL HAIKU INVITATIONAL CONTEST

**VANCOUVER, BC (March 1, 2016)** – The 10th anniversary Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival (VCBF) launches today with the start of the annual Haiku Invitational contest, which has attracted 10,000 entries from 40 countries since it began in 2006, and the announcement of the Haiku Invitational winners from 2015.

The internationally acclaimed contest, which runs from March 1 to April 30, invites established and budding poets to submit up to two unpublished haiku, which will be judged in five categories: Best Vancouver, Best BC, Best Canada, Best United States, Best International and Best Youth haiku.

The winning poems will be widely published in the Vancouver Courier newspaper, a Leaf Press hand-bound chapbook, the Haiku Society of America's "Ripples" newsletter, the Haiku Canada Newsletter, The Bulletin magazine, Ricepaper online magazine and the VCBF website. The winning poems will also be read by The Bard on the Beach's Christopher Gaze at the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra Tea & Trumpets Concert. Additional haiku will be recognized in the Sakura Award and Honourable Mentions categories.

"Our theme for this year's Haiku Invitational is celebration!," says festival creator and Executive Director, Linda Poole. "To all cherry blossom lovers of the Lower Mainland who are inspired by the pink and white cherry blossoms beginning to appear across the city and by our stunning new banners now lining the Burrard Bridge, try your hand at haiku!"

The new Burrard Bridge banners were created by Ryann Carney, the winning artist chosen from a group of 80 Emily Carr students who competed to design a new Festival bridge banner for the festival's 10th birthday. To find a nearby cherry tree to inspire haiku writing, people can visit the Festival's online [Cherry Blossom Viewing Google Map](#), where they'll find more than one thousand locations of cherry trees in West Vancouver, Delta, New Westminister, Burnaby, Langley, North Vancouver and Richmond.

Cherry tree lovers can also plant their very own cherry tree, which are available through the VCBF in eight cultivars, with bloom dates that span from February through May. As supplies are limited, you need to reserve your cherry tree now through the Festival website ([vcbf.ca](http://vcbf.ca)) and then pick them up from VanDusen Botanical Garden on April 30/May 1, 2016, at which time they will be four years old. Funds raised through the Birthday Blossoms tree planting program supports the Festival and its campaign to have 1,000 cherry trees planted on private properties this spring.

Judging the Invitational will be a diverse, professional panel, made up of Deborah P Kolodji (moderator of the Southern California Haiku Study Group and the California Regional Coordinator for the Haiku Society of America), Emiko Miyashita (councilor for the Haiku International Association in Tokyo) and George Swede (cofounder of Haiku Canada and an international recognized haiku author and editor).

The tenth annual VCBF will take place from March 24 - April 17, 2016. The festival will include returning favourite events such as the free Cherry Jam Downtown concert and Tree Talks & Walks series. For more information about Birthday Blossoms and other festival events, please visit [vcbf.ca](http://vcbf.ca).

**About the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival:**

The Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival is a charitable, not-for-profit society whose mission is to sustain and renew Vancouver's cherry tree heritage while educating and actively engaging diverse communities in arts and culture to celebrate the fragile beauty of the cherry blossom (sakura). The month-long celebration's unique cultural programming includes the performing and visual arts, literary, film screenings, design installations, exhibitions, culinary and creative cultural arts.

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