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CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL PRESENTS NEW WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THE BLOSSOMS
2021 features drone film, haiku and photo contests, schools outreach and virtual dining

VANCOUVER, B.C. (March 4, 2021) - We're all longing for a change of scene here. More than ever this spring, when billions of cherry blossoms burst into bloom spreading joy and uplifting spirits in every neighborhood, our city will be transformed into a fairyland and we will be reminded of the hopeful spirit of Spring. To celebrate this much awaited April, the **Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival** will present some exciting new experiences for viewing the cherry blossoms during these challenging times.

As usual, the 15th edition of the Festival will connect communities and generations with about a dozen free programs to safely engage participants in interactive, social, and artful ways. In partnership with Peacemaker Filmworks, chief drone pilot Patrick Weir will capture Vancouver coming into bloom with a new cinema experience called **In Full Bloom**. His goal with this short film is to bring the fragile beauty of the cherry blossom into everyone's home, especially those who are housebound or more vulnerable. With all the added stress of the pandemic, Weir feels we need calm now and to be reminded of the beauty that's out there. As of April 26th, viewers everywhere will be able to feel and live this year's cherry blossom experience from their devices and TV screens.

The Festival brings another beautiful new cherry blossom viewing experience with **Soundwalk Dance**, created by lead artist and artistic producer, Desiree Dunbar, and presented by the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association. Put in your earbuds, awaken your playful inner-child and discover the wisdom and beauty of cherry trees in a whole new way with prompts and music. Elan Dancers will guide you on an embodied journey to enliven all your senses with the vitality of spring!

Submitting your photo experiences with cherry blossoms to the new online virtual **BC Blossom Photo Watch** presented by TD just got more exciting. Photographers will see their photo coming to life in real time in our virtual Mosaic Photo Collage and be united with all the other cherry blossom fans in the final collage image.

The Dorothy and David Lam Foundation has made it possible for the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival to present to elementary students across Metro Vancouver and beyond with the new educational video, **BLOOM!** This outreach project shares information about cherry blossom culture, the botany of the cherry tree, our Vancouver story of sakura, as well as how to write and appreciate haiku.

Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel Ltd. presents the **2020 Haiku Invitational's** winning poems in six categories, and many more in the Sakura Award and Honorable Mention categories, to encourage the writing of haiku. (See below). The 2021 contest is now open for submissions at <https://www.vcbf.ca/community-event/haiku-invitational>.

It has never been more important to support your Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival! You can show support by purchasing tickets to the virtual fundraiser, **Sakura at Home**, to be held on April 25th. It will be a very special evening celebrating spring and our 43,000 cherry trees, while showcasing a diversity of local restaurants and top chefs who are curating an exclusive seasonal take-out menu especially for this event. Dining will be complimented with curated evening programming and guests will be the first to view the world premiere of the **In Full Bloom** drone film project. **Sakura at Home** tickets are limited and available for sale as of March 5th from the website.

Watch for **Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival** banners flying on Burrard Bridge and Oak Street around March 22nd to officially announce the arrival of Spring to the city. For full Festival program details, visit vcbf.ca.

2020 VCBF HAIKU INVITATIONAL WINNERS

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Quiet Money.®

Vancouver

cherry blossoms fall—
the gentle quake
of baby kicks

*Genevieve Wynand
Coquitlam, British Columbia*

United States

mixing concrete
a few petals
don't hurt

*Jeffrey Ferrara
Worcester, Massachusetts*

British Columbia

cherry blossom
after cherry blossom
dawn's slow light

*Ulrike E. Narwani
North Saanich, British Columbia*

International

petals in the wind
my girlfriend is never
where I expect her

*Marcellin Dallaire-Beaumont
Brussels, Belgium*

Canada

blossom wind
my sick wife holds my hand
tighter

*Chen-ou Liu
Ajax, Ontario*

Youth

cherry petals
renewing the scarecrow's
shabby coat

*Buzuc Andreea, age 12
Botosani, Romania*

Overall comments from judges Gary Hotham, Agnes Eva Savich, and Beth Skala:

For the 2020 VCBF Haiku Invitational, 747 poets submitted 1,364 haiku. With so many from which to choose, the task of selecting the top haiku required a great deal of thought and consultation among the judges.

The theme was simply “Cherry Blossoms,” reflecting the purpose of the festival. It was no surprise, however, that a secondary theme was on the minds of many poets. We received a large number of haiku capturing the feelings of isolation, the restrictions, and the fears around the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout those poems, we searched for ones which also had a universal message beyond the current situation.

Other themes which emerged from the submissions included family members, children, pets, and love, which goes to show just how personally writers connect with the phenomenon of cherry blossoms. Juxtaposing a feeling of sadness was the poignant choice of many, while light humour provided a welcome relief, and sometimes just pure nature painted a lovely scene.

We would encourage all poets who entered the competition this year to continue to write haiku, share your work, and hone your craft. While we cannot respond to each of you individually, we want you to know how much we enjoyed reading your submissions.

About the 2021 Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival:

Presented by Coromandel Properties Recreation, the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival is a charitable not-for-profit organization with the objective to educate and actively engage diverse communities in accessible local arts and culture to celebrate the fragile beauty of the cherry blossom. To sustain and renew Vancouver’s cherry tree heritage. Cherry blossom viewing has become a joyful Festival springtime tradition in our city now as people marvel as 54 different varieties blossom across our city. For more information, visit: www.vcbf.ca

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