

Celebrate a
Vietnamese
Autumn Moon
Festival
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The Source

forum of diversity

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Photo courtesy of L'Alliance Française de Vancouver



Verbatim 

Diversity in the classroom

by TINA QU

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been able to grow up where I did. During my childhood, no matter what school I went to, there was always a wide range of students with different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and different lifestyles, experiences and interests. Not only was everyone included, but everyone was also celebrated. As a young girl, I did not understand the significance of diversity. I have to admit that perhaps the only reason why I loved it so much was that it meant more food and games on Multicultural Day.

As I entered high school, however, things around me changed. Our classroom slowly became more homogeneous. One year, two students (one girl, one boy) of First Nations descent left. The next year, we lost a Latina with whom I was very close. There was no more Multicultural Day nor Multicultural club. It didn't bother me too much at first: there was still a pretty large group of Chinese Canadians like me that I liked to hang around with.

During high school, I fell in love with learning new languages, partly because of my family's tendency to go traveling, partly because of my Latina friend who left. I took advantage of the courses my school offered, learning both French and Spanish. Through these classes I began to rebuild my understanding of other cultures and the rest of the world. But I didn't just want to learn about these incredibly rich cultures – I wanted to share them. The problem was that there was no one to share them with.

The fact that my school was becoming less diverse, and less culturally aware, bothered me. I observed that my

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Newcomers are the new francophiles

by XI CHEN

Vive la langue française! A quirky historical fact – prior to the Gold Rush in 1858, French was the most spoken language in western Canada. French also has a long and illustrative history in the international arena aside from Canada. INSEAD, a reputable international business school, ranked French number two after English and ahead of Mandarin and Spanish in its 2018 list of world's most powerful languages, based on criteria of geography, economy,

communication, knowledge, media and diplomacy.

For those who learn French these days in Vancouver, some see the language as a door opener in Canada and others just love the language.

A trend Karen Rolston, director of the Career and Professional Program at UBC extended learning, has seen in recent years is that immigrants who were not exposed to French in the past are interested in taking up the language after they moved to Canada.

"Most students are professionals. We see 50/50 with half learn-

ing for work-related purposes and the other half learning for travel or personal interest. With French there is definitely a more committed group that goes to the advanced levels," she says. According to her, UBC extended learning French program sees over 600 registrations per calendar year for its evening, weekend and online classes.

To each his/her own – À chacun(e) ses raisons

"I am almost obsessive at this point about French, but I don't have the opportunity to speak it very much," says Luke Auffen-

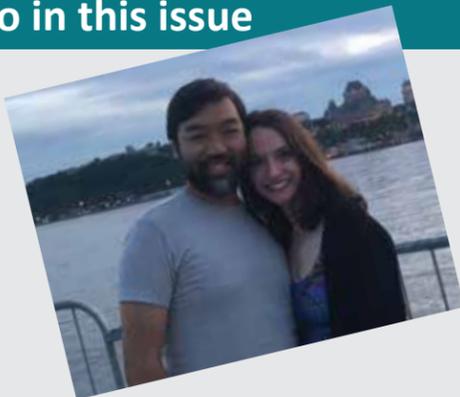
berg, during a Sunday event for the Vancouver French-language meetup with more than 20 people gathering around in a coffee-shop to practice their French.

Auffenberg, a U.S. native, started learning French at McGill University after studying Spanish and Latin in his teenage years. After his recent move to Vancouver, he started looking into permanent residency and found out he can get a lot of extra points for a certain proficiency level in French.

Motivated by his love for languages and to pass the comprehensive language test in

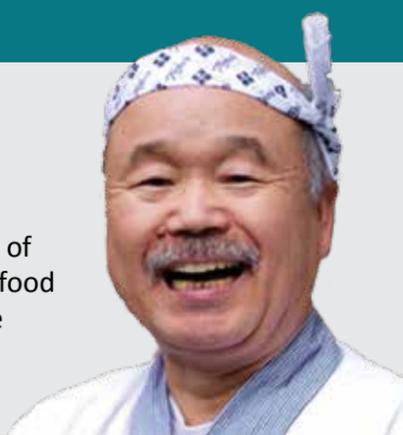
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Cultural Spotlight



Photo courtesy of Autumn Moon Festival

A Vietnamese moon for Vancouver

by COLLEEN ADDISON

From Vietnam to Vancouver... via the Yukon? Kim Dinh now celebrates the Autumn Moon Festival of Vietnam with Vancouverites, but that festival has come by a circuitous route. Dinh's original immigration – and the festival's first Canadian incarnation – was in the Yukon, where Dinh moved to be with her husband.

"I went straight from home to Whitehorse. From +40C to -40C!" laughs Dinh. "Actually, it turned out not so bad. We started the festival, and it was a big success!"

That festival, which now takes place in the lower mainland, reflects similar Autumn Moon Festivals from Vietnam. This year, on September 7, Dinh, who is now the Vancouver director of the Canada Vietnam Society, will host lantern-making



Photo by Colleen Addison

▲ Kim Dinh, director of the Canada Vietnam Society.

workshops at Mackin House in Coquitlam and at the Outlet Work Room in Port Coquitlam later in the afternoon. The workshops will be followed on September 14 with celebrations and a lantern parade, beginning at the Leigh Square Plaza in Port Coquitlam and at All Saints Parish Hall in Coquitlam.

An autumn moon and a midnight sun

Dinh moved to Whitehorse because of family, and this theme of family and children is still at the heart of her festival.

A story at the heart of the festival teaches children how to care for nature and how to forgive, explains Dinh.

"Chu Cuoi is a special legend of Vietnam," she says. "If you look at the moon's shadow, it looks like a big tree with a boy seated in it. We built a legend from this picture."

In the legend, a boy, Chu Cuoi, disrespects a Banyan tree, a piece of nature in every Vietnamese village, Dinh continues.

"The trees are amazing!" says Dinh. "They can be a thousand years old. You have to take care of the tree, keep it very clean. Chu Cuoi was in charge of the tree. He peed on the tree and yelled. Suddenly the tree uprooted itself and flew to the moon. Chu Cuoi was scared, and he followed the tree. Now, maybe five hundred years later, he's still there. So we light the lanterns to show him the way to come home."

Dinh's festival also features legends from other Asian countries, she says.

"Hang Nga is another legend from China," she recounts. "A king wanted to kill all the subjects to gain longevity. His queen was angry. She went up to the moon and lived there. So we have the queen of the moon."

The festival will also have mooncakes. In Vietnam, children give and receive the cakes, made from rice syrup, an exchange that symbolizes a key part of Vietnamese culture.

"We offer cake to parents and grandparents, and they give a share to their kids," says Dinh. "This is our religion, ancestor worship. We keep the family as a strong core in Vietnam."

Lighting the way

It's the children who are in charge of the lanterns at this festival, says Dinh.

"They start with a bamboo frame, and they put the paper on around a cup or jar, [something to] put a candle in," she says. "It takes a little bit of skill. Then we join the parade!"

Hand-made lanterns are not usual in Vietnam, where the lanterns are bought. But, notes Dinh, making lanterns by hand allows the festival to be more inclusive.

"Before I came to Canada, I worked in the Cultural Department in Ho Chi Minh City," she says. "We thought about the poor and started to organize workshops. All kids enjoyed making lanterns, and it spread to the schools. Now it's run by youth groups, and every city does it."

Activities like lantern-making and festivals like this one can brighten a child's life, Dinh points out.

"You grow up with this memory, then your childhood becomes colourful," she comments. "Not just cartoons, movies, picture books. [You] carry it, when you grow up." ✍

For more information, please visit: www.coquitlamheritage.ca/ eventslist.org or www.portcoquitlam.ca/recreation/leigh-square-community-arts-village/

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Practicing everyday philosophy

by GINA HSU

Valerie Malla will be moderating a philosophers' cafe titled *Culturalism versus racism: What is the difference between them? How is our DNA connected to these concepts?* at the Anvil Centre on September 11.

Malla, a philosophy and psychology student at Simon Fraser University (SFU), shares her views on philosophical contemplation and on using wisdom to engage in discussions about race and racism.

The importance of being contemplative

Philosophy and philosophical discussions can contribute to society, says Malla. "The methods of philosophy get us to contemplate various aspects of our existence" beyond our daily, quotidian focus, and being contemplative "frees our mind to consider different perspectives so we will not jump to conclusions hastily."



▲ Valerie Malla will be moderating a conversation on how to address racism at the Anvil Centre.

Malla also believes that philosophical contemplation is key to becoming aware of our biases so that we can try to be more objective. Although she acknowledges that total objectivity is not possible, she thinks that with awareness and practice we can get a lot closer to being objective, which can then make a genuine difference on matters such as racism.

Using wisdom to navigate difficult conversations

As one of the moderators at the SFU Philosophers' Café, Malla facilitates public discussions about culture, race, and building a more inclusive society. While discussion topics can sometimes be sensitive, she strives to create a non-hostile space for the exchange of ideas.

"It is unfortunate that there are no real 'safe' places for sympathetic and constructive dialogue about social issues where people know they will not be judged based on their perspectives," comments Malla. She recounts incidents where even participants at the Philosophers' Café were cautious about sharing their views or had their opinions dismissed for being politically incorrect. Rather than embracing such a manner of "non-dialogue," she asserts that "we need to allow opposing views to be aired, and to allow for enquiry rather than conclusions."

Instead of shying away from or evading discussions about certain social issues, Malla stresses that we should engage these



conversations contemplatively. "With [such] issues as difficult as racism, we need first to calm down, and then employ our higher faculties," she advises. "And you don't have to be a philosopher to do this – anyone can do it. It's just wisdom."

When asked what she thinks is the biggest obstacle preventing people from talking and learning more about race and racism, Malla stresses the importance of gaining wisdom through self-improvement. "Having respect, kindness, compassion, and sympathy are very

natural human expressions," she says. "We can only truly facilitate outwardly when we prioritize these qualities inwardly within ourselves."

To build a better multicultural society, Malla asserts that "we have been multicultural since time immemorial, so we need to remember that." Thoughts, emotions, and behaviour are a product of our inner/outer environment, she says, and "we have to be honest with ourselves instead of shifting blame or hiding from the truth so as not to live in a false context."

Practicing this awareness and gaining wisdom from the thought process speaks to Malla's belief that philosophical contemplation is applicable to our everyday life. "We are all philosophers practicing philosophy," she says. "This is a remarkable world in which we get to practice the strength and impact of our very presence and attention, as philosophers, in the everyday." ✍

For more information, please visit www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/events/2019/03/being-called-a-racist.html

► "French education" from page 1

December, Auffenberg is spending at least one hour every day outside of work to study French, plus coming to the two-hour weekend meetup to practice his conversation skills. "It is a concentrated and extensive effort, reading graphic novels, listening to podcasts, etc.," he adds.

Auffenberg is not alone out of the small sample of people the paper interviewed. Rinaldo Ferlin, a project manager who is originally from Brazil, has been taking French with Alliance Française since March for the same immigration purpose. He is at an intermediate level now and plans to continue on regardless of the immigration test. "I would like to be fluent in French. I have friends in France and I would like to go there and speak [French] like I speak English. That is my goal," Ferlin says.

A number of students in his class started French from scratch in March and are dedicated to further advancing their levels.

Gina Hernandez, a fellow student who is originally from Mexico, is taking on French as her fourth language for both professional and personal purposes.

"I love to travel and I work in the music industry. I am a music distribution coordinator and a marketing assistant for the Vancouver Intercultural Orchestra. When you work in the music industry, for you to be able to open markets in Canada such as Quebec or Nova Scotia, you need to know another language, especially French," she says.

Phil Chen, another student from the same March cohort, whose first language is Mandar-



▲ Students of the French language at the Alliance Française.

in, is taking on the French challenge after he mastered English.

"I have been to France and I like the culture. When I was learning English I remember how much I enjoyed it, so I am hoping to repeat the experience," he says.

Rising demand for French classes

The Alliance Française, the largest French-language school and one of the oldest non-profit organizations in Vancouver, is also planning for an expansion to accommodate the rising demand for French classes in Vancouver. The expanded campus, slated to open in 2021/2022, is expected to double the size of the current one with 11 classrooms. The school already has one of the largest French libraries in British Columbia.

According to Eloise Lorient, event coordinator at the school, student enrolment has been increasing 35 percent per year in the last five years.

"Per year we welcome 2,500 students. More than half are kids or teenagers. We have a lot of students who are returning students so we see about 4,300 class subscriptions a year. Cor-

porate and public services classes also represent 10 to 15 percent of our total activities," she says.

The school is celebrating its 115th anniversary this year. According to Lorient's research of school data, it is estimated that between 150,000 to 200,000 students have gone through their programs over the school's centennial history.

Government data tells the same story. Based on data from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, French immersion enrolment has increased 30 percent in the decade leading to 2016. Nearly 6,000 students are enrolled in French language schools between 2016 to 2017, a 25 percent increase over the previous 5 years. One third of public school students are enrolled in core French in the academic year of 2016 to 2017.

Achieving some level of French, one of the two official languages of Canada, is mandatory in grade schools in some Canadian provinces, but not in British Columbia.

It is estimated that around 7 percent of British Columbia's population are bilingual in Eng-

Where can you learn French in Vancouver

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lish and French; however, the Francophone community does seem to be growing over the years. Based on the above government data, in the decade to 2016 there was an increase of 21 percent of people who speak French most often at home.

With growing interest in French language learning, it looks like there will be many more French speakers in the years to come. ✍

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Promoting children's safety through artificial intelligence

by NAILA TOPAN

Envision a safe space where you are able to play a game with your peers, controlled by each of the participants' emotions.

Students at Simon Fraser University (SFU) have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) initiative designed to support the development of empathy in children. The EmotoTent AI generates highly accurate holographic images in a tent based on the emotion each individual is feeling when encountering a mem-

children...rather than a teacher where there could be a power imbalance."

A lab for the modern world

The idea of the TECI lab is to enable a physically tangible learning experience for children to create a technologically interactive learning environment. The lab serves as a collaborative space for students of varying levels to work on technological concepts that can facilitate an environment to promote self-regulation and emotional development.



Photo courtesy of SFU

▲ SFU students producing holograms by reproducing emotional memories.

ory event. Participants are then able to guide each other through their emotions throughout the game using compassion and empathy. Each individual has the ability to edit the system if any minor discrepancies in capturing their feelings occur.

An experimental learning environment

The EmotoTent was created for a design competition at the Association for Computing Machinery International Conference on Interaction Design and Children (ACM IDC), where the theme focused on children's feelings of safety in schools.

"The EmotoTent is meant to be a design provocation, a call to action to the academic community and to society more broadly," says Alissa Antle, PH.D., professor at SFU, director of the Tangible Embodied Child-Computer Interaction (TECI) lab, and the project lead of EmotoTent.

"I've played around with the tent in the past; it's a safe, contained space – something we have looked at before. The question was how you can augment that space to enable them to work on understanding how their feelings and the feelings of other people work," she adds, explaining the conceptualization of the initiative.

Students came together in the TECI lab to create the safe, experiential learning environment of the EmotoTent. Part of cultivating this environment was to include a fluffy dog character named Nana, based on the character in Peter Pan, to help mediate sad feelings.

"Nana's role was to look after the children, figuratively and physically. Pets have a big role to play in children's emotions," says Antle. "We entered the dog into the equation to help keep them safe, to have someone to play with as well as the other

Antle poses the question of whether there is a positive role for technology to play in doing something we couldn't otherwise do, or a way to work with current interactive and digital technologies to create support for learning environments. Having done some work in emotional regulation using technology previously, she wants to explore this topic more in depth.

"Everyone's experiences now in the modern world are mediated by technology," she says. "We need to enhance our education system in this way."

She emphasizes that the EmotoTent is less of a functional, active piece and more of a call to the academic community to understand the importance of creating systems for emotional and social learning.

"The bigger thing is stressing the importance of teaching children empathy and compassion, especially as we become more complex and diverse societies," says Antle. "We will function better with children who have solid empathy skills and have experienced it as part of their upbringing."

To her, it is critical that time is spent on teaching children how to understand their emotions at a young age.

"One way to counter increased environmental and societal pressures, marginalization and violence in schools, is to develop emotional regulation, empathy and compassion in children," she says.

Antle feels that although she and her team are technology developers, they want to promote social and impact the world at large. ✉

For more information, visit www.antle.iat.sfu.ca and www.sfu.ca/siat/stories/graduate/ACM_IDC_2019_Design_contest_finalists.html

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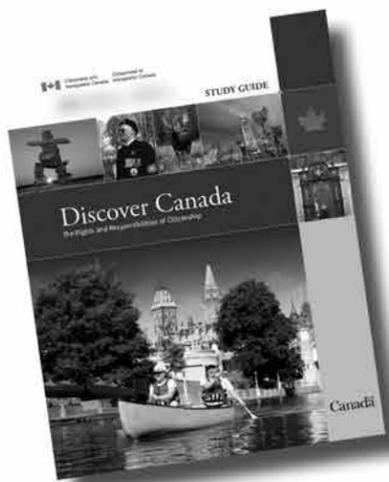
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The diversity information tool

by MATTHEW FRASER

Although Canadians are increasingly connected via media and social experience, people frequently find themselves separated by both language and political ideals.

Enter Diversity Votes, a website and media initiative that aims to educate the general public about the demographic, economic and social characteristics affecting electoral strategies, increase the accountability of regional and national media sources by making their work more accessible in various languages, hold candidates and political parties responsible to the greater population, and inspire informed discussions regarding Canada's diverse voting patterns while bringing disparate voices into the national discourse.

Sharing the small stories

When asked about the impetus for starting Diversity Votes, sources director Blythe Irwin stresses the need to validate ethnic media voices using both data and new access to their work.

"In order to validate ethnic media voices with the statistical data of the population they serve, we produced a citizenship education tool. Diversity Votes combines demographics with ethnic media to showcase what's being said in these communities about upcoming elections [and political matters in general]," she says.

The goal was to produce a citizen education tool using the statistical data of Canada's population as its backbone, while providing access to the conversations and problems media sources specific to ethnic communities address that may be forgotten or passed over in

the wider media spotlight. Two clear and important examples of this have been the conflict some Jewish communities have experienced with "Shemini Atzeret" and "Simchat Torah" falling on federal election day, as well as the Italian-Canadian community's request for Trudeau to apologize for the detention of over 700 Italian-Canadians during World War II. These community-specific topics may fall through

the U.S," says Irwin. She continues by pointing out how closely linked Canada is to America both economically and culturally. But there is a downside to this close connection: "It is becoming increasingly evident that Canadians are not insulated from the U.S. as the polarization in the U.S. has led to an influx of migrants (to Canada) but also to anti-multicultural and anti-immigrant rhetoric here in Canada."

“ Diversity Votes combines demographics with ethnic media to showcase what’s being said in these communities about upcoming elections.

Blythe Irwin, director of Diversity Votes

the cracks or be brushed over by larger Canadian media.

Irwin reminds us that as an important benefit of Canadian citizenship, people have the right to free speech and to make their voices heard, and that the increased prominence gained by many communities will always lead to the exposure of frictions.

Between neighbors

Because Canada shares an ideologically porous border with the United States, Canadians often feel themselves drawn into the tide of American politics while still hoping to remain distinct from their southern neighbours.

"The States is our monster neighbour which gets all of the attention and has a much larger population; Canadians feel the need to differentiate themselves in perception from the U.S. to the rest of the world, who might otherwise just lump us in with

Irwin explains that though populist democracy is often an attack on multicultural democracy, immigrants are often just a pawn of a bigger crisis. Since populism frequently works as a tool to enhance larger divisions in societies, she posits that this is a time and place where making diversity inclusive rather than divisive can play a major role in protecting the wider Canadian population.

Bring us closer to them

As social media spreads various bad faith political ideals or open attempts at misinformation, Irwin wants to be clear that gullibility does not discriminate along ethnic lines. In reality, all demographics are equally susceptible to fear mongering, and education may be the most important factor in helping people make strong political decisions.

"As a society we need to ensure that all Canadians can participate in our democracy, and that they have full access to the education and resources needed to make informed decisions," she says.

Lastly, Irwin invites Canadians to educate themselves about the interplay between diversity and politics.

"Canadians can be open to new things, new points of view, leave our echo chambers and talk to each other and not just our Facebook followers and friends," she says. "Communication can bring 'us' and 'them' closer together."



▲ Blythe Irwin, sources director, Diversity Votes.



▲ Andrew Griffith, author, immigration, diversity policy and data expert.

Photos courtesy of Diversity Votes

For more information, please visit www.diversityvotes.ca

► "Verbatim" from page 1

language classes were getting smaller, and my friends were starting to go to a coffee shop at lunch on days when the school served naan and butter chicken or chow mein, instead of sandwiches or pizza.

However, once in a while, something would happen to assure me that hope for cultural diversity at my school was not completely lost. For example, once a year, the junior school would celebrate their Multicultural Day. Music would of-

ten flow up to the senior school. Students would dance along and sometimes head down to join the younger kids if they had spares. When a new exchange program opened this year, more than half of the students in my grade applied, including myself. The thought of being able to go to another country, in this case, France or Spain, for two months, was extremely thrilling to any teenager.

High school students are busy. Maybe people were dropping language classes simply because

they couldn't fit them into their schedule. Maybe students were going off campus for lunch simply because the library is right beside the coffee shop.

I want to be a part of a community that is comprised of people from all over the world. I want to be a part of a community that is interested in learning about different cultures. I want to be a part of a community that is both accepting and expressive. And I think that my school, however flawed, represents that community for me.

Portrait

Vivian Kayeg El Jamal, international student

by AASTHA PANDEY

With strong family ties, a mixed ethnic and cultural background, and an extremely protective father, Vivan Kayeg El Jamal never really dreamt of moving abroad for education.

Born in Sao Paulo, Brazil to a Lebanese and Italian immigrant family, El Jamal experienced all the

to let her move abroad at the age of 17. As a minor, she also needed authorization from the Brazilian government to leave the country. But she persisted in following her dream, and in 2013 moved to Vancouver to pursue her undergraduate degree in Psychology and Economics at UBC.

El Jamal faced many challenges in adjusting to life in Vancouver and at UBC. For example, her graduating high school class at

and now “I just talk, and hope they understand!”

As a protected 17-year-old, El Jamal also found it difficult to manage the chores of everyday life. “I love cooking, but I didn’t realize that cooking every day would be a struggle, plus I would have to remember to do grocery shopping too, and most of the food would go to waste,” she says.

Her biggest struggle occurred when she had to move off cam-

“ I would always be late because I could never find the class. I was so intimidated because the class sizes were so big compared to my high school!

Kayeg El Jamal, international student at UBC

challenges of a kid living among three different cultures. She was intensely family-oriented, and grew up in a large family with homes on the same street. “I would always be at my grandparent’s place when there was no one home,” she says.

El Jamal always thought she’d stay in Sao Paulo for post-secondary education. However, she had the opportunity to sign up for a summer conference at University of British Columbia (UBC) in grade 11; when she visited the campus for the conference she was mesmerized by the beautiful campus and the learning spaces that UBC had to offer. This led her to do research about Canada and further research about UBC. Eventually, she realized it was the place for her after high school.

It took El Jamal some time to convince her protective father

her small international school in Sao Paulo had only 12 students, with only 500 in the entire school. Entering UBC – a school with 60,000 students – was completely out of her comfort zone. “I would always be late because I could never find the class,” she laughs. “I was so intimidated because the class sizes were so big compared to my high school!”

Getting used to the language here was tough too. “Back home I was able to use both English and Portuguese at school, but here I had to speak English 100% of the time,” says El Jamal. “It was hard to find a perfect translation for some words,” and this sometimes stopped her from being able to fully express herself. She was afraid students from English-speaking countries would make fun of her accent. Eventually, she grew more confident,

pus after losing on-campus housing. Missing her friends who were still living on campus, “I would always stay over at UBC at a friend’s because I lived alone downtown,” says Jamal.

Despite the challenges, El Jamal found many positive changes in her new home. For one, she felt a sense of freedom and safety in Vancouver. “We don’t walk or take the bus back home because it’s not that safe, so it was very shocking for me that [Vancouver] was so safe,” she explains. She also loved that she could get everywhere she needed to go within walking distance: “It was shocking, but also so freeing!”

Does she miss home? El Jamal admits she’s been very divided on this issue. “We always miss what we don’t have at the moment; when I’m home I miss Vancouver,



▲ Vivian Kayeg El Jamal, international student.

when I’m in Vancouver, I miss home,” she says.

While she wants to pursue career opportunities in Toronto, El Jamal also mentions that ultimately she wants to be close to her family. She wants her kids

to grow up with her parents the way she grew up in a close-knit family with her grandparents.

Wherever she goes in the future, Jamal is grateful for the opportunity she has had to create a new, independent life in Vancouver. ✍

Ramya’s Treasure comes to Vancouver

by KYLIE LUNG

Experience a fusion of Indian and Canadian storytelling with a reading of *Ramya’s Treasure* (2018) by Pratap Reddy. Reddy will present his book Sept. 6 at the South Hill branch of the Vancouver Public Library. *Ramya’s Treasure* is a novel that blends two seemingly disparate worlds into a relatable tale of retro-spection and reflection.

Reddy came to Canada in 2002 from the city of Hyderabad in southern India at the time he was working for a large company in India, but he found that it was not conducive to his writing dreams. Reddy was looking for a fresh place for creative inspiration, so he decided to uproot his life and head to Ontario for a change in scenery. In no time, Reddy’s authorly ambitions were realized. In 2008, he was bestowed the Mississauga Arts Council award for Best Emerging Artists and in 2009, received a grant from the Ontario Arts Council.

“I was conscious that my style could reflect the colonial hangover which the educational institutes in India seem to encourage, so I attended creative courses of Humber School of Writers and Ryerson Uni-

versity,” says Reddy. “I wanted to tell a story in a way which would be acceptable to readers and publishers in Canada, even though the subject matter and treatment would be East Indian.”

Reddy has poems, short stories, and novels published in the United States, Canada, as well as his homeland of India. His work displays that leaving India and coming to Canada is far from the hardest part of the emigration process. In his most recent work, *Ramya’s Treasure*, Reddy’s heroine Ramya is having a mid-life crisis

after several years in her new home.

Little treasures

Ramya’s Treasure starts up 15 years after Ramya and her husband have immigrated from India. Ever since arriving in Canada, Ramya has straddled two different cultures, but after a divorce rattles her world she decides to delve back into her past.

Memories play a huge part in Ramya’s journey within the novel and the past comes flooding back to her when she finds a sandalwood box from her childhood. Within the box she finds childhood memories that bring her current circumstances into perspective. Ramya delves into the treasure, and the book becomes an intertwining tale of life back in India juxtaposed with current day.

Reddy based these special treasures off his own version of a treasure box from his childhood.

“It was something in which my sibling and I would store stuff when we were children,” says Reddy. “The items were of little value to others but were beyond price to us.”

A female perspective

Choosing to inhabit a female perspective ended up being a spontaneous outcome of Reddy’s plot.

“I wanted to write about a vulnerable individual who fac-

es challenges on many fronts, personal and professional to name a couple,” he says. “Who could be more vulnerable than a woman who follows her husband who has decided, most probably unilaterally, to immigrate?”

Being newly divorced and in a country she did not fully choose to move to, Ramya is left to her own devices to re-discover who she is without the influence of her husband.

“Ramya isn’t consciously modelled after somebody I know,” says Reddy, “Neither is she a collage made up of characteristics of various people in my circle of acquaintances. Ramya is completely a figment of imagination, an imagination which I trust is rooted in an author’s sensitivity to the world around him.”

Propelled by her old treasures and the power of memory, Ramya navigates this new chapter as she enters the second half of her life. The memories do lead to an epiphany moment the reader must discover on their own.

“Like any person who’s leading an unhappy life, Ramya is given to mulling over her past,” says Reddy. “But in case of Ramya, I am happy to add, her bouts of reminiscences eventually lead to making a courageous choice.” ✍

For more information, please visit www.vpl.bibliocommons.com/events/5d378ae61e29962f0088a735



▲ Pratap Reddy, author of *Ramya’s Treasure*.

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MOSAIC Settlement Services
604 254 9626 ext 1010
clee@mosaicbc.org
www.mosaicbc.org/sip

Public Service Announcement: September 1 – 15, 2019 Free Community Activities

Food Connect Program

Food connects people. Join us and meet new people. In this program, you will learn how to cook dishes from different cultures, kitchen safety and how the various kitchen appliances work.

- 🕒 Mondays, August 12 – September 23, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm
- 📍 Brentwood Community Resource Centre, 2055 Rosser Ave., Burnaby
- ☎ Eliza 604 438 8214 || echan@mosaicbc.org

Drop-In English Conversation Circle for Work Permit Holders

- Learn effective communication skills and practice workplace English
- Familiarize yourself with Canadian workplace culture
- Meet new people and have meaningful conversations
- 🕒 Mondays, July 29 – September 30 (excluding statutory holidays), 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver
- ☎ Rey 604 438 8214 || rblasco@mosaicbc.org

MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S GROUP

English Conversation Circle for Persian-Speaking Women

Join this free conversation circle for women to improve your English. Persian-speaking volunteer assistants provide support to Persian-speaking women of all English levels. Topics are relevant to everyday life and are chosen by the group.

- 🕒 Tuesdays, 10 am – 2 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver
- ☎ Mehrzad 604 254 9626 ext 1013 || msalari@mosaicbc.org

Book Club for Multicultural Women

Join our book club this Summer. We will practice reading an English book together and increase our knowledge of the English language.

- 🕒 Monday, September 9, 16, 23, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver
- ☎ Mehrzad 604 254 9626 ext 1013 || msalari@mosaicbc.org

English Conversation Circle for Refugee Claimants

Practice your English and learn more about life in Canada in a friendly, welcoming environment! Childminding available. Every Tuesday from 6:00-8:00 pm, make connections and become more comfortable speaking in English through activities and conversations. Open to all refugee claimants, any English level welcome.

- 🕒 Tuesdays, August 21 – September 18, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
- 📍 MOSAIC Head Office, 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver
- ☎ Katherine 604 254 9626 || kgriffin@mosaicbc.org

SENIORS CLUB ACTIVITIES

Activities at MOSAIC 5575 Boundary Road, Vancouver

English Conversation Circle (Beginner) **

When: Thursdays, September 3-December 10 14, 10 am-12 pm

Holistic Stretching and Patting Acupressure Exercise **

When: Mondays, September 9-December 9, 8:30 am-9:30 am

Knitting Circle

When: Tuesdays, September 17-November 19, 1-3 pm

Activities at MOSAIC 5902 Kingsway, Burnaby

English Conversation Circle

When: Thursdays, September 19-November 14, 9:30-11:30 am

Activities at Brentwood Community Resource Centre, 2055 Rosser Avenue, Burnaby

English Conversation Circle

When: Fridays, September 20-November 15, 1-3 pm

Qigong

When: Fridays, September 20-November 15, 9-10 am

Tai Chi

When: Fridays, September 20-November 15, 10:30 am-12 pm

Contact: Jennifer 604 218 7347 or jng@mosaicbc.org

**Daisy 604 254 9626 ext 1005 or daisyau@mosaicbc.org

LGBTQ

I Belong Peer Support Social Group for LGBTQ Newcomers

Meet new people, make friends and participate in fun activities! Our peer support group gives you a chance to learn about community resources, share experiences and information and build up your social connections. Language support provided by volunteers (please contact us in advance to ensure that we have a volunteer who speaks your language).

- 🕒 September 9, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
- ☎ 604 254 9626 || ibelong@mosaicbc.org

MOSAIC is a multilingual non-profit organization dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society.

Postcard



Photo courtesy of Simon Yee

Honeymoon in Québec City

In July, my wife Sherry and I travelled to Québec City for the second part of our Canadian honeymoon vacation. We had previously visited Montréal in December 2018 and we loved La belle province so much we had to come back in the summer to experience one of the oldest and most romantic cities in Canada.

We arrived at Jean Lesage International Airport on a Sunday after eight hours in travel – which included a stopover in Toronto – and promptly made our way to the Hotel Le Clos Saint-Louis, situated inside the historic walls of Old Québec, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Billed as a romantic hotel for couples, this intimate hotel has the look and feel of a 19th century Victorian house, blending both British and French decorative styles. We stayed in the Maid's Room on the fourth floor; it was a cozy room with a comfortable bed and historical ornaments. As a hotel maintaining its historical look, it had no elevators – we definitely got a workout walking up and down a winding, circular staircase every day during our stay!

Québec City is definitely a city which values its cultural and historical role and influence on Canadian and international affairs. The city served as the capital of New France, the site of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, a fortress defending against America during the Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812. It was also a venue for important conferences such as planning out Canadian Confederation and coordinating World War II operations. Its streets are lined with statues from French, Canadian and Québécois history, from explorers Samuel de Champlain and Jacques Cartier to the Québec soldiers fighting in wars abroad.

Compared to Montréal and Seoul, Québec City is a much smaller city, with many of its attractions in or within walking distance from Old Québec. We spent time in different parts of the city, each of which had its own unique, romantic charm. We browsed the local crafts at the artisan markets in the Lower Town, checked out the historic buildings of the Upper Town, walked along the waterfront in Lévis, strolled the laid-back area of Saint-Jean-Baptiste, ate delicious food in the trendy district of Saint-Roch, and drove a rental car up

to the idyllic Île d'Orléans. We also visited many landmarks around the city: touring the residence of the Governor General at the Citadelle, strolling the historical Plains of Abraham, critiquing art at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and viewing the city from the Observatoire de la Capitale, the city's tallest skyscraper.

Unlike our previous outings this past year, we resolved to take it easy during our visit, free from transiting between stations on a subway or travelling long distances from one attraction to another. Early on in our trip, we promptly got ourselves a couples' massage and enjoyed afternoon tea at the Fairmont Le Château Frontenac, one of the world's most photographed and iconic hotels! We also resolved to go to a mix of both touristy and local-only restaurants and bars. Old Québec had no shortage of fantastic restaurants, such as Le Continental, L'Omelette and Tournebroche. In Saint-Roch, we lucked out when we visited the Maelstrøm – the bartender there gave us a list of great places we had to visit, such as



▲ Tea time for Simon Yee.

Sardines, La Buvette Scott and MacFly Bar Arcade. All these venues provided memorable moments and amazing food during our honeymoon!

Québec City is both the cradle of French civilization in Canada and one of our best and relaxing vacation destinations. For the last leg of our honeymoon, we couldn't have asked for a more romantic and intimate setting. Québec City felt like a world away from the hustle and bustle back home where we could enjoy each other's company over delicious food, beautiful surroundings and charming locals. ✍

SIMON YEE

Photo by Sherry Lee

TAIWANfest 2019 Discovering similarities while celebrating unique cultural identity

by KRISTY DOCKSTADER

TAIWANfest 2019 aims to highlight the vibrant culture and history of Taiwan this Labour Day weekend. The festival will run Aug. 31 to Sept. 1, marking their 30th anniversary in Vancouver.

Although the festival has always aimed to teach and show off the stories of Taiwan, since 2016 it has taken on a slightly new spin by creating the *Dialog With Asia* series. For this

“We are trying to go beyond multiculturalism and are trying to do a bit more of interculturalism,” Wu explains.

The festival takes approximately a year and a half to organize due to the many collaborations and thought that is put into each performance and aspect.

This year will include a fashion exhibit called *Taiwan New DNA*, featuring traditional Indigenous Taiwanese designs. As with so many Indigenous populations worldwide,

“The elders believe that the Indigenous techniques and fashion should not just be kept within the Indigenous community, it should be part of Taiwan’s new DNA.

Charlie Wu, managing director of TaiwanFest

series, a different Asian country is chosen each year, and the events of the festival focus upon the cultural similarities between Taiwan and the chosen countries through multiple art forms. Past years included the Philippines and Hong Kong, with the current spotlight on Vietnam for the 2019 event.

“We are trying to find a relevance within the diversity among each other, and trying to explore similarities and connections, while hoping to tell a different story from what people have already heard,” explains Charlie Wu, managing director for the festival.

Cultural courage – New DNA

The overarching theme this year is ‘courage.’ To explore this theme, the festival will

colonization has had devastating effects on loss of traditions and culture for Indigenous Taiwanese people. The fashion department at Shih Chien University has partnered with Indigenous elders from Taiwan’s Indigenous community to teach the students about traditional Indigenous techniques, designs and cultures. This led to a collection of unique fashion pieces ready to be shared and shown off.

“The motivation behind this project is to make the Indigenous art mainstream. The elders believe that the Indigenous techniques and fashion should not just be kept within the Indigenous community, it should be part of Taiwan’s new DNA,” Wu explains.

Taiwanese cooking – Meet the chefs

According to Wu, another important piece of identity for many cultures is their culinary dishes. To feature the best of Taiwan, the festival has included a Friendship Kitchen program, which allows participants the opportunity to take a cooking class from one of many highly experienced chefs while learning about the influences that define Taiwanese food. In attendance this year will be Chef Nguyễn Mạnh Hùng from Hanoi, Vietnam, Josie Chang from Taichung, Taiwan and Alie Huang from Tainan, Taiwan, among others.

“Be prepared to be curious and to learn about every single story, because you might find a new perspective. We encourage people to share their experiences and the things you learn,” Wu says enthusiastically.

TAIWANfest 2019 will continue to show Vancouver that although people should celebrate each culture’s unique identity, they are all a lot more similar than one may think. ✂

For more information about the festival and to view the schedule, please visit www.taiwanfest.ca



Photos courtesy of Taiwan Fest

▲ Xin Hwang, the Child Poet.

showcase the courageous struggles around topics such as female strength, Indigenous reconciliation and finding one’s identity. These stories will be told through an array of arts including music, film, fashion and food.



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POLISH FESTIVAL

Shipbuilders' Square and Pipe Shop: 115 Victory Ship Way, North Vancouver

September 8th 1:00pm-8:00pm





<p>1:00 pm - Official opening of the Polish Festival</p> <p>Market in the Pipe Shop Magic Show for Kids Games, Arts and Activities for Children Polonez - Polish Folk Dance Group Roma Gry - Dance Group</p>	<p>8:00 pm - Closing of the Polish Festival</p> <p>Parno Drom Romani Music Group Toque Flamenco - Music & Dance Band Polish Canadian Soloists Yaazda - Portland, OR Dance Party with Yaazda 6:30 pm : 8:00 pm</p>
<p>Traditional Polish cuisine (pierogies, sausages, pastries and more) and beverages (Polish beer).</p>	

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Old Soul, new life: A band's journey

by CURTIS SEUFERT

Old Soul Rebel brings their passionate, politically personal sound to the Richmond World Fest on Saturday, Aug. 11. Composed of core members Chelsea D. E. Johnson and Lola Whyte, Old Soul Rebel takes the defiant sound of soul, rock and blues as a means of expressing their rebellious life experiences.

"It's the rebellious nature of talking about when I've felt like crap, and I'm still gonna rock it. It's in our delivery when we're just screaming at the top of our lungs or just belting out the last chorus. It's how we really approach anything in this project," says Johnson.

Finding their voice

For Lola Whyte and Chelsea D. E. Johnson, music and expression have always been key facets of life. While neither come from an exclusively musical performance – Johnson was first originally involved in acting, while Whyte comes from a dancing background – they have both been able to find their creative voice through song, discovering music as a natural extension of their respective artistic passions.

For Whyte, song-writing was always a part of her cabaret dance background, and for Johnson, singing was never too far away from the art of vocal performance in theatre.

"I always thought of myself as an actress. When I moved to Vancouver, I went to see a poetry reading for the first time and I got to see CR Avery play piano and sing, and I just was like, 'Oh man, this is it!'," says Johnson. "It was like another opportunity for a monologue, like this is my story and I get to write it, and I get to express it with my voice. It just felt right, and it's just been a journey ever since then."

After meeting each other through mutual friends in the Commercial Drive music and art community, the two began swapping songs with one another. With each possessing some musical and poetic experience under their belts, it quickly became clear that the connection for this creative duo was something special.

"We sort of just realized like, 'Hey, this feels really good,' and started moving towards where we are today," says Johnson. "You just know what's right. I've been in lots of bands and with Lola, it just felt really right."

Passion and presence

Part of the connection, which comes to life through the lyrics and energy of the band's music, has to do with Whyte and Johnson's shared experiences of defiance and strength in the face of oppression. As Whyte notes, the act of taking space as queer women of colour in the realm of music in Canada makes for a rebellious action.



Photo by Mary Matheson

▲ Chelsea D E Johnson (right) and Lola Whyte of the band Old Soul Rebel.

"I'm First Nations, Chelsea is African-American, and we're female, we're queer, and gone through considerable amounts of hardship," says Whyte. "I think the sheer act of us living out our freedom, this is an act of freedom, and the fact that we can exercise it, that itself feels rebellious, even still in 2019."

As the name of their band would imply, the performative space that Johnson and Whyte take up is filled with a passionate and audacious presence as cathartic as it is life-affirming.

"I think it's just cathartic, and seeing how freeing it can be, and how much the soul can expand," says Whyte. "Like anything in life, it's a spiritual journey, but in the line of work that we do, it's hard to ignore how spiritual it feels. There's this interconnectedness with this huge community of people, and we're sharing from the heart and head."

As the band continues to find opportunities and make their own path in the music industry, Johnson and Whyte hope to travel throughout North America and the world, with no telling where they'll stop.

"That's what we've been shown. I think that's what the universe keeps pushing us towards, like going to this television show and that, and meeting all these great people. We're gonna use that and hopefully we can make good of that," says Whyte. ✍

For more information, please www.richmondworldfestival.com.

HAPPINESS

IS Our next wellness day!

Shakti Society presents
its 6th Annual Wellness day

On: September 22nd, 2019
Time: 8.00 am to 4.00 pm
Venue: Bollywood Banquet Hall,
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HAPPINESS

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Dentist, Rajyoga meditation teacher and Center Coordinator of the
Brahma Kumaris, Vancouver

For info contact: Sonia 604 307 8796 or email: shaktisociety2000@gmail.com

Cultural Calendar

August 27–September 10, 2019



Photo courtesy of TaiwanFest

by SIMON YEE

I hope everyone had a chance to enjoy their summer. I definitely had fun! The end of August and the beginning of September mark the final leg of this year's summer season. Many cultural events and festivals are squeezed in on Labour Day weekend in order to get in as many participants as possible before school starts. Why not check one or two of them out before the semester starts?

20th Vancouver International Tap Dance Festival

Aug. 26–Sept. 1
Various venues in Vancouver
www.vantapfest.com

The Vancouver International Tap Dance Festival has been bringing together international and local tap dance artists for premiere performances, workshops and intensives, and community events for 20 years. Bring your shoes, and try out the floors at the open studios, learn to tap dance at the beginner's class or watch some of the world's most passionate tap dancers amaze with their moves! For a complete list of events, check out the festival's website.

Fifth Annual Richmond World Festival

Aug. 30–31
Minoru Park, Richmond
www.richmondworldfestival.com

The Richmond World Festival returns to Minoru Park for the fifth time, once again showcasing the city's cultural diversity through food, music, sport and art. Featuring performances from over 90 musicians, culinary cook-offs, media film and art galas, and sporting exhibitions, there will be something for everyone of all ages. Admission is free! For a complete listing of performers and events, please check out their website.



▲ Visit the Chinese Opera tent at the Richmond World Festival.

Photo courtesy of Richmond World Festival

Summerset Music & Arts Festival

Aug. 30–Sept. 1
Fort Langley National Historic Site of Canada, Fort Langley
www.summersetfestival.ca

The inaugural Summerset Music Festival brings three genres of music over three days for an unforgettable summer experience. Come on down to the city's newest festival as they fill picturesque Fort Langley and celebrate the summer with live music at the Fort Langley National Historic Site. Bring your family and friends together on Labour Day weekend to hear classic rock, rock and country artists all weekend long! For an artist lineup and more information, check out the festival's website.

Namaste Canada 2019

Aug. 31, 2–8 p.m.
Massey Theatre, New Westminster
www.masseytheatre.com

The Consulate General of India in Vancouver is hosting Namaste Canada 2019, a day-long event celebrating India's rich and vi-

brant cultural heritage featuring a wide spectrum of classical and folk dances from different states of India, with dancers in their unique, colourful traditional costumes and ornaments, dancing to the rhythms of their vibrant local music. These dances depict folklore, stories and unique style forms that have joyful and vigorous, elegant and graceful hand and body movements and footwork that will mesmerize the audience!

Seventh Annual Nikkei Matsuri

Aug. 31–Sept. 1
Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Burnaby
www.nikkeimatsuri.nikkeiplace.org

This annual celebration of Japanese culture hosted by the Nikkei Cultural Centre returns to Burnaby for the seventh year, featuring food, performances, games and entertainment. Bring the kids down to chow down on a Japadog, play ring toss and mini-golf, dress up in a yukata traditional dress and cheer on talented musical and dancing contenders vying for the Matsuri Star.



▲ Chow down on Japanese food at Nikkei Matsuri.

Photo courtesy of Nikkei Matsuri

29th Annual Serbian Days

Aug. 31–Sept. 1
Saint Sava Church, Vancouver
www.serbianday.com

Bring the kids to this family-friendly event to partake in the celebration of all things Serbian at the 29th annual Serbian Days at Saint Sava Church, a yearly opportunity to get to know the Serbian religion, nationality, culture and language right here in Vancouver. Learn about the heritage and folklore of Serbian culture, compete in a soccer tournament, enjoy grilled barbecued meats and listen to traditional trumpet and popular music.

TaiwanFest 2019

Aug. 31–Sept. 2
Various sites in Downtown Vancouver
www.taiwanfest.ca

The TaiwanFest of Vancouver is packed with food and performances from the Taiwanese community. Enjoy the cultural ambiance, and learn more about the wonderful Taiwanese culture. This year's guest culture is Vietnam, featuring stories and performances from expats from Vietnam in Taiwan and vice-versa. Visit the website for more information on concert times and performances.

Monica vs. The Internet: Tales of a Social Justice Warrior

Various showtimes between Sept. 5–15
The Nest on Granville Island, Vancouver
www.vancouverfringe.com

The Vancouver Fringe Festival is happening again this September with lots of shows and performances to entertain and inspire independent theatregoers of all ages. One of these shows is *Monica vs. The Internet*, a multimedia storytelling/stand-up that

will leave you in tears, both the laughy kind and the heart ones. Storyteller and comedian Monica Ogden sheds light on activism in the age of the internet, mixed-race identity and why white feminism is like Lays chips. Check out the Fringe Festival website for tickets, showtimes and more information.

Fabrizio and Cabriolet In: Water, Dirt, Breeze, Fire!

Various showtimes between Sept. 5–15
False Creek Gym on Granville Island, Vancouver
www.vancouverfringe.com

Another of the Fringe Festival's performances is a comedy from Portland playwrights Summer Olsson and Ari Rapkin, *Fabrizio and Cabriolet In: Water, Dirt, Breeze, Fire!* Their accents are from somewhere in Europe. Their clothes are from somewhere in the '70s. Their follies are universal. In this hilarious show, full of physical comedy and idiotic foibles, two egotistical vaudevillians – Fabrizio and Cabriolet – try to pull off a spectacular homage to the four elements. With physical comedy, idiotic costumes and by generally making fools of themselves, these clownish characters will have you crying with laughter.

Seventh Annual Polish Festival

Sept. 8, 1–8 p.m.
Pipe Shop Building at The Shipyards, North Vancouver
www.belweder.org

Come on down to the seventh annual Polish Festival at the Pipe Shop Building at The Shipyards, North Vancouver for a day of family fun. Activities include puppet shows, arts and crafts, singing and dancing. Traditional cuisine will be available, as well as vendors selling Polish accessories and merchandise. Special musical guest Yaazda will perform.



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