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Photos: Vancouver Welcomes Spring at Annual Cherry Blossom Festival

A late bloom didn't stop Vancouverites from celebrating the start of Spring.

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By Maan	si Pandya / Photo: Youn Park, Artona
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Afterymonths of main and grey skies, spring is finally here! And there's no better way to celebrate the changing seasons than marvelling at the gb/Pgeons cherry 1976 soms. Vancouver's annual Cherry Blossom Festival (http://www.vcbf.ca/) was in full swing in April, featuring picnics, a festival/ste-Photos Shart should culture fair, food trucks serving Japanese cuisine, a lantern parade and much more.

"This event is all about celebrating the return of spring," says founding executive director Linda Poole. "With our winters being so cold and grey, people really look forward to this event each year and it really lifts their spirits." Poole says the aim of the festival is to create a sense of belonging and to actively engage diverse communities within Vancouver. "We had a bunch of new events this year like the Spring Lights Illumination, Haiku Invitational and lantern parade. Plus, it's Canada's 150th birthday."

The extended cold weather did cause a problem during the early days of the festival with the cherry blossoms blooming a little later than usual. "We had to delay certain events like Tree Talks, Cherry Picnic and Spring Lights Illumination because they were dependant on the blossoms," says Poole. "We thought they would bloom the last week of March but it ended up being two weeks later!"

But when they finally did bloom, Poole says it was definitely worth the wait. "People loved sitting under the cherry blossom trees enjoying their bento box lunches," she says. "It was such a success and everyone had a great time." For next year, Poole hopes to build on the festival's success and plan even more musical events. "Right now we go from year to year so our goal is to secure the festival for future generations."



Posing for a photograph under the cherry blossoms at the Big Picnic. (Photo: Youn Park, Artona.)



Lanterns and bright lights projected onto the cherry blossom trees made Queen Elizabeth Park even more magical. (Photo: Lukasz Szczepanski.)



Hundreds gather to enjoy light shows and dance performances at Queen Elizabeth Park for Spring Lights Illumination. (Photo: Lukasz Szczepanski.)



 $Festival-goers\ enjoyed\ tasty\ bento\ boxes\ under\ the\ cherry\ blossoms\ at\ the\ Big\ Picnic.\ (Photo:\ Youn\ Park, Artona.)$



Fun with bubbles at the Big Picnic. (Photo: Youn Park, Artona.)



Uzume Taiko performs at the Cherry Jam Concert. (Photo: Tracy Moromisato.)

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