

# Island festival aims to inspire sustainable changes

By **ANDREA HAYLEY**  
Epoch Times Staff

VANCOUVER—‘Organic Islands’ is more than just the name of the largest and greenest outdoor festival in Canada—it represents a vision of the future where people work together to create sustainable lifestyles.

On July 4-5, when the gates open at Glendale Gardens and Woodland in Victoria, B.C., visitors can expect a “very fun” and “transformative experience,” suggests festival creator and director Deb Morse.

The event was conceived five years ago with the idea of “a place that lingers in our collective imagination where the air is clean, the water clear, and the food sublime.”

“It’s about bringing the community together,” says Morse. “We are realizing that we have common goals.”

An estimated 150 booths—up 25 percent from last year—will be set up at scenic Glendale Gardens, a demonstration garden located just north of Camosun College Interurban Campus in Victoria.

Besides the usual ‘economic activity’ one expects to find at a trade show-style festival, there is much, much more on offer at Organic Islands, and one’s senses can expect a workout.

For the taste buds, there will be copious free samples throughout the weekend, as well as healthy meals for purchase. The Teresan Gas Cooking Stage will feature regular cooking demonstrations by local

chefs demonstrating the merits of using seasonal farm produce.

The Green Drinkery, a garden offering samples of microbrewery beer, wine, and juice coolers is even bigger this year with the addition of Salt Spring Island Brewery.

“a place that lingers  
in our collective  
imagination where  
the air is clean, the  
water clear, and  
the food sublime.”

Toe-tapping entertainment will take place at the festival’s large outdoor stage. Highlights are the roving and funny minstrel Jeremy Fischer, famous for biking to his shows, and the Grapes of Wrath, recently regrouped and playing together again for the first time at the festival, as well as Lester Quitzau, Fiddlin’ Frenzy, Oliver Swain and Ashtanga Yoga Shala.

For time out, people can head over to the wooded creek and Zen Garden, or stroll around and learn about the variety of plants, shrubs, and trees in the gardens. A traditional Japanese tea ceremony as well as massage treatments will transport attendees into the tranquil zone.

Highly anticipated at this year’s

festival is a half-acre Children’s Village and Play Zone, complete with piglets, chickens, and wild roosters, compliments of the Pacific Northwest Raptors. Kids will delight at the Storytelling Stage, and in learning through recycling and garbage pickup activities.

With something for everyone, Organic Islands also presents intellectually provocative panel discussions daily. Heard of the 100-Mile Diet? Saturday’s panel will discuss ‘Re-viving the Vancouver Island Diet.’ Speakers include Bill Code (Heritage Island Food Services Co-operative), Tom Henry (Small Farm Canada), Carolyn Herriot (The Garden Path) and Jen Bradley (Women’s Food and Water Initiative).

On Sunday ‘change-makers’ Dirk Becker (Synergy), Devon Carter (Home ECO-nomics) and Brandon Baauer (The Blue Raven Permaculture Farm) will tackle the topic of sustainable living.

The festival itself is fully committed to sustainability in action. Its energy needs are solar powered, and attendees can visit the power station and learn how it works. “They can see our zero-waste commitment in action,” says Morse.

Folks can even catch a bio-diesel shuttle to the festival from either Mayfair Mall for those coming from Victoria, or Royal Oak exchange for people travelling from the Mainland. Cool, eh?

Details for transportation, ticket purchase, and the festival program can be found at [www.organicislands.ca](http://www.organicislands.ca)



Festival creator and director Deb Morse (left)  
PHOTO BY SHARI MACDONALD

A girl decked out in face paint and butterfly wings enjoys the festival. (right)  
PHOTO BY SHARI MACDONALD

Percy Schmeiser spoke under the big tent at the 2008 Organic Islands Festival. (lower right)  
PHOTO BY SHARI MACDONALD

Roving minstrel Jeremy Fisher will perform at the festival on Saturday (lower left)



## A paper dragon in a Chinese volcano

CONTINUED FROM P1

Chen was the consul for political affairs in the Chinese consulate in Sydney before he defected in 2005. He revealed that one of his duties there was to monitor Chinese political dissidents and rights activists in Australia.

He also revealed how the regime used front organizations, including Chinese community groups, Chinese student groups, and Chinese media, to further Beijing’s interests abroad.

In his speech last week at the Chinese consulate, Mei highlighted the efforts of Chinese who echoed the Chinese regime’s stance during the Canadian election last fall, a campaign Mei was in town to witness.

Among those odd occurrences was a poll published by Ming Pao which claimed the single largest concern of Chinese Canadians was China-Canada relations. The poll came with the suggestion that political strategists could use the findings to lure Chinese voters.

The findings of the poll were surprising to many Chinese Canadians we spoke to who said they were more concerned about issues closer to home like taxes, healthcare, and social services for seniors.

Also odd were the townhall debates organized by Chinese community groups whose members were vocal supporters of the Chinese Communist Party and its foreign policy objectives.

**INTELLIGENCE EFFORTS**

Michel Juneau-Katsuya, formerly a senior intelligence officer at CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) believes these incidents were efforts by the Chinese regime to influence Canada foreign policy.

His description of the Ming Pao newspaper offers some explanation.

Intelligence agents, he said, “gave evidence to believe that Ming Pao has been used by the Chinese intelligence services on numerous occasions. So when we look at Ming Pao we see it as an extension of the government of China, the Central Committee of China and [an instrument of] Chinese intelligence services for its propaganda purposes.”

The same went for many Chinese community associations operating in Canada, he said. The goal was to exercise influence without getting caught.

“The Chinese government is having things done on their behalf but by someone else so you don’t have a smoking gun.”

Juneau-Katsuya backed Chen’s assertion that Chinese media, community and student groups were all frequently employed to influence foreign governments.

But a luncheon Minister Yang attended during his visit adds another dimension to that influence effort.

**UNFUNNY BUSINESS**

The luncheon was put on by the Canada China Business Council, an influential China-lobby group whose membership roster includes some of Canada’s most powerful business leaders.

The business organization revealed in an email sent to members urging them to attend that the Chinese regime had directly asked them to put on the event.

Juneau-Katsuya said the CCBC, though made up of Canadians rather than Chinese diaspora, looked no different from an intelligence perspective than known front organizations.

He suggested the group was heavily influenced by Chinese intelligence services and the Chinese regime.

“We’ve seen some positions, some statements made by these people, that were very very much representing the party line and the policies that the Chinese government wanted its allies to reverberate and to disseminate left and right,” said Juneau-Katsuya.

He added that intelligence agents never considered the CCBC to be a “strictly business oriented” and thought it was being manipulated by the Chinese government and the Chinese intelligence services.

The Canada China Business Council (CCBC) has twice barred reporters who write articles critical of the Chinese regime from attending its events including its most recent luncheon. The organization has consistently cited “space limitations.”

The CCBC’s founding president, former CEO of Power Corp. Paul Desmarais Sr, is one of the richest men in Canada and has multiple business interests in China.

Juneau noted that when former Chinese Premier Li Peng came to Canada in the early 1990s he spent a day and a half visiting then Prime Minister Jean Chretien and the rest of his five-day visit at Desmarais’ cabin.

In 1985, Clive Ansley was the first Western lawyer to establish a practice in China. He is also a former president of the Shanghai chapter of the CCBC. He said the group has basically dictated Canada’s China policy for the past 50 years through Desmarais’ close personal relationships with former Prime Ministers Pierre Trudeau, Brian Mulroney, and Jean Chretien. Desmarais’ son is married to Jean Chretien’s daughter.

Ansley said the CCBC has managed to convince Canada’s A-list business leaders to pay hefty

membership dues to join the organization.

However, despite the CCBC’s efforts to influence Canada’s business elite and its very vocal claims otherwise, three national business polls conducted by COMPAS Inc. in 2006, 2007, and 2008 found that most business leaders judged Mr. Harper well on his public criticism of China’s human rights abuses.

The executives said they believe Mr. Harper’s tough stance would either have no impact on Canadian business opportunities in China or actually be good for business by helping to improve the Chinese legal system. They also saw it as advancing human rights in the long run in China.

**LEGITIMATE CONCERNS**

As a former diplomat, Chen is well familiar with the inner workings of the regime and said its foreign policy effort all boils down to one thing.

“The core of China’s diplomacy is to maintain the international recognition of the Chinese Communist Party as a ruling regime in China,” he said.

In short, the CCP is entirely focused on ensuring it is recognized as the legitimate ruler of China, an issue all the more critical at the present moment, he said.

“The exchange of visits with the Canadian top leaders will strengthen the public impression of the legitimacy of the Chinese government, which is not popularly elected.”

Chen points to the fact that China has been encouraging and assisting unstable neighbours North Korea and Pakistan in developing nuclear weapons as evidence that matters like national security hardly matter at all.

“The image of the Chinese leaders is the most important matter.”

It was once the case that a protest in China was met with bullets. But as the regime prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary public demonstrations and riots in China are at an all time high. In January, China’s state-run Xinhua news agency published an article saying this year will be the peak period for “mass incidents.”

Official reports of “mass inci-

dents” grew by more than seven times over ten years to 74,000 in 2004. Since then, officials have been tight lipped about the details of unrest in China, but many suspect it has continued to increase.

The biggest recent protest was in Shishou city in Hubei province from June 19 to 20. Estimates vary but anywhere from several thousand to 70,000 residents there overturned police and fire vehicles in a confrontation with police that required soldiers from another city to put it down. Another much smaller riot erupted the next day in Nanjing when students found out their technical college would be giving them degrees equivalent to high school diplomas rather than the associate degrees they were promised.

Some China analysts say public discontent in China is nearing a breaking point and the regime is deeply concerned about anything that could push the masses towards a popular uprising.

“The Chinese regime has never been so weak as it is now,” said Chen. “With the rapid expansion of Internet surfers, the regime has found it is harder and harder to fool the Chinese people. The people know more and

more about the truth of China’s past and present. The regime has exhausted all methods to cover the brutality and persecution. Petitioners demanding their cases to be reviewed have become more united than ever.”

While the elite of CCP officials have prospered in communist China the masses have suffered through corruption and persecution and many of them aren’t willing to accept it quietly.

A small but well-reported case reveals the magnitude of the change taking place.

**BLOG JUSTICE**

Waitress Deng Yujiao was charged with murder after she stabbed and killed one of three Chinese Communist Party officials who were allegedly trying to rape her.

The case caused outrage across China. Bloggers called for her release and for the officials to be punished. Many advocated taking their protest from the web to the streets. Other people started support groups in her name and a grassroots effort grew to have her freed.

Last week her sentence was handed down. She was found guilty but her murder charge was downgraded twice, from manslaughter to assault and she received no punishment. Witnesses were not called leading many to suggest the verdict was politically decided. In other words, the people had been heard.

Chinese dissatisfaction has registered another way, perhaps even more disconcerting to the regime. Chinese people have begun registering public withdrawals from the various organs Chinese Communist Party they either voluntarily or were compelled to join by their workplace or school.

The withdrawal movement sprang from an editorial series published by The Epoch Times called the Nine Commentaries on the Chinese Communist Party. The series details the regimes repressed bloody history and has led to over 56 million withdrawals.

According to the Falun Dafa Information Centre, Falun Gong practitioners in China operate approximately 200,000 underground presses. The Nine Commentaries are among the materials they are reported to regularly produce.

Suppressing the spread of the series is a top priority of the regime. University of Toronto-based Citizen Lab, an anti-censorship research hub, announced that when it uncovered a million-plus messages stored by the Chinese version of Skype, the filters employed by the program had specifically targeted discussions about the Nine Commentaries and a substantial portion of those stored messages were about withdrawing from the CCP.

Although Chinese authorities have enlisted the help of western companies like Cisco and Sun Microsystems to sanitize and censor China’s Internet, but that technology can be circumvented by freely available software developed by overseas Falun Gong practitioners who formed the Global Internet Freedom Consortium. And Chinese people looking for free information aren’t the only ones who have benefitted from what has become the world’s most widely-used anti-blocking technology.

Nicholas Kristof, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, recently wrote about how Iranians are using that same technology, translated now into Farsi, to get around their own regime’s Internet controls and tell the world of their struggle for democracy.

“The push to remove witnesses may be the prelude to a Tehran Tiananmen. Yet a secret Internet lifeline remains, and it’s a tribute to the crazy, globalized world we live in. The lifeline was designed by Chinese computer engineers in

America to evade Communist Party censorship of a repressed Chinese spiritual group, the Falun Gong,” he wrote.

To plug the leak created by that software, Chinese authorities now plan to demand all computers sold in China include the Green Dam Youth Escort.

**BROKEN BLOCKADE**

While China’s Orwellian-titled Ministry of Information and Information Technology says the software is to keep children from pornography, an analysis of Green Dam’s key word libraries reveals only 2,700 keywords are related to pornography while 6,500 are related to “politically sensitive” topics – a majority of which are Falun Gong.

The code for the portion of the program that actually deals with pornography has allegedly been stolen from Solid Oak, a U.S. software company now seeking an injunction against Green Dam’s developer.

The Global Internet Freedom Consortium says it already has a way around the software and promises to unleash a “Green Tsunami,” software designed for Chinese users to detect, disable or remove “Green Dam.”

**HOW MIGHTY THE DOLLAR?**

The CCP’s perceived legitimacy becomes even more crucial in the face of an economic downturn given the regime has staked its life on improved economic prosperity for China’s masses.

But with unemployment rising, the findings of a report by Albert Edwards, a strategist at Societe Generale who predicted the Asian Crisis in 1997, couldn’t have come at a worse time.

Earnings for Chinese companies have fallen through the floor, revealing critical faults in the Chinese economy.

“I believe we will look back on the Chinese economic miracle as the sickest joke yet played on investors,” Edwards wrote in his report.

“The bullish group-think on China is just as vulnerable to massive disappointment as any other extreme example of bubble-nonsense I have seen over the last two decades... The fall to earth will be equally as shocking.”

Which could mean there may not even be a buck for Canada to sell out to, making Harper’s now famous claim that Canada would not sell out all the more a position to reconsider.

And given that Canada runs a huge trade deficit with the regime and does three times as much business with the State of Illinois than the entire country of China, maybe now is not the time to kowtow to Beijing.