



## XXVI Song and Dance Festival- Riga, Latvia

Video of news clips available



As June came to an end people across Latvia and the many Latvian communities all over the world congregated in Riga for what was to be one of the biggest event of the yearlong 100 year celebration – the XXVI Song and Dance Festival. Celebrated every 5 years in Latvia as well as in Latvian communities in the US, Australia and elsewhere, this festival played a significant role in the reemergence of free Latvia.

Choral and traditional dance groups have been long practicing hoping to be among the 43,000 performers and organizers that made this year's event one not to be forgotten. Every day from June 20th to the closing ceremony on July 8th was filled with official and unofficial events – from the procession of groups in traditional dress winding their way from the center of Riga to the main stage – to the closing ceremony where over 1000 voices joined together in the songs that bring different generations together uniting Latvians throughout the world.

Among those present were many from the Seattle area among them the Seattle folk dance group 'Trejeksnetis'. Andris Rogainis spent hours putting together a video of news clips - just a glimpse of this extraordinary event.

Coming next - Latvian Independence day - November 18th - will be celebrated at the Latvian Center in Northgate the wheeled of November 17-18th.

## ***Holiday Lunch or maybe Brunch???***

**Save the date - Sunday, December 8, 2018**

Our holiday lunch has been the best attended of our events and we hope that to be the case again. Without summer exchange students and the busy schedules of those who usually organize these events, we skipped our summer picnic - reason enough to be there for this event. The general feeling is that we have outlived the venue we enjoyed for the past several years and your board is looking into other options. For now, save the date and look for more information by Thanksgiving.

### **BSCA MISSION STATEMENT**

The Bellevue Sister Cities Association (BSCA) is a non-profit organization of citizen diplomats dedicated to fostering understanding, appreciation, and peaceful coexistence among the peoples of our world. BSCA works toward this aim by creating and maintaining people-to-people relationships in an effort to promote cooperation, cultural understanding, humanitarian aid, and economic development at the local level.

President—Gregg Schrader Secretary—Pamela Alsbaugh Newsletter Editor—Inta Gotelli  
Check Facebook or our website for updates! <http://www.bellevuesistercities.org/>

## From your editor

The Japan-America Grassroots Summit brought visitors from Japan to Washington many of them hosted by Eastside families coordinated by the City of Bellevue.- see back page.

The next big event - coming in 2019 will be the **50th anniversary of Yao-Bellevue sister city affiliation** - we need to work with the City to plan for this event. Sadly - of the many people involved during the beginning years of BSCA none of them are with us any longer - we hope to ensure that their legacy lives on - we will need volunteers to help organize this event - please help.

***Have you renewed your BSCA membership?  
We appreciate all of you who have promptly  
sent in your dues. Thank you!***

Dues for fiscal year March 1, 2018- Feb. 28, 2019 are still **\$30 individual or \$50 family**.

Your check to BSCA mailed to: Inta Gotelli,  
18911 SE 44th Way, Issaquah, WA 98027

## Washington State Sister Cities Conference - Saturday, Oct. 6th

Each fall this statewide conference offers an opportunity to network with representatives of other WA Sister City organizations. This year it will take place in Olympia in the State Capitol's Columbia Room and is sponsored by the Washington chapter of [Sister Cities International](#). Be prepared for a full day of distinguished speakers, panel presentations, and discussions for the furtherment and enrichment of citizen diplomacy around the world.

Join the sister cities of Washington and Lieutenant Governor Cyrus Habib at the State Capitol Building to celebrate Washington State Sister Cities Day by the official proclamation of Governor Jay Inslee.

BSCA will be represented by Inta Gotelli and Kristin Gullegde - among Kristin's responsibilities at City Hall is coordinating with BSCA and Sister Cities International.

## Beatrice Mitman

Riga, Latvia 12/17/1933-Bellevue, WA 8/27/2018



It had been some time since we had seen Beatrice at our meetings, but, as many of us will remember, not only did she serve as president 1999-2000, but she was very active during the first years of the Liepaja committee - always helping out with the many shipments of books, medical supplies and more (picture from back when...). It was during her time as president that we held the most successful dinner auction - funds that covered our student exchanges for several years.

Beatrice was born in Riga, Latvia not long before WWII - and, as so many of the people from the Baltic nations, her family fled the Soviet occupation, spending several years in a refugee camp in Germany prior to making her way to the USA, arriving in NY at the age of 16.

As students at Columbia University, she met and married David Mitman, eventually moving to Detroit where they lived until 1995. There she raised her three children returning to school for her degree in Accounting - knowledge she shared not only with BSCA but also helping the Latvian Association of the State of WA with their taxes.

The family moved to Bellevue in 1995, where Beatrice made contact with the Elmar and Cacilia Zemgalis whom she had met during her time in Germany and through them started her involvement with BSCA. She enjoyed the many activities, and since she liked traveling, especially the delegation visits to our sister cities. She kept in touch with the many of the people she met during these visits.



A celebration of life will be held on Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup> from 1:00-4:00 at the Pogacha Restarurant in Bellevue. Please see the obituary at:

<https://www.flintofts.com/obituary/Beatrice-Mitman/Issaquah-Washington/1813208>

## Original wall hangings return to the Ainu (Japan)

Age catches up with us all and along the way we start going through all the accumulated stuff and wondering what we should do with it... some might just throw it all out... but others see their sentimental or historic value... and thus some of Florence's treasures found their way back to Japan.

Daughter of Canadian missionaries in Japan, Florence was born and grew up in pre-WWII Kobe. With her knowledge of Japanese she returned to post-war Japan during the Allied Occupation and along the way she met George Metcalf... They settled into married life - George busy "blowing up" old unexploded Russian sea mines that were still washing ashore in 1948, and disposing of hidden munitions in Hokkaido and northern Honshu. Florence was attached to Women's Affairs in the new Women's division of government stationed in Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido the northernmost island of Japan.



Both of them traveled extensively throughout Hokkaido and would frequently visit the Noboribetsu hot springs passing through the small town of Shiraoi, home of the indigenous Ainu people, the first inhabitants of Japan. Being able to speak Japanese opened many doors to visiting with the few indigenous Ainu still in Shiraoi. They frequently met Chief Miyamoto, the last chief of his race, and his wife. (See picture ) and brought back home pictures and many treasures from their visits including two original wall hangings depicting everyday life of the Ainu.

The Ainu did not have a written language or art - no books or pictures available so in the early 1900s the Japanese government commissioned wall hangings to record their culture and customs - a lifestyle that was fast vanishing. It is these valuable "kakejiku" that Florence decided to return to the Ainu Museum Foundation. Along with the two wall hangings Florence donated to the Ainu Museum Foundation pictures and documents and a short film. The latter was much appreciated as it showed not only the last chief dancing and laughing with them, but also the last authentic bear festival - the bear cub was shot with poison arrows - these days the arrows are non-lethal to the bear cub.



Originally established in 1976 the Ainu Museum was established to carry out cultural educational projects. Later the Ainu Folk Museum was added to exhibit Ainu cultural assets as well as to carry out academic research and study and in 1990 it reopened under the auspices of the Ainu Museum Foundation. As Japan prepared for the 2020



Summer Olympics, the museum will again undergo a change - a new national museum about Ainu culture is scheduled to open on April 24,

### BSCA Summer Student Exchange

#### Please let interested people know—Applications for Summer 2019 Available!

This long standing program is our most important contribution to international friendship-the first exchange back to 1977 one of the many activities we shared with our first sister city Yao, Japan. As we added our next sister cities, the student exchange has been our most successful joint venture.

Our exchange is a two part program: we match each selected student with a student selected by our Sister City counterparts and the two spend much of the summer together - half here and half in the Sister City. It also has become very much a family centered program - not only is the selected student involved, but so is the whole family often leading to long lasting friendships.

It is now time to begin looking ahead to next summer. Most of our applicants hear about this program from past exchange students, friends or family members or from BSCA members such as you. Do let your family and friends with teenagers at home know of this unique opportunity - the flyer and applications should be available on our website [www.bellevuesistercities.org](http://www.bellevuesistercities.org).



## Grassroots Summit – Washington State



A group of more than 140 participants and 10 organizers arrived from Japan on a sunny day –Tuesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> and were met at the airport by Japan America Society of WA organizers and volunteers. After an evening of rest, they spent the next day touring Seattle attractions then departing for Blake Island for the official opening ceremony. Participating in this event were 12 WA cities, Bellevue among these, as well as Tye Middle School and Mt Vernon High School, each hosting a group of the visitors – 13 of them with host families in the Eastside.

With Gregg Schrader and Kyra Olson as the principals, the City of Bellevue had put together a two day program including a meeting with Bellevue Mayor John Chelminiak, touring

downtown Bellevue, shopping at Bellevue Square, a tour of City Hall, parks and of course lunch at the Bellevue Botanical Garden and a visit to the Yao garden.

Host families welcomed the visitors assigned to them for the evenings and all day Saturday – time spent enjoying getting to know their visitors and sharing with them their homes, families and friends, visiting favorite places - Snoqualmie falls was a must (think Twin Peaks) and taking them to favorite restaurants or inviting friends to join them for a northwest barbeque.



Sunday saw both visitors and hosts congregate at the Hyatt Lake Washington – over 200 people listened to speeches, enjoyed the entertainment and the buffet... and said good byes promising to see each other again.

## 2019 Young Artists and Authors Showcase *Theme: Global Citizens: Resilient Communities*

With communities around the world facing an increasing number of challenges be they political or due to natural causes - earthquakes, storms, the expected problems associated with climate change - the question is: How well can a community face these challenges?

Resilience refers to how well an individual or community can prepare for adversity or challenges.

- How can future global leaders prepare their communities to respond to the global challenges of the 21st century?
- How does international experience affect an individual or community's ability to adapt?
- What are examples of resilience in a global context?

This year's theme asks students to explore these questions by highlighting citizen diplomacy and the creative ways that we create peace through people-to-people interaction.

Sister Cities International Young Artists and Authors Showcase (YAAS) encourages youth from around the globe to express the mission of Sister Cities International through original artwork, literature, film, and photography. Ten finalists are selected—five US and 5 international. One U.S. artist and one international artist will be the Grand Prize Winners - and awarded \$1,000. We look forward to again see a submission from Yao. More at: <http://sistercities.org/YAAS>