

2021

Hello everyone.

Here I am again with a new report on my life in Kanazawa.

I want to start this one off with some great news: 2021 was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ghent-Kanazawa sister city bond! Despite the limitations set by the global pandemic, we did our best to have a full year of many, varied, (and mostly online) events to celebrate this historic moment. Thanks to the tireless and enthusiastic efforts of our many friends in both cities, we managed to have some beautiful opportunities to acknowledge the deep bond between Ghent and Kanazawa, and above all between their citizens. As a lot of the year happened online, I do have the opportunity to show you some of my favorite moments of the 2021 celebration.

I will first direct you to [Kanazawa Jazz Street 2021](#), which was transformed into a covid-safe online version due to the pandemic. For the duration of the event, videos were played to show the jazz scene in various partner cities because direct visitation wasn't possible yet at that time.



Our jazz friends in Ghent compiled a 10-minute video to show the multi-faceted, creative and inexhaustible world of Jazz in Ghent to the citizens of Kanazawa.

In February, Kanazawa-based pastry chefs from the Ishikawa Gateaux Association and Ghent-based chocolatier Nicolas Vanaise created edible art in the image of their city (Maeda Toshiie en Maeda Matsu watching plum blossoms for Kanazawa and the dragon on top of the Belfry for Ghent) that they presented during an online show-and-tell. The work they created was beautiful to see and, though I couldn't taste it myself, looked absolutely delicious.



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As for things I did have a chance to taste: extending the celebration into 2022, February saw the members of the Ishikawa Gateaux Association holding a Belgian-themed “Sweets Fair” that took place for two weeks in the valentine season.



In preparation for this, they received a [recipe video](#) from the chef of Michelin star holding restaurant Vrijmoed on how to make a sabayon sauce and used this and their experience from their previous exchanges with Ghent as inspiration for their Belgium-inspired sweets and deserts.

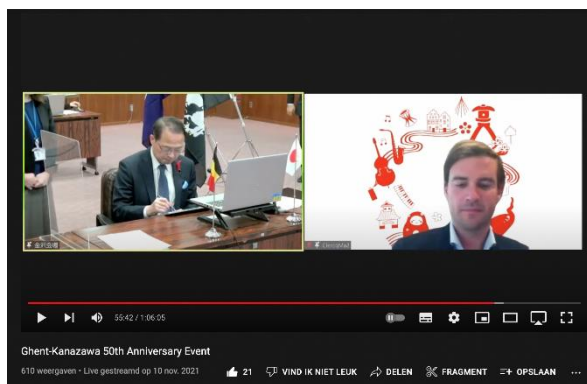
In exchange, they sent [their own dessert videos](#) back to Ghent which contained a recipe for a local sweet potato-based Mont Blanc, a presentation of a Japanese-style wedding cake, and an explanation of some of the techniques used to make traditional Japanese sweets called *jōnama-gashi*.



The culmination of the celebrations was the [online signing ceremony](#), where the mayors of both cities signed the Memorandum of Understanding for the upcoming 5 years of exchange in the presence of various partners from the sister cities and the ambassadors of both countries. The ceremony included speeches from representatives of both cities and video exchange messages from the many partners that are instrumental to the deep and very active collaborations that our cities have built throughout the years. The whole event was live streamed and uploaded to the Kanazawa City Youtube page and has 610 views as of me writing this. |



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Aside from sister city exchange events, we had a plethora of other events and projects since my last report. For example, our yearly Kanazawa Supporter's club event was held online two years in a row. This event is especially for sister cities that have a Kanazawa Supporter's Club; to deepen the understanding of Kanazawa's culture for the Ambassadors of Kanazawa in our sister cities.

The 2021 edition focused on tea ceremony and university exchanges, while this year's edition had a Zen meditation experience.

I'm proud to report that we had our very first Kanazawa Fairtrade Festa in October of 2021. This was originally planned in May, as many fairtrade events are, but had to be postponed due to Corona. We eagerly look to our sister city who is very well versed and our senior when it comes to all things Fairtrade.



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Even just seeing the growth from the first event to the second when it comes to the booths, events and interested parties is heartwarming and I look forward to what we can accomplish next.

As usual, we visited many schools (carefully and while observing corona countermeasures) this year as well but I've already talked about this before so I will only go into detail about when I was engaged as a speaker for an audience of adults this time around. This type of lecture is more of a rare occurrence, but it happened twice this past year: once in October of 2021 when I got to discuss a foreign perspective on Kanazawa tourism at the Kanazawa Volunteer University and once again in May of this year when I spoke about what brings us together as people even across borders at the Minma Community Center.

This year we started on a new chapter in our social media adventure. As I've mentioned in my previous reports, we began posting encouraging messages to our official Facebook page at the start of the corona crisis to cheer on our sister cities in the shock and chaos of a sudden and terrifying global pandemic. While the crisis is by no means over yet, we slowly had to get used to this new normal and with this shift (and as covid exhaustion



set in) we moved away from the Covid messages to more lighthearted and easygoing weekly updates about what's going on in our city and in our sister cities. This year, we've upped our game by creating our very own Kanazawa CIR Instagram page (@kanazawa\_cir) where we aim to introduce the Kanazawa that we – as foreigners – see, what exactly a “CIR” is, and what on earth we're doing in Kanazawa. |



As always, I would like to end this report by introducing three new places that I love in Kanazawa to you. This time I want to introduce some of the local libraries.

The first library I present to you is the Tamagawa library. This is a completely normal library like any other, except that its building was designed by Yoshio and Yoshiro Taniguchi; a famous father-and-son pair of architects hailing from Kanazawa. The building is an impressive combination of old-fashioned brick with modern steel and glass that incorporates the surrounding park into its architecture. It is the only joint work of Yoshio and Yoshiro Taniguchi, making it a beautiful piece of Kanazawa history to stroll through in search of a new novel to read (especially since Japanese apartments are generally smaller than their Belgian counterpart, making the small home library that I like to have shrink from a large bookcase to a one-shelf collection). |



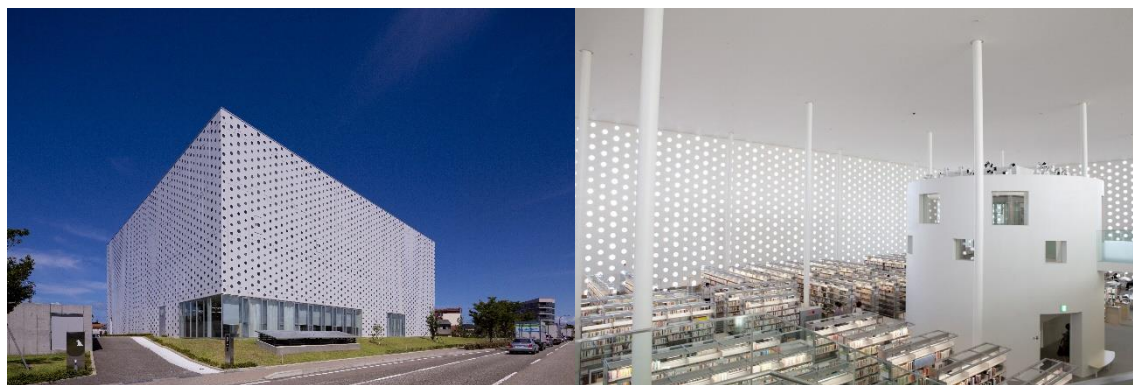
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The second library I'd like to introduce to you is the Kanazawa Umimirai Library. This one also has a very impressive architectural style and is completely different from the Tamagawa library. It's a little far from the center so I've only visited it once or twice, but the building leaves a lasting impression that doesn't always get conveyed in photos. It is a high-ceilinged building with wide-open spaces for the bookshelves and lots of natural light. |

The final library I'd like to mention here is the Umino library. This one is less awe-inspiring architecture-wise when compared to the other two, but it has a very peaceful atmosphere (as libraries generally do) and carries a special place in my heart. It is the first library I visited since arriving in Kanazawa. I was asked to come read a children's book in Dutch to some local families and play some games with them, which was both terrifying and a lot of fun. It also (blessedly) boasts a surprising variety of international novels. The best thing about these libraries is that they are all connected like the libraries back home. This means that I can take a nice walk or bus ride to the Umino library to look for an English novel or two, but when I finish reading them, I don't need to go all the way back to return it. I only need to take the scenic route from city hall to the station and pass by the Tamagawa library on the way to drop it off.



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I wanted to introduce the libraries not just because I love books and feel like they are great way to release stress while exercising the mind, but also because libraries have a habit of being very involved in their communities. The libraries of Kanazawa are no different. Umino library has a variety of events and games aimed at children, Kanazawa Umimirai library even has half a floor dedicated to kids' books and a separate corner where parents can read to their children, while Tamagawa library organizes language events, meetups and bi-monthly book clubs. If you find yourself in Kanazawa and don't know where to go or what to do, checking the monthly event schedule of a library close to you might be a fun idea.

I hope you had some fun reading this just as I had fun writing it.

Wishing you all a nice (and not too hot) summer,

Rani