Bulletin Juin 2015



Le Centre communautaire des fe<mark>mmes sud-asiatiques</mark>

SAWCC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2014-2015 Saturday 20th June, 2015 at SAWCC, 1035 Rachel east, 3rd floor

9:30am -- arrival & light breakfast (provided)

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10:00am -- morning session - presentation & discussion - "25th Anniversary of Occupation of Kanehsetake"

25 years ago at Kanehsetake, the so-called "Oka Crisis" began, when the Sûreté du Québec and then the Canadian army turned their weapons on the Mohawk Kanienkehake) people there. Since that time, the situation for indigenous people in Canada has deteriorated further, with corporate depredations and government contempt. As a feminist organization that works in solidarity with women's and marginalized groups, we stand in solidarity with our native sisters, whose hospitality we enjoy, on whose lands we live, lands which they never ceded to any government. We will spend time informing ourselves about the occupation of Kanehsetake, and the meaning and manner of solidarity in this context.

The morning session is open to members, volunteers and participants as well as people who are interested in knowing SAWCC and its activities. Please come and participate.

12 noon – 1:30pm -- lunch (provided) – members, participants and friends – eat, catch up with old friends, make new ones.

1:30-3:30 - business meeting - Annual Report presented; Financial Report presented

CCFSA-SAWCC- ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ANNUELLE 2014-2015 Samedi le 20 juin, 2015 au bureau du Centre: 1035 Rachel est, 3e étage

09h30 - Arrivée et petit déjeuner léger (fourni) 10h00 - Séance du matin - présentation et discussion sur le thème "Le 25e anniversaire de l'occupation de Kanehsetake"

Il y a 25 ans à Kanehsetake, la soi-disante «crise d'Oka» a commencé, lorsque la Sûreté du Québec, puis l'armée canadienne ont tourné leurs armes sur les personnes Mohawk (Kanienkehake). Depuis ce temps, la situation des peuples autochtones au Canada a continué à se détériorer, avec déprédations d'entreprise et le mépris du gouvernement. En tant qu'organisation féministe qui travaille en solidarité avec les femmes et des groupes marginalisés, nous sommes solidaires de nos sœurs des Premières nations; c'est de leur l'hospitalité dont nous jouissons, leurs terres que nous habitons, des terres qu'elles n'ont jamais cédées à aucun gouvernement. Nous prendrons du temps pour nous informer de ces événements - l'occupation de Kanehsetake, et le sens de la solidarité dans ce contexte.

La session du matin est ouverte aux membres, aux bénévoles et aux participants ainsi qu'aux gens qui sont intéressés à connaitre le Centre communautaire des femmes sudasiatique et ses activités. Nous serons ravies de vous accueillir- venez nous joindre!

12h00-13h30 - Déjeuner (fourni) - les membres, les participants et amis - partageront un repas, échangeront avec de vieilles amies, s'informeront des nouvelles de part et d'autre.. 13h30-15h30 - Réunion d'affaires - Présentation du Rapport annuel Présentation du Rapport financier Discussion

Nous avons hâte de vous voir à le 20 Juin!

Qu',9en pensezvous?

What do you think?

- Let us know your thoughts about the bulletin.
- Que pensez-vous de notre journal?
- We encourage you to send in your stories and articles for upcoming newsletters in any language by the 25th of every month to:
- adisun3@gmail.com
- Écrivez nous à
- adisun3@gmail.com

CENTRE UPDATE



Centre Hours Monday & Thursday 9am—9pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday-9am-5pm

The Centre is wheelchair accessible Le centre est accessible aux fauteuils roulants.

Volunteers

If you are interested in helping out at the Centre, please contact Homa (Ext. 102 or homa@bellnet.ca) to coordinate a meeting!

South Asian Youth (SAY) Update

Employment Opportunities for the following are available. Please visit our website for more details!

-Camp Counselor

-Librarian for the SAY space

-SAY Program co-coordinator

As the academic year draws to an end, the youth groups had their last sessions this past week. The youth program will now be transitioning into its summer projects!

No words can describe how we feel in <3 after a profoundly inspiring year with you: Brhaami, Helena, Afeefa, Abigail, and Elisa. Thank you. To ongoing building of safer spaces...

Merci pour démontrer l'entraide et la créativité! (Lucien Page)

Merci à toutes les filles du groupe danse Bollywood et Club des filles à l'école secondaire Lavoie pour une année amusante Academy, Ville St-Laurent et d'amitiés!



Group at LaurenHill



Bollywood group at Ecole Secondaire Lucien Page, Parc-Extension

See you later!

We would like to take this opportunity to say "see you later" to Farha, our youth program co-coordinator, as she transitions into another job. Farha has been involved at the SAWCC for many years in a variety of ways, and we are certain her involvement will continue and together we will all continue to make waves. We are sad to see her leave her current position, but are excited to be part of ongoing projects with her in a new capacity.

Congratulations!

SAWCC member and public relations secretary Mela Sarkar with her grandchildren. From left to right, the grandbabies are: Izel Inocencia Arenas Benoit, aged two and a half; Indro Tupac Amaru Sharma Sarkar, aged 4 months; Priam Arenas Benoit, aged 6 months.

Izel and Priam are the children of SAWCC member Nina Benoit and Indro is the son of Amani Sharma Sarkar , a frequent performer at SAWCC year end parties.



Member News

This summer, our member, RADHIKA SUNDARAKRISHNAN will be attending two conferences that are of interest to us at SAWCC. The first is in Toronto, and is titled "Inclusive Mental Health Services for South Asians". The second is in London, England, and is titled, "Forced Marriage: Health, Wellbeing, Community and Law". It is to be chaired by Sushrut Jadhav, Senior Lecturer in Cross-Cultural Psychiatry, University College London, and Co-Director, Cultural Consultation Service, University College, London.

Gratitude

In 2012, my intention to become a SAY program co-coordinator came from my ongoing commitment to youth/community organising and inspiring moments as a SAY collective member. Since its inception, in 2011, SAY has taken on many forms. I look forward to seeing how it will continue to change, or how it will inform new forms of youth organising rooted in SAWCC.

With this in mind, I have chosen to leave the co-coordinator position for several reasons. One is that I have decided to return to work as a speech language therapist. I intend to explore how these formal skills can be used artistically and creatively, from antioppressive, self-determination and collective-based frameworks. Secondly, I would like to make room for new energy and ideas coming into SAWCC, particularly for SAY projects/campaigns.

Youth-organising has been and continues to be very integral to my spirit. As such, it is hard to leave the position that has given me the privilege to work closely with inspiring youth, particularly young Racialized Womyn, on a consistent basis close to three years. I have grown from the discussions, safer spaces, and projects I have been lucky enough to co-facilitate and support. Alongside fellow SAY program co-coordinator/member and dear friend, Naila, I have found myself being in awe of these young people during the years.

There is so much to say about working alongside Naila, and not enough Bulletin space to express it. Our friendship and working principles have allowed for ongoing reflections and practice around self- and collective care. I also believe that our community organising approaches counter capitalist and patriarchal ways of thinking and working. Thank you Naila, for being a dream to come true.

This particular position has also given me the opportunity to work closely with other SAWCC workers. I have a learned a lot from them. We may not always agree, or may even have fundamental differences. However, I remain humbled by the trust building that has occurred over the years between staff, and continues to occur now. Thank you to the workers at SAWCC, for the important work that you do.

One important lesson I have learned over the past three years, and hope to always carry with me is the following: although radical changes in our world are urgent, the reality is that change is about process. It takes time for change to occur, even if we are constantly working towards achieving them, with great thought and care.

For now, I plan on being involved with SAY and SAWCC in other capacities, with the particular hope to be part of ongoing intergenerational work/dialogue around various struggles; staff support; youth projects; safer spaces, including the ongoing building of positive spaces for Racialised people connected to SAWCC and SAY who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning (and other orientations that are not captured by these words).

I feel lucky to have experienced moments of deep feminist inspiration, whether in classrooms, dance studios, youth centres, on the streets, and other spaces. I look forward to what (and who) is to come through SAWCC's doors as we continue to struggle to end various forms of systemic violence, and towards a world based on justice and gentleness.

With gratitude,

-Farha Najah Hussain

Write a Love Letter to Feminism

Is feminism your summer love? Or is your relationship with feminism long standing? We would like to know! Why not express your love for feminism? Profess your feelings with poetry or write a letter directed to feminism and what it has done for you. Submissions will be welcome anytime- there is no deadline. Your work could be included in the upcoming bulletins.

E-mail adisun3@gmail.com if you are interested.



RENCONTRER ET A ECHANGER AVEC

Sandra Moran de Guatemala et Helena Wong de New York lors d'une réception 5-7 le mercredi 10 juin.

Ou: Centre des femmes sud-asiatiques, 1035 Rachel est, 3e étage (Métro Mont-Royal, bus 11)

Cette réception est dans le cadre des assemblées publiques de l'Alliance internationale des femmes, avec le collectif Femmes de diverses origines, et cette fois, avec la participation du Comité québecois de la Marche mondiale des femmes.

Sandra Moran*, militante pour les droits de la personne et les droits des femmes au Guatemala depuis plus de 25 ans, a déjà été l'invitée du collectif Femmes de diverses origines pour nos activités du 8 mars. Elle a vécu en exile au Canada pendant 14 ans, et elle est retourné au Guatemala en 1994 pour participer à l'établissement du Secteur femmes (Women's Sector) dans l'Assemblée de la société civile pour les négotiations de paix visant à mettre fin à la guerre civile au Guatemala. Artiste et militante des droits autochtones, Sandra est une des porte-paroles de la *Marche mondiale des femmes au Guatemala.*

Helena Wong*, est avec Grassroots Global Justice (<u>http://ggjalliance.org</u>) ou elle travaille à l'organisation des communautés asiatiques et réfugiées depuis plus de 20 ans sur les problèmes de l'embourgeoisement des quartiers et contre la violence policière. Elle parle de lareconquête du féminisme centrée sur les connaissances et le leadership des femmes de couleur; Grassroots Global Justice est le groupe fer de lance de la *Marche mondiale des femmes* aux États-unis.

MEET AND GREET FEMINIST LEADERS

Sandra Moran of Guatemala, and Helena Wong of New York at a reception on Wednesday, June 10 at 5-7 pm.

Where: South Asian Women's Community Centre, 1035 Rachel est, Metro Mont-Royal, bus 11.

This event is part of the public meeting series of the International Women's Alliance, with the Women of Diverse Origins collective, and this time, in collaboration with the Marche mondiale des femmes.

Sandra Moran is a feminist and human rights activist and has worked in the Guatemalan women's movement for over 25 years, during which she spent 14 years in exile in Canada.

Sandra returned to Guatemala in 1994 to participate in the formation of the Women's Sector, and to participate in the Civil Society Assembly at the negotiations for the peace accords to end the 36-year war in Guatemala. Sandra remains an active member of the Women's Sector, and is also a performance artist and cultural advocate. She is a spokespersons for the *Marche mondiale des femmes* in Guatemala.

Helena Wong, National Organizer, of Grassroots Global Justice (<u>http://ggjalliance.org</u>) has organized in low-income Asian immigrant and refugee communities in New York for nearly twenty years around gentrification, community development and land use, and police violence. Helena has served on the national steering committee of the Right to the City alliance. She has led delegations to China, meeting with organizers who do work around land rights, migrant workers, environmental protection, and queer visibility. Helena is queer, Asian, and a proud lifelong New Yorker. Her organization is a key representative of the *Marche mondiale* in the United States.

MEMORIAL FOR DAYA VARMA (1929-2015)

Daya had a long association with the South Asian Women's Community Centre (SAWCC) -- a service, support and advocacy organization for South Asian women and their families in the Montreal area -- since its inception. He was a strong and unwavering supporter of SAWCC, and a lifetime associate member. And Daya was a founder of CERAS (South Asia Centre) -- dedicated to peace, secularism and democratic development in South Asia. His passing away on22nd March was a very sad occasion for both organizations and their members. His loss is irreparable.

The members of both organizations, that have had a long supportive relationship with each other, invite you to gather on **Sunday 7th June**, 2-4pm at SAWCC, to remember Daya in ways that are meaningful to you and which you would like to share with others.

Refreshments will be served.

Location: South Asian Women's Community Centre 1035 Rachel east, (3rd floor) (between Boyer and Rachel; metro Mt-Royal > bus no. 11 going east). contact: <u>cerasmontreal@gmail.com</u>



I came to Canada for asylum, but I still feel lost here

I have been living in Toronto for eight years and I find life is getting harder and harder.

I came to Canada for shelter from a long civil war, a war with which I grew up. I had worked for over 20 years providing community-based services for war-affected people in my country. I was also actively involved in human rights advocacy on issues affecting women and children there.

When I came to Canada, I found that my work was not recognized or valued. When I went for help to employment services, I was advised to remove these work experiences from my resume. It was only the Canadian experience that would matter, they told me.

Since coming to Canada, I have spent a lot of time studying English and volunteering my free labour to various organizations. I have tried my best to enter college to better my qualifications, but without success.

In 2012, I entered the Ontario Second Career Program hoping to gain admission to a social service worker program to pursue my passion for community work. Thanks to a kind Second Career counsellor, who completed my paperwork, I did get into a program through Ontario Colleges. The application itself was extremely challenging because it had to be completed online, and I was unfamiliar with the process. Even so, I got help from my friends and made it. I was very happy until I found out that I would have to complete an ESL course before the academic program. Rather than spending my time learning about community services in Ontario, I spent a year in an ESL program.

I did not enjoy the ESL course. Some of the teachers were kind, but most of them treated us like children. As the course was mostly about becoming "Canadian" rather than learning English, we were taught about how "Canadians" live. We were taught how to speak on the phone and how to order pizza. Some teachers would say, we Canadians don't like this or that. I remember one teacher telling us that Canadians don't make physical contact while talking, and that we should avoid that.

Another day, the teacher asked me how I was, and I replied that I had a headache. She told me that in Canada, when asked how I am, I should reply that I'm well. We were made to feel that we were not "Canadian" although many of us were citizens or permanent residents.

After a few weeks, we even began to feel embarrassed about our lunches, as a teacher taught us that Canadians do not like food odours. Another teacher would ask us every Monday what we had done the previous weekend without understanding that most of us didn't have money to go out. Eating at a restaurant is very expensive, and travelling outside of the Great Toronto Area (GTA) is almost impossible. I had nothing to contribute to that conversation.

Many of my classmates were engineers, medical doctors, and had Masters and PhD degrees from their home countries. They had moved to Canada hoping for a better life, but had to pass this ESL course and get a Canadian qualification to access the labour market. My classmate, an engineer in his home country, came to Toronto and failed the English test six times. He paid international student fees, much more than for domestic students (over \$2,000 per semester). He completed eight semesters of English to get into college. And he did get into college. But there are many of us who failed the test and could not afford to pay the fees to continue in the program.

Eventually I had to leave the program because I did not pass two levels of the course in my first attempt. This meant that I had two uncompleted levels at the end of the academic year. I was informed that the Second Career Program did not cover tuition to repeat those levels, which meant that I would need to spend over \$1,000 to complete the course. I did not have that kind of money, as I had spent the year as a full-time ESL student. So I dropped out of the course.

Did they fail us because they wanted us to stay back and pay more fees? There were very few practice exams and we were unfamiliar with the methods of testing. They didn't care about how hard it was for us to pass the test, and I don't think they realized that passing the test meant our future in Canada. *Continued...*

In the end, I was barred from a career in the social services sector because I could not speak English like a Canadian (Question: Who is providing services to the thousands of Canadians who speak my first language and cannot speak English?). What are the options for immigrants whose second language is English? We face many difficulties: unemployment, poverty, higher rent than earnings. We find it difficult to live, to pay the bills. Some of us support our families in our home countries, where our families barely scrape a living. Most of us are doing part-time jobs, and day by day there are fewer hours of work. Some of us work five hours a week on minimum wage. How do we live? I live day by day uncertain of what will happen next month.

The government likes to say we are all on welfare, but many of us are not. I will do anything to keep a job because I do not want someone else to tell me where and how to live. I prefer to live with dignity.

In fact, I did find work for a short period at an organization providing community mental health services a few years after I came to Toronto. What a difference this made for me. Not only did I enjoy my work, but I could live in my own apartment and afford to eat well. But this was a contract job, and I was laid off once the project funds ended. This gave me access to the Second Career Program, but, in the end, what was the "second career" I entered?

I sent my resume to hundreds of job postings but nothing worked out. Eventually I found a job at a fast-food franchise in Toronto with help from a friend. It was her recommendation that got me the position (not the ESL course). I work very hard at this place. Each order must be completed in 60 seconds. We have to serve thousands of customers every week. The manager tells us that Canadians need faster services, and if we are not quick we will lose business.

The workers are not unionized, and workers' rights are violated daily. We receive very few breaks, and are made to work continuously on our feet. Many of my co-workers have sad stories to tell. One of them had previously worked the night shift for seven years in a hotel, and has been sick ever since because he cannot sleep. He is tired all the time and cannot work long hours.

Another co-worker has been working 20 years in this franchise, and underwent knee surgery from standing endless hours. Some of my co-workers are students, and they are paying back big student loans on minimum wage. No one is in a position to take legal action because everyone is thinking of surviving.

It is not surprising that there are so many homeless people in the area where I live. They are on the streets, but nobody seems to care. These people are overwhelmingly people of colour or native people. These communities live under poverty, discrimination, racism, and prejudice.

Canada proudly claims that it is a "multicultural" country, and is full of peace, democracy and human rights. But at the same time Canada brings in discriminatory laws against its citizens.

The recent anti-Muslim Bill C-51, which will increase surveillance of citizens to improve national security, will definitely target immigrants. With the immigration reforms brought in by the Harper government a few years ago, refugees now live in fear of being deported.

We have come to Canada for different reasons; as refugees, asylums seekers, skilled immigrants, students, housemaids etc. Like me, many of my friends, including medical doctors and PhD qualified immigrants, are doing labour work and struggling to live in Toronto.

We cannot speak English like Canadians, and we do not find good jobs. We struggle to survive, working in a hot environment, cold environment, exposed to chemicals used for cleaning, lifting heavy weights, and end up with various physical and mental health problems.

Occupational safety regulations, although in place, are often not enforced in Canada. Older generations of immigrants who have worked in Canada for a very long time have high rates of diabetes, blood pressure, and depression.

Temporary foreign workers remain temporary, with no resident rights even after years and years of service. We face discrimination in getting government jobs while English and French speaking Canadians are privileged owing to their language ability. Federal budget cuts of millions of dollars are affecting us and the few services we receive.

The bottom line is that our labour is not valued. The Canadian government must provide safe employment opportunities and create social support systems that recognize the challenges we face every day.

Instead, the government, while exploiting our labour, tries to look good by spending millions on employment services. These services train us to dress up and face an interview or speak Canadian English. But these services do not help us find work. The Canadian government should provide jobs for us; not waste money on training us to dress and speak.

In the few times I have got an interview, the first question asked is, "Do you have Canadian experience?" Without "Canadian experience," I cannot be trusted enough to do a job that will give me "Canadian experience". But I can gain "Canadian experience" only if I am given the opportunity to do so.

By Viji Murugaiyah

Taken from http://rabble.ca/news/2015/06/i-came-to-canada-asylum-i-still-feel-lost-here

The torch-bearer

NO ordinary life, was her ordinary life!

Our beloved...

The academic;

Knowledge of Persian, Arabic, Urdu, the Letters of the Orient, Gulistan, Boustan ... Lovingly taught by her enlightened father who cherished her but could not send her to school beyond grade 5 who nurtured her but could not carve an easy life for her who cared for the weak, and the marginalized Entrusted her to care for orphans.

The bride; At age 18, married a 19 year old charismatic scholar, an orphan with a sense of mission

The guardian; Mothered his six younger brothers

The survivor; Persevered through drudgery, deprivation, violence Honoured the choice of her dear father



The life-giver, the provider, the servant-leader; Sustained 11 child-births with minimal medical care Fed, clothed, sheltered all and many dependants, with meagre resources Served any number of faith-travellers any time of the day

The educator;

Taught her children alphabets with dough when making bread, poems and text at night so they dream big

The guide;

Inspired her children to see beyond the skies, to reach for the stars.

The truth-warrior; the justice-seeker; Enabled education for her 4 girls in the throes of conservative opposition. Rejected gold and jewels as they symbolized ownership of women by men Carried the sense of injustice, for each preventable deprivation imposed on her children, in her soul

The healer;

Mourned the grief, celebrated the joys, of those who came knocking at her door.

In a manner characteristic of her, she took upon the suffering, to give enough notice to us all, so we could gather around her, to watch her silently depart.

Her physical struggle in her last 3 weeks symbolized her spiritual journey on this earth. While helpless and voiceless in the face of a medical trauma, her inner life was rich, prolific, and hopeful. With every belaboured breath, she strived to keep life moving forward.

Where do we go from here, now? How do we keep the torch burning? So, she may Rest in Power!

To honour her life's work, let us identify small steps that we can take to create a just world.

There are a few simple questions that we can ask ourselves:

"How is this action/choice of mine affecting those around me?"

"What can I do, in my power, to support those who depend on me?"

"How can I create conditions for them to flourish?"

Remembering that we have the agency to act, no matter how constrained our circumstances are, is one way of honouring her legacy.

By Shehla Arif

The poem was written in honor of Shehla's grandmother's who recently passed away in Lahore Pakistan.

My Mothers

My mothers

Born of mothers

Unto mothers

They asked me who my role models were

Who do you channel?

Who taught you to speak,

To think,

To walk,

This way?

They did.

My mothers.

Born of mothers

Unto mothers

Who taught you revolution?

They did.

My mothers

Born of mothers

Unto mothers

Standing, marching, holding

Relentless in their passions

Devout in their actions

Unwavering in their strength

In awe I remain

In solidarity I stand

In time I learn

In their love I thrive.

By Naila Aldina

Watermelon Agua Fresca Recipe

Ingredients

- 4 cups cubed seeded watermelon
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup white sugar, or to taste
- 4 slices lime
- 24 fresh mint leaves
- ice

Method

Puree the watermelon and water in a blender until smooth. Add sugar to taste. Cut the lime slices in half. Place a half lime slice into each of 8 glasses along with 3 mint leaves. Crush with a cocktail muddler, then fill each glass with ice. Pour in the watermelon agua fresca, and stir before serving.

This is a drink served throughout Mexico. It is made with several different fruits. This is a watermelon drink

Watermelon, Feta and Roasted Almonds Salad Recipe

Ingredients

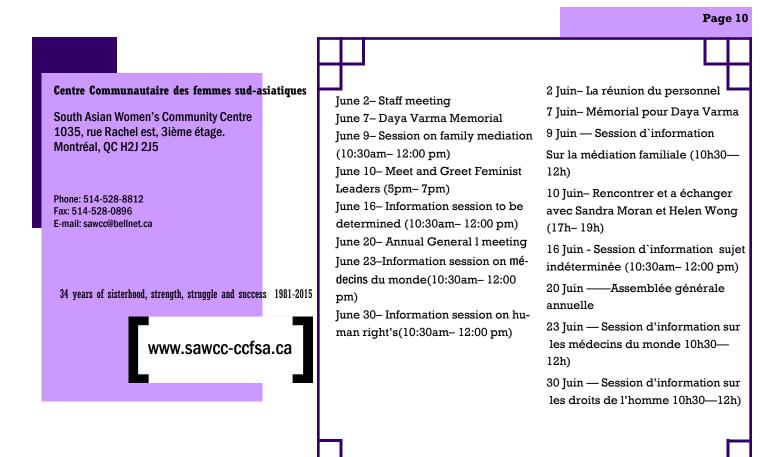
- 8 cups 1 1/4-inch chunks seedless watermelon (about 6 pounds)
- 3 pounds ripe tomatoes (preferably heirloom) in assorted colors, cored, cut into 1 1/4-inch chunks (about 6 cups)
- l teaspoon (or more) fleur de sel or coarse kosher salt
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 1/2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons chopped assorted fresh herbs (such as dill, basil, and mint)
- 6 cups fresh arugula leaves or small watercress sprigs
- l cup crumbled feta cheese (about 5 ounces)
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds, lightly toasted

Method

Combine melon and tomatoes in large bowl. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon fleur de sel and toss to blend; let stand 15 minutes. Add 4 tablespoons oil, vinegar, and herbs to melon mixture. Season to taste with pepper and more salt, if desired.

Toss arugula in medium bowl with remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Divide arugula among plates. Top with melon salad; sprinkle with feta cheese and toasted almonds and serve.





June	2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 In Memory	8	9 💿	10 🏌	11	12	13
14	15	16 📵	17	18	19	20 🍪
21	22	23 🔟	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 🔟				