

Giller-winning author coming to Guelph

M.G. Vassanji speaking at annual lecture, David Buckland delivers keynote address

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The Eramosa Institute has snagged two-time Giller award winner M.G. Vassanji for a literary reading at its annual "On Being Canadian" lecture.

Vassanji, who this year is nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award and the Giller Prize for his novel, "The Assassin's Song," will speak at the event, scheduled for Nov. 9 at the River Run Centre.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1950 and raised in Tanzania, Vassanji came to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study nuclear physics at 19. From there, he immigrated to Canada and moved to Toronto in 1980.

He began writing full-time following the publication of his first novel, "The Gunny Sack," in 1989.

In his time on Canadian soil, Vassanji said he's learned that "being different is also being Canadian."

Canadians are embracing a changing identity, he said from his Toronto home yesterday.

It was a different Canada when he arrived here in the '80s, and he appreciates that residents don't expect it to remain the same.

Canada has also been a good home base for him as a writer, Vassanji said.

It's a country where he's received a lot of support. When he visits small towns, he said, he is often surprised to see as many as 200 people turn out for his readings.

In addition to Vassanji, British resident David Buckland will be featured as the keynote speaker at the lecture. He will address this year's theme of environmental responsibility and action as he discusses Canada's role in the world, especially when it comes to tackling climate change.

The designer, artist and filmmaker has been directing the Cape Farewell project since 2001.

Buckland takes artists, scientists and educators on expeditions into the Arctic aboard a schooner to raise awareness about climate change. In 2008, he's set to take several Canadians north.

"Being Canadian is very much about being a global citizen," he said.

Canadians have that responsibility and are beginning to realize the actions humans have in warming up the planet, he said.

The lecture will also feature a musical world fusion dance performance by Guelph's own dub sensation, eccodek and Ishra Dance Theatre.

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TORONTO STAR

Author M.G. Vassanji, who is nominated for the Giller Prize and a Governor General Award for his most recent novel, 'The Assassin's Song,' will be in Guelph Nov. 9 for the Eramosa Institute's annual 'On Being Canadian' lecture.

