



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia

Corso di Laurea magistrale  
(*ordinamento ex D.M. 270/2004*)  
in Relazioni Internazionali Comparate -  
International Relations

Tesi di Laurea

—  
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**Escape from Italy**  
The Italian immigration experience in  
Canada from the Unification of Italy to the  
present day

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**Anno Accademico 2011/ 2012**

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## Preface

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the historical, socio-cultural and political aspects which have characterized one of the most important migrations in the history of Italy: the Italian emigration to Canada, and the consequent immigration in the host country.

I was inspired by my experience of internship and volunteering in the Italian Cultural Centre of Vancouver (British Columbia), during my stay between March and July 2011, in which I had the opportunity, and the honour, of working and collaborate for the realization of some activities in the Centre.

In Chapter 1, the history of the Italian immigration in Canada is illustrated, thanks also to the support of some tables which indicate, for example, the number of Italians arriving in Canada in the different decades from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the companies of Italian origin in Toronto area, the data on the Italian emigration to Canada in relation to the European Union countries, etc...

The Italian emigration (and subsequent immigration) in Canada can be divided into three main historical periods, concerning the generational aspects of the Italian migratory flows.

The first flow includes all the Italians who emigrated overseas from the Unification of Italy to the Second World War. During this phase, Fascism had a strong political and social role in the Italo-Canadian communities, above all in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, where the first pioneers settled.

In the years just after WWII, the second period of the Italian immigration in Canada begins; this is the phase of the “migratory boom”, in which Italian emigrants

massively left because of different reasons: for example the bilateral agreements between Canada and Italy that deleted the pre-recorded restrictive policies, the huge expansion of the Canadian labour market, the Canadian governments' policy with the new tool of the "sponsorship", etc... The mechanism of sponsorship will be then limited at the end of the 60s, when the introduction of the new multicultural policies supported by the Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau will led to a closure towards the external and to a revaluation of the original ethnic communities.

During the third period of Italian immigration in Canada, which occurs since the early 90s, we see the arrival of a new generation of Italians that differs from the other first two migrations because it is more limited and has new trends, reflecting the economic situation of both countries. In fact, compared to the past, the Italians' professional profiles have changed, with a significant spread of specialized workers and technicians, entrepreneurs and researchers. It is a matter of fact that Canada, in the last years, has become the destination of a kind of emigration that differs from the past in various points, characterized by people with high academic and working skills and experiences: this phenomenon has been often identified with the name of *Brain Drain*.

In Chapter 2 we find a description of those that were the first Italian sites in Canada, in the cities of Toronto (Ontario), Ottawa and Montreal (Quebec). Toronto, which can be considered one of the biggest Italian metropolis abroad, began to see the first Italian settlements from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but a significant presence of Italian people was not seen until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup>. The choice of many Italian emigrants fell

on Toronto, as well as Montreal, because these two cities had intermediaries of chain migration, the so-called *padrones*, who were Italian agents working on behalf of the Canadian government and companies, such as the Canadian Pacific Railway which recruited Italian workers. The largest group of Italians arrived after WWII: the number of emigrants arriving in Toronto at the beginning of the 50s was higher than that of the Italo-Canadians who were already in the city.

The area where the Italian people settled first was in the core of the city; the original district was part of a real district for foreign people known as the “*Ward*”, where the Jews were in larger number than the Italians, and where also Chinese and Slaves people settled in large number.

The development of a urban environment in the Ward depended on three factors: 1) despite the easy use of the adjective “not specialized”, most of the immigrants who settled in Toronto knew a job; for example they worked as labourers and they could make shoes, clothes, work as barbers...; 2) the seasonal nature of the outdoor work in Canada and the commercial initiative of many immigrants induced to a constant search of opportunity to gain in the city during the difficult periods of unemployment; 3) the most important factor is the third one: the demand for unskilled labour passed silently from the countryside to the city. Between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup>, first in Toronto and then in the other big cities, a new figure, that of the *navvy*, stated; a navvy was a labourer who worked for the building and the excavation works, most of the times in the railways, bridges and roads constructions.

The other important city where Italians started to settle was Montreal. The factor of this city which attracted most

was the variety of facilities that were essentials for assisting the transportation industry: the harbour, the railway stations, the freight yards, etc... The major transportation companies which hired Italian workers had a significant role in the distribution of work among the immigrants: the Montreal Street Railway Company (MSRC), the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and the Grand Trunk, a railway system that operated in Ontario and Quebec, and also in some American states. Then we have to mention the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company (MLHP) and the City of Montreal's works Department. Another key sector of the Montreal labour market was represented by the building of urban infrastructures such as sewers, canals, tunnels, streets, and huge construction projects.

In the city of Ottawa, instead, the Little Italy, located in Preston Street, gained great fame thanks to its famous annual events, and, first of all, for giving luster to interesting and leading personalities in the Italian community. To the Little Italy of Ottawa was given then the name of "Corso Italia".

The maintenance of the Italian identity by Italian immigrants in Canada was possible through the presence and the role of the media, too. Many Canadian-Italian newspapers were reprinting material from Italian newspapers with the addition of a little local information. Among the media which are still active we find *Radio Chin*, a multiethnic radio that broadcasts in over 30 languages but its founder was an Italian man, Johnny Lombardi and, then, the Italian broadcasts have always been in the foreground; the *Corriere Canadese*, instead, is a newspaper which was founded in 1954. It comes out with *La Repubblica* and it is distributed in Ontario

(particularly near Toronto) and in Quebec (near Montreal). The project is that to extend the distribution of the *Corriere* at national level, above all in Western Canada.

The media had, and still have, an important role for the diffusion and the support of Italian language here in Canada, but also in all the other immigration countries (Australia, USA, Latin America).

Another aspect of the Italian immigration in Canada that I wanted to learn because I thought it was really important, is the role of Italian women and wives during the migratory phases. If for the young women at their arrival in Canada the job opportunities were multiple, for the married women the situation was a bit different: they had to work at home, because the men were busy to work hard and bring home the salary to feed the whole family. In fact, Italian women started “taking in boarders”, that is to keep the compatriots’ pension. The boarder was an economic resource, even if this system could have negative implications: the women were often forced by their men in this task, and unfortunately they had to suffer some painful conditions of servitude or violence (the teenagers and the young women were often victims of sexual violence). On the other hand the boarder represented a cheap accommodation and a psychological support for all those single men who came to Canada.

In Chapter 3 the topic is the integration of Italians in Western Canada, with particular attention to the city of Vancouver and the region in which it is located, the British Columbia.

The first Italian people who settled in British Columbia, starting from the 50s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, arrived together with the gold seekers of the gold rush in the 1850s. In the essay “Beyond the Frozen Wastes”, the author told that the

Italian presence in BC “was suggested by reports like the one published by the Victoria Colonist in 1861, which described the good fortune of three Italian miners who left the colony after only three weeks with \$12,000 in gold”. The same author explained that in the Canadian colonial period, before the construction of the railway, the territory that constituted what is now known as British Columbia was difficult to access, but, despite this, many Italians succeeded in entering the region and found in there their new home.

The integration of Italian people in British Columbia was made easier and faster thanks to the help of an important institution: the Catholic Church.

In fact, the religious assistance to the Italians who first arrived in the new country was fundamental. During the migratory boom the Italian parish communities in BC spread rapidly and became a point of reference for many Italian families, but mostly for the single men who were alone in a country so far from their homeland. Furthermore, it is known that Italians maintained, almost in every place where they used to settle, an attachment to the religious traditions.

One of the typical aspects involving the Italian immigrants’ life in Western Canada is the “associative phenomenon”, that is the initiative taken by many immigrants to meet in groups or associations, with the same interests and common goals. For example, we have to mention the “Mutual Aid Societies”, the oldest Italian associations abroad, that had the goal of material, medical and moral assistance.

The Italian societies were usually called “Logge” and had a very long and detailed statute. Some of these societies still exist. It must be said that there is a basic difference

between the oldest associations and the most recent ones, that is that the first had some charitable and moral purposes, while the second had some particular recreational, regional or sports features. Among the best known Italian societies, we mention the “Case d’Italia”, where banquets, weddings and social events often take place. The phenomenon of diffusion and creation of all these associations was possible above all in the biggest centres, as Vancouver, in the Western coast, and Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, for the Eastern Canada.

For the Italian communities in Canada, the foundation of the COASCIT was also important. It is the Italian Committee for Educational and Cultural Activities, and it was created in the 70s. This institution wanted to maintain its Italian and consular feature, without being registered with a legal status at the Canadian offices. It had several tasks and goals, for example the coordination of the consular activities of educational assistance, the promotion of folkloristic and cultural initiatives in the Italian communities, a wider cooperation with the Canadian school and cultural authorities, etc...

The CAIV (Committee for the promotion and organization of Italian Activities in the district of Vancouver), instead, was an entity born in 1974 and it specifically operated for the district of Vancouver. Among the several activities promoted by it, the project for the construction of the Cultural and Recreational Centre in Vancouver had priority over all. The CAIV operated for three years and a half, working mainly as an operative and coordination centre.

As just mentioned, the Italian Cultural and Recreational Centre of Vancouver was one of the projects that the Italian community had desire to realize. Its construction

was possible thanks to the contribution of the Italian Folk Society of British Columbia, a federation composed of more than 50 associations, Italian and Italo-Canadian groups. For many years the idea of the Centre was supported by the Italian community, but a real organization linking the different groups and a joint program lacked. The Canadian Government together with the Italian Government concluded that the Centre could meet all the primary social needs, as the care of old people, recreational, educational and social activities for children and teenagers, the organization of free time activities, etc... In this paragraph there will be a link between the history of the Centre and my personal experience in Vancouver, and, above all, the cooperation with the Italian Cultural Centre Society.

In Chapter 4, the last one, the topic is the cooperation between Canada and Italy, with particular attention to the cultural and political relations which link the two countries. In this section we find the analysis of a very important aspect of the Canadian politics and culture: the multiculturalism.

It is known that Canada is one of the countries with the highest ethnic differentiation, and this derives from the several migrations which involved first French and English people, and then other European and Asian emigrants. An important stage of the policy of multiculturalism in Canada was the *Canadian Charter of rights and freedoms* (1982), contained in the Constitution Act of April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1982, a law that has the objective of protecting the citizen from the will of the State and the minorities from the will of the Parliament majorities. Thanks to this act, Canada finally acquired its full sovereignty and became independent from Great Britain.

The person who ever made this possible was the Prime Minister *Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (1968-79; 1980-84) of the Liberal Party of Canada. Thanks to him Canada opened to multiculturalism, to diversity, to multiplicity, and it worked for the clearing of polarizations and dichotomies with the aim of unity. Moreover, he managed to get approval of the *Official Language Act* by the federal Parliament in 1969: through it French and English were established as official languages.

Other two fundamental actors of the Canadian history were the Premiers of Quebec, Jean Lesage of the Liberal Party (1960-66) and René Lévesque of the Parti québécois (1976-85).

Lesage is famous for being the promoter of the so-called *révolution tranquille*, with which important reforms were initiated, while Lévesque was a prominent figure in the revolution that should lead to a greater autonomy in Quebec, up to ratify the independence of the latter. He also introduced the *Charte de la langue française*, with the goal of making French the “normal and everyday language”.

To conclude all these stages of the Canadian history, in 1988 *the Multiculturalism Act* was approved.

The topic which will be discussed then, is the participation of Italians in the public and political life of Canada, and the consequent problem of the *naturalization* of Italian immigrants. In fact, the political participation regards only the Canadian citizens, though, until a few years ago, for example the owners of a house, of any nationality, could vote in municipal elections. On the other hand, for some people, the naturalization is seen as a “repudiation” of their original citizenship. For the Italian immigrants the problem of political integration refers, first of all, to their

integration in the Canadian society, then to the participation to the Canadian constitutional system. Concerning other topics, as the Italian educational and cultural activities, there is a law that was set in 1971: the Law N. 153 of March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1971.

This Law grants to the Minister of Foreign Affairs the right to undertake, directly or not, initiatives abroad designed to: 1) facilitate the enrollment of Italian children in the public schools of the country (in this case Canada) by creating classes and courses in the local language; 2) maintain and increase the knowledge of the Italian language and culture by organizing courses for children and adults; 3) provide kindergarten classes, out-of-school assistance and courses for professional training.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1975, a new Law, the Law N. 327, was intended to give a legal status to the teachers that serve in Italian educational establishments abroad, giving them a stable employment and income.

The last study about the relations that link the two countries concerns the ITACA Project: Italo-Canadian communities for the internationalization of the districts". This Project is part of the activities for the training of the Italians that reside abroad, in non-European countries. Its main purpose was to give new prominence to Italian people resident in Canada and to their descendants, transforming them into intermediaries of business and relation between the Canadian and Italian territorial systems/districts.

The ITACA Project developed along three operating guidelines: 1) Networking; 2) Training; 3) Associative Empowerment. In the last chapter these phases will be explained in detail.

# Chapter 1

## The history of the Italian immigration in Canada

### 1.1 Introduction

The Italian immigration to Canada can be divided into three different historical periods, that correspond to the three generations of emigrants. The first generation includes the emigrants in the years from the Unification of Italy to the Second World War, that is from the original pioneers to the birth of the first capillary Italian communities. The second generation is that of the period after World War Two, when the migratory boom from Italy supported a big strengthening of the Italian communities in Canada, in which the new immigrants mingled with the sons of the old generations. The third one is that of the new emigration towards Canada, where the number is for sure more reduced but the kind of professions is more relevant.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 The first generation of immigrants (1861-1945)

Just after the Unification, the young Italian nation knew the phenomenon of the emigration, a fact that in reality was not so new in the peninsula, but that had a great boom after 1861. More than a million people should have left Italy between 1790 and 1861, a considerable portion if we consider that in 1861 the Italian population was around 27 million inhabitants. The destinations of these migratory movements were mainly European; but from the second

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<sup>1</sup> M. Troilo, Lavoro ed imprenditoria degli italiani in Canada, tra vecchie e nuove generazioni, in *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, 29/01/2011.

half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the transatlantic emigrations towards the America began. During the 70s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Argentina and Brazil were the nations where people mostly decided to emigrate, while in the following decade North America became one of the most involved destinations. Within a few decades big cities as New York and Toronto started being even more Italian.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1880 and 1920 the great expansion of the north American industry deviated part of the migratory flows towards the United States and Canada. The emigration towards Canada remained more limited than the one towards the United States. The Italian presence in Canada grew considerably in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although it was not the favourite destination, because the emigrants preferred the United States, Brazil and Argentina, during this phase, Canada represented a considerable attraction to the Italian emigrants. But from the beginning of the 30s the emigrations from Italy towards Canada decreased because of the combination of different factors: we find the same propensity also in the flows towards other countries as the United States. The first braking factor consisted of the two World Wars, that led to a considerable drop of the departures from Italy during the years 1915-18 and 1940-45. The second factor was the Italian government's policy between the two Wars as far as emigration is concerned. During the Fascism the executive power expressed particularly a strong hostility to the emigration, considering it dangerous both

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<sup>2</sup> N. Messina, *Considerazioni sull'emigrazione italiana dopo l'Unità (1876-1879)*, in F. Assante, *Il movimento migratorio italiano dall'Unità ai giorni nostri*, Napoli, 1976, pp. 247-251; Donna R. Gabaccia, *L'Italia fuori dall'Italia*, in *Storia d'Italia Annali 24. Migrazioni*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009, pp.226-230.

economically and politically. The regime answered in this sense in two different ways, on the one hand trying to support the settlement of Italian workers in the African colonies, and, on the other hand, supporting the associations of Italians abroad. Actually it is very difficult to quantify the number of Italian people who went to live in the colonies during the 20s. However some recent studies have revealed how this policy was substantially a failure.<sup>3</sup>

The intervention policy towards Italian people who lived overseas led to important results. Paradoxically, more than any other Italian ruler, Benito Mussolini tried to respect and support the Italians abroad, doing so they could feel part of the so-called “Italian race”. At the same time the control over the Italian associations abroad was used to restrict the “weight” of those Italians who had left their country as political exiles.<sup>4</sup> In Canada Fascism actuated a policy of gradual roots in the Italo-Canadian society to gain consensus both from the Italian emigrants and the authorities of the *dominion*.<sup>5</sup> The third factor which restrained the Italian migration between the two Wars was the policy that the receiver nations of the migratory flows, Canada included, realized during the Great Depression to put a limit to the arrival of foreign workers.

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<sup>3</sup> G. Podestà, I censimenti nei domini coloniali italiani come fonte per la storia sociale, relazione al convegno Società Italiana di Demografia Storica, *I censimenti fra passato, presente e futuro. Le fonti di stato della popolazione a partire dal XIV secolo*, Torino, 4-6 novembre 2010.

<sup>4</sup> D.R. Gabaccia, Emigranti. Le diaspore degli Italiani dal Medioevo a oggi, Torino, Einaudi, 2003, pp.189-191.

<sup>5</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, L'Italia e il fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, pp.73-89.

All these elements considerably influenced the development of the Italian emigration towards Canada, in the period that precedes the Second World War. The studies on the emigration and the Italo-Canadian culture recognized three periods of this first Italian settlement in the north-American country. The first period includes the first emigrants who settled in an isolated way in the Canadian lands in the mid-nineteenth century. They were often single men who had left Italy with the intention to go back. The second period, which starts around 1880, was characterized by an increase of the number of Italians in Canada, who were more often joined by their families with the purpose of settling and living there definitively. The so-called *Little Italies* were born. They were neighbourhoods with a massive Italian presence, in which the cultural expression gravitated around the local communities of origin of the emigrants, more than around the national sense. After 1930, the stabilization of those Italians arrived in the previous decades and the fascist cultural policy led to the foundation of a real Italo-Canadian culture.<sup>6</sup>

These “cultural” elements also influenced the working condition of the Italian people in Canada. Thanks to the social nets created by the kinship, the friendship or the belonging to the same country, the Italians in Canada got a job and also started to create business activities. Whether on the one hand the high labour demand recalled towards Canada lots of Italians, that was their ability to adapt that encouraged the expansion of the communities. That established the base for the following emigration phase in the second postwar period. In the 80s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>6</sup> M. Stellin, *Bridging the ocean. Italian literature of migration to Canada*, Udine, Forum, 2006, pp.16-19.

Canada was expanding a lot, and it needed great infrastructural works which could join its huge territory. The railways and canals construction produced a growing not qualified labour demand, for seasonal jobs. The presence of Italian workers in these sites was so high that very often there were emigrants coming from the same region or country who were put to work together, as, speaking the same dialect, they could better understand each other.<sup>7</sup>

The first Italian emigrants worked out of the towns, doing public seasonal jobs, but they tended to settle in the big urban centres, particularly in Montreal and Toronto, and to a lesser extent in Vancouver. This tendency to prefer the provinces of the Ontario and the Quebec kept on because these were economically more developed and offer more job opportunities. In fact the urban centres development, begun in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, created a high workers demand in the construction industry and in the maintenance of the city services, as the streets and the sewers. At the same time, the birth of the huge industrial plants helped to the concentration of the Italian emigration on those towns where the workforce was required. The largest development of the industrial cities in Ontario supported the foundation of different communities also in smaller cities, as for example Hamilton, Guelph, Windsor and Thunder Bay. Here the Italian communities are nowadays still developed. On the contrary in Quebec the Italian allocation concentrated above all in the metropolis of Montreal. The cities offered to the Italians who had business ambitions the opportunity to undertake new small

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<sup>7</sup> M. Stellin, *Bridging the ocean. Italian literature of migration to Canada*, Udine, Forum, 2006, pp.16-19.

trade businesses or to practice those craft activities they had learnt in their native villages. Obviously the supply of more humble jobs, as for example the labourer or the workman, was always significant. Some Italians endured years of high difficulty and uncertainty as daily workers, with the hope of accumulate a small initial amount, that was enough to begin a business. For some of them, this dream became true: they became barbers, shoes repairers, grocers, greengrocers, baker, or they handled other activities of this kind. So these shops outlined the most common scenery of the Italian neighbourhoods.<sup>8</sup>

In some cases the businesses which were opened principally for Italian customers, became an excellent springboard for enterprises at national level: what made the difference was, above all, the *know-how* brought by Italy, that was economically engaged in a more dynamic reality. We can give an example thanks to the studies of John Zucchi, that have shown as the immigrants of the Sicilian city *Termini Imerese* brought their knowledge of the fruit business, and, once arrived in Toronto, they could introduce themselves in this trade until gaining a good position, almost of monopoly.<sup>9</sup> Another part of the emigrants found a new way to use their agricultural abilities and to adapt them to the urban context: in Montreal, for example, lots of Italians were able to get a job as gardener for well-off families.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> B. Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada*, Canadian historical association, Ottawa, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> J. Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto. Development of a national identity, 1875-1935*, Kingston (Ontario), Mc Gill-Queen's University Press, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> B. Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada*, Canadian historical association, Ottawa, 1989.

In the phase which preceded the Second World War the bases for the development of the mechanisms of emigration were placed. This development made record an increase after 1945. The Italian workers were introduced in the Canadian job world by Italian officers, who were often known as *padroni*, that were previously emigrated and knew the Canadian reality and languages very well. What happened in the other countries, as far as emigration is concerned, happened in Canada, too. Already during the 19<sup>th</sup> century lots of emigrants paid the intermediaries and the labour recruiters, who were often back emigrants, so that they could be the mediators between them and the construction sites, the plantations, the mines and the industries. Some officers played the role of mediators in Canada, other, after being back in the native countries, set up the connection for the future emigrants. When the number of Italian emigrants increased and the new communities became stable, de facto this service was given by the family and friendships nets. From the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards the relatives and friends started to give the most part of the services, the money and the assistance the new migrants needed.<sup>11</sup>

The Italian emigration to Canada developed according to what was defined “migration chains”. The notion of migration chain was introduced thanks to the studies on the international emigrations, to explain the ways through which the destinations of the emigrants were, and still are, decided. This concept was introduced for the first time by

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<sup>11</sup> P. Audenino, M. Tirabassi, *Migrazioni italiane. Storia e storie dell’Ancien régime a oggi*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2008, pp. 43-48; D.R. Gabaccia, “L’Italia fuori dall’Italia”, in *Storia d’Italia Annali 24. Migrazioni*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009, pp.233-239.

the studies of John and Leatrice MacDonald, based on the observation of the arrival mechanisms of the Italian emigrants in Australia. That research pointed out as the Italians, arrived in the big oceanic country, formed some homogeneous aggregates according to the origin. The emigrants of the same region, and, often, of the same municipality, went to live in the same cities, or neighbourhoods, or even streets. This settlement model was very much alive, indeed, also in other adoption countries of the Italian emigrants, as precisely Canada, and that was already evident at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The studies of the MacDonalds wanted to underline the mechanisms of the migratory chain. In fact the chain didn't describe only the phenomenon of the settlement of local communities in the same city or neighbourhood, but it expressed also the reasons and the gears of that moving. The migratory chain was defined, then, as the mechanism through which the future emigrants could know the opportunities, and they had a good condition for travelling and could obtain their first home and the first job in the arrival places; all that thanks to social relations with the previous emigrants.<sup>12</sup>

The process of adaptation to the new land was realized by similar modalities and the social nets had a basic role in this case. The family was central for sure in the Italian nets, but also some new institutions were born: they served to maintain the Italian traditions and sense of identity alive, and they served as employment offices for the

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<sup>12</sup> P. Audenino, M. Tirabassi, *Migrazioni italiane. Storia e storie dell'Ancien régime a oggi*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2008, pp.43-48; F. Sturino, "Italian Emigration: Reconsidering the Links in Chain Migration, in R. Perin, F. Sturino, *Arrangiarsi. The Italian Immigration Experience in Canada*, Montreal, Guernica, 1992, pp.63-64.

emigrants. The first forms of association referred to the Mutual Aid Societies, in accordance with a model known in the peninsula and exported in Canada. The Mutual Aid Societies were important because they gave assistance to the Italian emigrants, that were often in a delicate position in the job world, for example due to the difficulty in acceding the Canadian labour unions.<sup>13</sup>

The family institution did the remaining work in the process of stabilisation of the Italian community. The immigrant women were essential to make less dramatic the transition between two so different socio-cultural realities. Women recreated in the new settlements the old family, working and social models, using traditional skills, mediating between the ethnic community and the host country. Very often the women came from Italy in a second moment, after their husbands, so they could rebuild the family unit. It was only with the arrival of the women that the situation changed radically, and that was no more as it was mentioned in Robert Harney's essay by the evocative title *Men without women*.<sup>14</sup>

During the time the Italo-Canadian women went over the classic role of wives and mothers, becoming also entrepreneurs. The first businesses managed by Italian women were the boarding houses for lonely men, where the just arrived emigrants could stay. Lots of clichés about the Italian woman condition, that often didn't reflect the reality, were put aside by the Italo-Canadian literature. Not only the emigrant woman wasn't necessarily a housewife, but she had also a cultural life outside the domestic sphere.

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<sup>13</sup> B. Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada*, Canadian historical association, Ottawa, 1989, pp.15-20.

<sup>14</sup> R.F. Harney, "Men without women. Italian migrants in Canada, 1885-1930", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 1979, pp.29-47.

This thesis is also supported by the studies of the historian Angelo Principe, who emphasized as before the war the role of the Italian women was central in the work, in the business and in the political activism pro and against Fascism.<sup>15</sup>

### **1.3 The 20s and the 30s: Fascism in Canada**

Between the 20s and 30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked a period of deep transformations in the Canadian political life. Those are the years of the union Radicalism and of the consequent “Red Scare”, that pervaded the country and peaked with the general strike in Winnipeg in 1919, considered by the conservative public opinion as a Bolshevik try to establish the proletariat dictatorship. The dissatisfaction had spread not only in the industrial proletariat, but also between the farmers of Ontario and of western Canada, who had supported the Union Government of the postwar years but they were disappointed by the government’s policy.<sup>16</sup>

The Italian Fascism took the first steps largely spreading in Canada, where the political situation, characterized by a deep instability, was ideal for this new event. The first task that Fascism had set was to penetrate gradually in the country and to take control of the “colonial” organisations,

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<sup>15</sup> A. Principe, “Glimpses and Lives in Canada’s Shadow: Insiders, Outsiders, and Female Activism in the Fascist Era”, in D.R. Gabaccia, F. Iovetta, *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives, Italian Workers of the World*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002, pp.349-351; S. Garroni, E. Vezzosi, “Italiane migranti”, in *Storia d’Italia Annali 24.Migrazioni*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009, pp.449-465.

<sup>16</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l’Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, p.59.

and, at the same time, trying not to alarm the public opinion. Especially in the first years, when Mussolini's regime was still consolidating, the dangerous presence of the notorious article 98 of the penal Code<sup>17</sup> was still perceived, above all on the activities of the rising Italo-Canadian Fascism. This article, although addressed against the Communists, could be theoretically used against all those riotous movements that threatened the established order. Therefore the Fascism, which had appeared in Canada even before the March on Rome, followed a careful policy during the first period, both because of organizational deficiencies and some distrust of the Canadian authorities.

In a small community as it was the Italo-Canadian community, which had in that time about 120,000 unities, the Fascists' efforts were directed towards the infiltration in the already existing organizations, above all the *Ordine dei figli d'Italia*, one of the most important and widespread of the North America.<sup>18</sup> Those who counteracted to the system were the antifascists: where

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<sup>17</sup> In Winnipeg, capital of Manitoba and the most important city of the western Canada, a strike ( started in May 1919 in the construction sites and in the metallurgical factory for the acknowledgement of the collective bargaining) spread in the whole city. After six weeks the Government asked for the intervention of the troops and imprisoned the leaders of the strikers. One of the consequences of the strike was the introduction of an amendment to the penal Code ("*Section 98*") according to which up to 20 years of imprisonment could be applied for the guilty of "sedition" against the established order. Article 98 was repealed only in 1936 by the liberal Government.

<sup>18</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l'Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, p.60.

they were, they fought to keep the independence of the *Ordine*.<sup>19</sup>

In Quebec, the Canadian province where there was the highest Italian presence, Fascism was able to penetrate more effectively in the community. In fact in 1922, not by chance, the first Italo-Canadian pro-fascist journal, “Le Fiamme d’Italia”, was published and, some years later, in 1925, the first Italian Fascist party in the dominion was founded. Within a few years the fascist organizations had a huge spread with the setting-up of female and youth sections and the opening of clubs in the districts frequented by Italians, thanks also to the support of the local section of the *Ordine dei Figli d’Italia*, that had adhered to Fascism in 1926. In the same period the weekly newspaper “L’Italia”, founded in 1916, became spokesman of the regime’s propaganda.

It was probably thanks to this influence of the local Fascism that the Italian consul in Montreal could obtain the cooperation of the Canadian authorities to hush up “Il Risveglio Italiano”, an antifascist weekly newspaper founded in 1926 and forced to shut down just after four months from the beginning of the publications. Spirit of this initiative was a young antifascist, Antonino Spada, who had settled in Canada recently and become famous immediately for his activism.<sup>20</sup>

*...Mr. Spada, although he is still so young, he’s a skilful agitator, very literate, very active, incisive and strong polemicist. The means he chose to realize his mission were dual:*

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<sup>19</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l’Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, p.60.

<sup>20</sup> *ibidem*, pp.65-66.

1) The “ *circolo Matteotti*”, organization with an ambiguous nature, liberal-radical in the events in which the authorities and local political elements were guests, clearly subversive in its colonial action.

2) The weekly “*Il Risveglio Italiano*”, body of the aforesaid club, in a modest manner published, but with unquestionable talent edited.... Emboldened, maybe, by the tolerance granted him, Mr. Spada crossed the limits and he exacerbated the tones of his polemic. The publication of an irreverent article for our King’s Majesty, and of the communist poster of the 1<sup>st</sup> of May forbidden by the Montreal’s police....have forced the General Consul of Montreal to put the Canadian authorities in the need of acting. The article, irreverent and defamatory.... was subject to tight negotiations between that Representation and the Prime Minister of the Quebec’s province, who.... promised the active cooperation of the Provincial Government by the Federal authorities to obtain the deportation of the agitator. The General Consul continued his own action operating directly on the Minister of Justice in Ottawa. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September the General Consul personally delivered to the Federal Minister of Justice a confidential memorandum.... Holding these documents and pressed by the Provincial Government, and by the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Immigration Department ordered the deportation of Mr. Spada.<sup>21</sup>

But we should note that the fascist success was not full because, thanks to an active mobilization of the public opinion in Montreal, the deportation order was revoked, provided that

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<sup>21</sup> Letter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the general Direction of public safety, on the 31st of December 1927.

*Mr. Spada doesn't write any article in the future anymore, or that he breaks off a relationship with publications for propaganda purposes and stops immediately the publication of "Il Risveglio Italiano".*

We have to wait until 1940 to see arise a new publication like that, of anti-fascist tendency; this fact had serious consequences also because Montreal was the seat of the most populous Italian colony of the dominion.<sup>22</sup>

During the 20s the main attention of the Italian authorities focused on the fascistization of the Community institutions; in the meanwhile they tried to control the antifascist activities. However, it was necessary to do a step to gain more sympathies in the mass of the emigrants: for this purpose a campaign in defence of the "Italian spirit" was begun, and this aimed at promoting a current of sympathy towards the regime, at the same time. In this context it is important to mention the "Caboto campaign", launched in Montreal in order to claim to the Venetian sailor the merit of the discovery of Canada. The campaign, which was centered around the project for the raising of a monument in honour of Caboto, tended to renew ties between the emigrants and the motherland and to establish a direct connection between the old and the current national glories.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l'Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, p.67.

<sup>23</sup> About the "Caboto campaign" and more generally about the situation in Montreal, see: R. Perin, *Conflicts d'identité et d'allégenace. La propagande du consulat italien à Montreal dans les années 1930*, in *Question de Culture*", vol.II, 1982, pp.81-102.

This claim of “Italian spirit and lifestyle” clashed hardly with the French-Canadian nationalist spirit, that already suffered hard strokes in the previous years as the abolition of the French language and of the Catholic education in the schools of many provinces, the subordination of Canada to the British imperial policy and, finally, the introduction of the obligatory conscription in 1917. In this situation, in which the French part felt ever more crushed and relegated in a position of inferiority by the Anglophone majority, the Italian initiative couldn’t not appear as a provocation. There was a deep split between the two ethnic groups, and it had led the consular authorities and the organizations that were supported by them to play the English card against the French one.<sup>24</sup>

In this particular and delicate context the pro-Caboto campaign started significantly in 1925, in the same year of the foundation of the Montreal Fascist party, under the auspices of the *Ordine dei Figli d’Italia*. In 1925, 1926 and 1927 the anniversary was celebrated on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, 1497, the day when Caboto had landed on Cape Breton Island. There was a military parade attended by consular representatives, Canadian authorities and important members of the community; on the occasion of the anniversary in 1925, an unique issue with the adhesion of Mussolini, of the Canadian Prime Minister and other many authorities was published.

In 1929 the journal “Il Cittadino” took on the task to be the mouthpiece of the fight; the campaign of “Il Cittadino”, set in anti-French terms, caused the reaction of the francophone press and, overall, of one of the most influential newspapers, “Le Devoir”.

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<sup>24</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l’Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, p.68.

Il Cittadino, while claiming it didn't want to diminish the French-Canadian history value, showed clearly that it identified the interests of the Italian community with those of the English Canada. In this case Caboto, who had crossed the ocean thanks to the support of Henry VII of England and pitched on the Canadian soil the two flags of England and Venice, assumed a function of symbol.<sup>25</sup>

Ultimately, according to the vision of "Il Cittadino", Canada was not a nation formed by two historical cultures where the different immigrated communities had to blend, but rather a variety of ethnic groups, each one with its own specific cultural connotation. For this, the journal wrote, the Italians claimed a level of absolute equality with the other Canadians, as a group proud of its origins exactly as the French-Canadian were.<sup>26</sup>

Despite all these oppositions, or maybe also thanks to them, the "Caboto campaign" had a great success in the Italian community, and we find confirmation of this in the book of a famous antifascist from Montreal, Antonino Spada, who praised the spirit of the initiative: therefore, this was sign that the call to the "Italian way of life" caught the attention of the antifascist environments, too.<sup>27</sup>

However, from the political point of view, it was dangerous to continue this contrast with the French part: in this way, the future prospects of Fascism expansion in the province of Quebec could be compromised. This province, after the conclusion of the Lateran pacts, showed estimate and favour towards the Italian regime.

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<sup>25</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l'Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, pp.68-69.

<sup>26</sup> See "Il Cittadino", 24th October 1929.

<sup>27</sup> A. Spada, *The Italians in Canada*, Ottawa-Montreal, Riviera, 1969, pp.114-115.

The controversy linked to Caboto remained a limited episode in the history of the Fascist penetration in Quebec and during the 30s, especially after the Ethiopian crisis, the Italian consuls will establish an active alliance with the French-Canadian nationalism, trying to go in the internal political affairs of the province, sometimes also unscrupulously.<sup>28</sup>

At the beginning of the 30s, the first phase of the spread of Fascism within the Canadian society was completed; this phase was characterized by the attention towards the “colonial” organizations and by the search of good relationships with the authorities of the dominion. At that time a qualitative leap was necessary taking new initiatives, that aimed at capturing the consensus of the general public and to impose the image of the “new Fascist” Italy.

In this period in Canada, especially in the province of Quebec, the first signs of a future violent anti-Semite campaign were present: in 1930 of the 156,000 Canadian Jews about 60,000 lived in Quebec and, as the community grew, ever more tensions with the French-Canadian element occurred.<sup>29</sup> In the same years a series of movements of fascist inspiration spread a little everywhere. In 1933 the “Fédération des Clubs Ouvriers” of Montreal adopted the brown shirt and embraced the fascist cause; outside Quebec some Swastika Clubs were born in Ontario, above all in Toronto, a sort of exasperation of the Anglo-Saxon origins, that was intended to fight the Jews and prevent the “contamination” of the areas inhabited by the Gentils, particularly the

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<sup>28</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l'Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, pp.71-72.

<sup>29</sup> *ibidem*, p.89.

elegant areas on the banks of the lake Ontario. The Swastika Clubs gave birth to many thug actions that culminated in Toronto on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1933 during a violent fight in the square where there were also some Jewish youth activists intervened to defend their faction. Then, in the West, the Canadian Nationalist Party was founded in September 1933 in Winnipeg, with an anti-Semitic program, too.<sup>30</sup>

All these different movements had as common matrix above all the anti-Semitism and they took inspiration from Hitler's Nazism. The Canadian Fascism looked more to Germany than Italy, and we cannot be surprised that the Italian consuls preferred maintain a certain distance from other different movements which could also compromise them towards the public opinion.

At the beginning of the 30s the fascist control on the Italo-Canadian community and the various "colonial" organizations were now firmly though, as the Canadian historian Robert F. Harney had shown, the spread of Fascism was limited and it had not yet affected deep on the ethnic community structures.<sup>31</sup> Even in 1932 the Italo-Canadian Society in Toronto, which was born in 1919 from the fusion of the oldest Mutual Aid Societies of the city, showed an aversion and a resentment for the fascist initiatives, that arose more from an "associative patriotism" than a militant anti-Fascism. The journal "L'Emigrato", mouthpiece of the society, in opposition to the pro-Fascist "Bollettino Italo-Canadese", published a long article where it stigmatized the fascist pretence to

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<sup>30</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l'Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, pp.90-91.

<sup>31</sup> R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada, 1800-1945*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1984.

make subject to the will of Rome all the Italian societies abroad and to transform the emigrants in “nothing but humble servants of the consular authority and of the regime”. This claim was even more absurd and dangerous because it had as its object emigrants in large part become Canadian, to whom a conflict of loyalty between the loyalty to the adopted homeland and the country of origin was imposed. The Fascism, concluded the journal, had to limit its influence to smaller areas, especially since the Italo-Canadian community had strong roots that went back to long before the March on Rome.

Afterwards organized groups of anti-fascists with political purposes arose in the major Canadian cities inhabited by Italian emigrants and, above all, in Ontario, where Toronto and Windsor were the headquarters of these activities.<sup>32</sup>

In 1926 in Toronto the “Circolo Matteotti” was created and, as a result of this, in 1928 the “Circolo Mazzini” was founded: between 1933 and 1934, in its best years, the Circolo Matteotti had about 150 members. Among its activities, in addition to the periodic assemblies and conferences, there was also the organization of English courses for the emigrants and theatre representations. Around the “Circolo” revolved all the antifascist groups of the city, by the Communists to the Anarchists.

The Italian authorities kept a close watch to the activities of the “Circolo Mazzini”, also because this was in contact with the Canadian Unions and the political organizations, such as, for example, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the Labour Party of Ontario; this surveillance would have increased after the foundation of “La Voce Operaia”, in July 1933. The journal, born as

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<sup>32</sup> About the antifascist activity in Ontario, see: A. Principe, *The Italo-Canadian Antifascist Press in Toronto*.

expression of the Circolo, was presented to the readers as antifascist unitary body without reference to a specific party.

The foundation of “La Voce” was important because it was the first antifascist Italian journal published in Canada, without taking into account the short experience of the “Risveglio Italiano” of Montreal, and, despite the limited edition, it could play an useful role of counter denouncing the internal situation in Italy under the dictatorship and taking a stand against fascist activities in Canada.

As far as the Canadian West is concerned, from the papers of the Policy Records emerges that antifascist teams of some significance existed in Calgary (Alberta) and in Vancouver (British Columbia), where since the 20s an Italo-Canadian Working Alliance was founded. In addition to the groups of organized resistance, there were also in Canada isolated figures who led their personal struggle against Fascism, but, not for this, they were immune to the repression of the Italian government.<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, in the antifascist movement some groups and elements stood out, especially in Toronto, but it is clear, thanks to the Italian archival documentation, that the movement was normally composed by people who had already fought in Left parties before the emigration. The ability of the Antifascism to affect the mass of emigrants was quite low and the difficulties had increased by the fact that Fascism enjoyed a large and widespread support by the Canadian public opinion. We certainly cannot say that most of the Italo-Canadian were fascist (the peak of the consensus would have been reached only during the

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<sup>33</sup> L. Bruti Liberati, *Il Canada, l'Italia e il Fascismo, 1919-1945*, Roma, Bonacci, 1984, pp.98-99.

Ethiopian war), but the Italian government, through its structure of propaganda, could hold up well under control a community which mostly didn't deal with politics and which was taken to refer to the consular authorities and the "colonial" organizations.



*Italian emigrants on their arrival in Canada*

#### **1.4 The migratory boom (from 1945)**

The migratory boom from Italy towards Canada occurred after the end of the Second World War. The end of the hostilities in Europe meant the possibility for thousands of people to begin again the migratory flow overseas, but in a completely changed atmosphere. As far as international policy is concerned, the war had meant the fall of Nationalism and economic Protectionism, both braking factors for emigration. Economically, the war had caused deep fractures in the European productive fabric, while the overseas countries remained immune from the war destructions.<sup>34</sup> Particularly Canada was in the condition it

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<sup>34</sup> P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra ad oggi. Società e politica 1943-1988*, Torino, Einaudi, 1989, pp.293-295; G.

could encourage in different ways the European workforce immigration, necessary to the huge economic development that was already imposing during the 40s. Finally, also the typical profile of the Italian emigrant had changed. Those who arrived in Canada from the 50s onwards were backed by a bigger heritage of working skills, which they had acquired in the previous migrations to the Northern Italy or to other European countries. That's why this generation got a job much more easily in the big industrial complexes as the huge steelworks in Hamilton, Ontario.<sup>35</sup>

Just because the Italian emigrants left in the years preceding the boom, they didn't know well the social and economical changes that were happening in their country. That characterized also the idea of Italy they had, so they looked at their country in a nostalgic way, thinking about it as a place characterized by poverty and simplicity, traditions and sense of community.<sup>36</sup>

As far as the working aspect is concerned, we can observe the Canadian statistics which help us to understand the progressive attraction that Canada had on the Italian emigrants. For example, looking at table 1, which summarizes the number of Italians entered in Canada in the main migratory periods, we can basically notice two

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Sapelli, *Storia economica dell'Italia contemporanea*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 1997, pp.45-52; V. Zamagni, *Dalla rivoluzione industriale all'integrazione europea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1999, pp.205-210.

<sup>35</sup> As regard as the Canadian economic development following the Second World War, see mostly: J.M. Bumsted, *A History of the Canadian Peoples*, Don Mills (Ontario), Oxford University Press Canada, 2007, pp. 365-371; K. Norrie, D., Owrarn, H.J.C., Emery, *A History of the Canadian Economy*, Toronto, Thomson-Nelson, 2008, pp.361-431.

<sup>36</sup> M. Stellin, *Bridging the ocean. Italian literature of migration to Canada*, Udine, Forum, 2006, pp.151-154.

historical picks. The first one concerns the first twenty years of the XX century, the second one is about the 50s and 60s. We don't have reliable values for the years preceding the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but thanks to the literature we can notice, however, a growing phenomenon starting from the 80s of the XIX century in continuity with the next increase of the twenty-year period 1901-1920. As aforesaid, the migratory flow towards Canada had an abrupt drop during the 20s and almost an interruption from the 30s. The restart of the phenomenon was very strong in the 50s and 60s and it reached much higher degrees than the ones preceding the two World Wars.

Table 1. Italians emigrated in Canada (1901-1978)

Years	N. of Italians entered the country	Percentage on the total immigration in Canada
1901-1910	58,104	3.5
1911-1920	62,663	3.7
1921-1930	26,183	2.1
1931-1940	3,898	2.4
1941-1950	20,682	4.2
1951-1960	<b>250,812</b>	<b>15.9</b>
1961-1970	190,760	13.5
1971-1978	37,087	3.1
1991-1995	2,540	0.3
1996-2000	2,225	0.3
2001-2006	2,270	0.2

Source: Statistics Canada

Between 1948 and 1972 Italy was at second place as source of immigration for Canada, just after Great Britain.

Among the reasons that pushed Italian people to choose Canada after the war there were the bilateral agreements which deleted the pre-recorded restrictive policies. This factor was really significant, so that, between the 50s and the 60s, the emigrants who left Italy to settle in Canada surpassed in number those people that, in the same period, went to the United States.<sup>37</sup>

The migratory boom, as previously happened, was favoured by the combination of institutional factors, as the precise will of the Canadian government to stimulate the arrival of foreign workforce, and of social factors, as the Italian nets which started again their solidarity work towards the newcomers. The extraordinary expansion of the Canadian labour market in the postwar period helped in its own way, creating the possibilities for the new Italian generation to settle in Canada. The policy of the Canadian governments in favour of the emigration came true through the sponsorship's tool. According to this policy the candidates to the immigration could enjoy a particular facility in the admission in the country, as long as their relatives, already resident in Canada, had accepted to sponsor them, finding an accommodation and providing for their first maintenance. The Italians were the first who took advantage of this system, above all thanks to the networks they created before the conflict. More than 90 per cent of the Italians who arrived in Canada between 1946 and 1967 were sponsored and, therefore, maintained and helped, by relatives that already lived in the North-American country. The good progress both of the networks and of the sponsorship's mechanisms, in economic and social terms, shows as the migrations

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<sup>37</sup> D.R. Gabaccia, *L'Italia fuori dall'Italia*, in *Storia d'Italia Annali 24. Migrazioni*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009, p.243.

towards Canada carried on also after the end of the migratory boom from Italy, that is when the national economy had already entered that growing phase known as “Economic Miracle”.<sup>38</sup>

The Italian emigration towards Canada was a complex phenomenon, powered by different experiences, as that of the “giuliano-dalmati”, who, after the war, were forced by the events to leave definitively their own lands. Whole communities chose among the new destinations also Canada: they differed from the other Italian communities because they abandoned the homeland.<sup>39</sup>

Another interesting episode concerns the arrival in Canada of thousands of Italian workers just passing through Belgium, where they previously emigrated. An agreement between the Belgian and the Canadian governments had to promote the arrival of French native-speaker emigrants, to compensate the predominance of the “Anglophone” immigrants. It happened, on the contrary, that Italian workers, well-intentioned to leave the hard work in the coal mines, arrived in large number.<sup>40</sup>

The role of the Federal Government of Ottawa consisted in encouraging the foreign immigration, and there are two important aspects to underline: the facility in the

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<sup>38</sup> M. Boyd, “Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas”, *International Migration Review*, vol.23,3, Autumn 1989, pp.638-670; S. Sonia, “Intersecting labour and social networks across cities and borders”, *Studi emigrazione*, anno XLIV, aprile giugno 2007, n.166, 2007, pp.313-326.

<sup>39</sup> R. Buranello, *I giuliano-dalmati in Canada. Considerazioni ed immagini*, New York, Legas, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> M. Maccari-Clayton, “From “watchdog” to “salesman”: Italian re-emigration from Belgium to Canada after the Second World War”, in *Studi emigrazione*, anno XLIV, aprile giugno 2007, n.166, pp.327-336.

acquisition of the citizenship and the welfare state policies for the emigrants' families. Canada, after the war, was looking for new citizens who needed to find a place where they could stay forever, and was not looking for temporary workers. This aspect was mainly favoured by the application of the *ius soli*, that allowed to the children born in the Canadian territory to become automatically citizens. So in Northern America, unlike Europe, the spread of much bigger and much more cohesive communities was possible. In the multiethnic Canada also the Italian descendants of third generation declare themselves as Italo-Canadians, even if they often don't remember the language of their forefathers. It was greatly to its credit that this generation limited the old stereotypes about Italians, above all thanks to their professional advance. There were lots of Italian immigrants' children who were able to improve their professional and social status, taking advantage of better educational conditions.<sup>41</sup> The advanced Canadian welfare state in the postwar never forgot the immigrants' families, in fact, through its tools, it contributed to the reinforcement of the immigrants' sense of belonging to the huge and variegated North-American nation. Many Canadian scholars pointed out as the welfare state was used as a mean to maintain the national cohesion in a country where, on the contrary, strong national symbols miss, also in the oldest communities. At the same time it was used in order to favour the arrival and the settlement of immigrants' families. In 1950, when the number of immigrants knew a small stasis, Ottawa changed the family allowance's program, including in the payments, through a special allowance, the immigrants'

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<sup>41</sup> D.R. Gabaccia, *L'Italia fuori d'Italia*, in *Storia d'Italia Annali 24. Migrazioni*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009, pp.245-248.

families, too, case that we could observe only in the United Kingdom and in Australia in the same period.<sup>42</sup>

The new emigrants and the second generations continued, despite everything, being attached to the motherland. That was not an easy and predictable connection due that people who left also after the war, still had an idea of the country very far from the current reality; furthermore the second generations didn't often speak Italian but the dialect learned by their parents. Nevertheless in Canada, as in lots of other extra-European Italian communities, the sense of Italian spirit is still very alive and founded on the centrality of the family, on the importance of the intergenerational links and on some imported rites from Italy as the grape harvest, the alcoholics' distillation and the typical Italian meals.<sup>43</sup>

In the postwar period the Italian entrepreneurial activity in Canada knew the most mature phase, that gave amazing results. In general the entrepreneurial quality of the Italians abroad expressed in many fields, from the musical instruments to the tobacco manufactures, up to the wine-growing and wine-producing firms, also started up in

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<sup>42</sup> J.M. Bumsted, *A history of the Canadian peoples*, Oxford (UK), Oxford University Press, 2007, pp.394-405; R. Blake, *From Rights To Needs. A History of Family Allowances in Canada 1929-1992*, Vancouver-Toronto, UBC Press, 2009, pp.13-22; D. Marshall, *The Social Origins of the Welfare State. Quebec Families, Compulsory Education and Family Allowances*, Waterloo (Ontario), Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006, pp.184-188.

<sup>43</sup> S. Ziegler, "The Family Unit and International Migration: The Perceptions of Italian Immigrant Children", *International Migration Review*, Vol.11, n.3 (Autumn, 1977), pp.326-333; C. Bianco, E. Angiuli, *Emigrazione: una ricerca antropologica di Carla Bianco sui processi di acculturazione relativi all'emigrazione italiana negli Stati Uniti, in Canada e in Italia*, Bari, Dedalo, 1980.

Northern America. They are all those productions defined as “ethnic”, made mainly to help the demand of the emigrants and, only later, intended to penetrate the “native” market. Many studies about this topic underlined as in the ethnic productions the business risk, that is part of the business logic, is limited in a way by a guaranteed base, the immigrants’ demand, that makes this risk less similar than a leap in the dark. To all this a safety net was added, that consisted of the political patronage ethnic system that was expressed – above all in Northern America – in different ways: in the most official manner with the Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad born in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in cities, as Toronto and New York, where the Italian presence was particularly high.<sup>44</sup>

To understand the evolution to the current days of the establishment process of Italian companies in Canada, we can use a recent census made by Team Italia, an association of Italo-Canadian entrepreneurs. The collected data are not complete, as they analyze primarily the province of Ontario and particularly the GTA (Grand Toronto Area), the metropolitan area of Toronto. Despite this, the results show up on the one end the way we have already shown considering the existing literature, on the other side new elements. In fact, if we observe table 2, where the sectors with the greater presence of entrepreneurs of Italian origin are in percentage summarized, we can see as these have plenty passed the

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<sup>44</sup> W. Anselmi, L. Hogan, “L’emigrazione italiana in Canada nell’era globale tra aspetti culturali e risvolti economici”, *Memoria e Ricerca*. N.18, 2005, pp.61-78; A. Martellini, “Emigrazione e imprenditoria”, in *Storia d’Italia Annali 24.Migrazioni*, Torino, Einaudi, 2009, pp.285-301.

model of the “ethnic” products. Almost a quarter of the companies (22 per cent) is employed in fact in the home finishes sector. There are then other sectors as the services, the industry and the construction, and the 12 per cent is in the food sector, typical of the ethnic entrepreneurial activity, not only Italian.

Table 2. Companies of Italian origin in Toronto area  
( percentage of data on a sampling of 1,683 companies )

Home services (furniture, doors, windows, alarm systems)	22
Offices, services, other ...	14
Industry	13
Construction	13
Food	12
Processing (wood, metal, paper)	10
Electronics	8
Distribution and sale	6
Hotels and Tourism	2

Source: Team Italia, *Gli imprenditori canadesi di origini italiane*, Toronto, 2008.

In table 3, instead, we can see summarized the percentages about a really small sample, regarding the years of arrival and establishment of the companies. Despite the limited data, the tendency seems clear: most of the entrepreneurs arrived in the period 1950-1969 and founded their own companies in the following twenty-years period, between 1970 and 1989.

Table 3. Periods of arrival in Canada of the Italian entrepreneurs and of companies' foundation (percentage of data on a sampling of 120 entrepreneurs)

Period	Arrivals	Foundation
Before 1940	11	5
1940-49	3	0
1950-59	45	11
1960-69	32	13
1970-79	5	24
1980-89	3	30
1990-99	1	16
2000-06	0	1

Source: Team Italia, *Gli imprenditori canadesi di origini italiane*, Toronto, 2008.

We can notice an evolution in the postwar period that fully reflects the way illustrated until now. Many Italians arrived at the end of the conflict, using the social and parental nets created in the previous decades, they often started with humble jobs and were able to conquer for themselves new places in the working and entrepreneurship world: in this last field, as time went by, they could walk away from the most typical sectors for the emigrants.

The big emigration phase towards Canada ran out at the end of the 60s when the government introduced a new immigration policy, just limiting the sponsorship mechanism. The multiculturalism of the liberal Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau led to a closure towards the external, but it also led to a revaluation of the original

ethnic communities, among which the Italo-Canadian community was one of the largest ones.<sup>45</sup>

### **1.5 The new generation of immigrants (from the 90s to the present day)**

The emigration flow from Italy to Canada is still present nowadays, in a more limited manner than in the past and with trends that reflect the economic situation of both countries. The emigration is still in Italy a current phenomenon and the Italian people are at the first place among the migrants in the European Union. Almost 4 million Italians reside abroad, even if most of them live and work in the Community countries. Compared to the past the professional profiles have changed, today in fact among the new emigrants we find many specialized workers and technicians, entrepreneurs and researchers.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand Canada still remains today a destination for immigration. The policy followed by the Canadian authorities in relation to the skilled immigration has produced a system of assignment of a score to the potential immigrant, that changes with the age, the education and training level, the kind of employment and the acquired experience. This system allows the orientation and the modification of the criteria of privileged acceptance for employment scopes, when the

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<sup>45</sup> About Pierre Trudeau Government's multiculturalism (1968-79 and 1980-84) and about the influence that Quebec had on the Canadian politics during the 60s and 70s, see: J. Saywell, *Quebec 70: A documentary Narrative*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1971; R. Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, Madison (Wisconsin), Wisconsin University Press, 1988.

<sup>46</sup> P. Audenino, M. Tirabassi, *Migrazioni italiane. Storia e storie dell' Ancien régime a oggi*, pp.170-174.

demand of the labour market varies. Canada tends to attract above all highly qualified staff in those areas that lack of local staff, particularly in the information and communication technologies.<sup>47</sup>

Between old and new elements the push of the Italian emigration towards Canada has changed. Looking again at table 1 we can see as the descending phase has started from the 70s and has had its minimum in the 90s, when the Italian emigration has stabilized in a lower, but regular, number. It has decreased above all the weight of the Italian immigrants upon the whole in percentage terms, all that led to a reorganization of the Italian community compared to other growing communities, as the Chinese one for example. We can observe a similar datum also in table 4, based on the Italian emigration data of the last decades in Canada compared to the total and to the other European Union countries. Also in this case Italy has lost its predominant position, particularly from the 80s.

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<sup>47</sup> S. Avveduto, “La mobilità delle alte qualifiche in Europa, Canada e USA” in *Studi emigrazione*, anno XLI, dicembre 2004, n156, pp.889-910.

Table 4. Italian emigration to Canada in relation to the European Union countries (data in percent)

	Before 1961	1961- 70	1971- 80	1981- 90	1991- 2001
Italians in relation to the total	46.7	38.3	10.3	2.8	1.8
Italians in relation to EU emigran ts	39.2	27.2	17.4	9.1	7.0

Source: Statistics Canada

In spite of the entries' decrease in the number, the Italian community remains stable, however, in the Canadian scenery: this is demonstrated by some data collected by the federal statistical office in the last 2006 census. The first is the one which registers a presence of 1,445,330 people of Italian ethnic origin, about 4.6 per cent over a total population of 31,241,030. Always in 2006 296,850 Italian landed immigrants were registered, 4.8 per cent upon the whole of 6,186,950. We mean by *landed immigrants* all those people who had the right to live permanently in Canada by the authorities for the immigration. Another interesting element is the declaration of the mother tongue. In 2006 455,040 Canadian citizens, 1.5 per cent of the total, declared Italian as mother tongue. If we consider that the Chinese group, about 1 million people, is actually formed by different

idioms, Italian seems to be in practice the first foreign language spoken in Canada.<sup>48</sup>

On the one hand the Italo-Canadian community still maintains large, thanks to the old migratory flows; on the other hand Canada in the last years has become destination of a kind of emigration substantially different from the past, characterized by people with high academic and working qualifications, a phenomenon often identified with the name of *Brain Drain*.<sup>49</sup>

This trend seems to be clear if we look at the data about the educational level of the Italians who moved to Canada starting from the 90s. In table 5 we can see, instead, the summary of the values as a percentage related to the Italian landed immigrants with a university degree from 1980. Here we can notice as the weight of the higher titles (masters and doctorates) has increased in a significant way from 1980 to 2002, a trend that we can perceive also looking at the data of the European Union, but with lower variations as regard as the doctorate titles. So, from Italy to Canada, high professionalism moved looking for a new dynamic economic world where people can spend the titles obtained in their own homeland, or to enrich their own resume in the Canadian university.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Statistics Canada, *Census 2006*, Ottawa, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> C.M. Brandi, “L’emigrazione qualificata e la formazione all’estero”, In *Fondazione Migrantes, Rapporto italiani nel mondo 2006*, Roma, IDOS, 2006; C. Cucchiariato, *Vivo altrove. Giovani e senza radici: gli emigranti italiani di oggi*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> S. Avveduto, “La mobilità delle alte qualifiche in Europa, Canada e USA”, pp.896-901.

Table 5. University degrees of the Italian landed immigrants in Canada, in relation to the European Union landed immigrants (data in percent)

	Italy			EU		
	1980	1990	2002	1980	1990	2002
Bachelor	80	67.6	46.8	70.1	63.5	44.6
Master	14.5	20.6	34	20.4	23.4	41
Doctorate	5.5	11.8	19.2	9.5	13.1	14.4

Source: Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Immigration Statistics 1980-1990-2002, Ottawa, 1980,1990,2002.

The most involved sectors are the scientific ones, which concern electronics, informatics and the media and, more generally, the specialized technologies (see table 6), while other highly qualified professions, as the managers and the university professors, are well represented, however.

Table 6. Work sectors of the Italian temporary workers with university degree (data in percent)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Electronics, media, informatics	50.5	49.4	49.9	50.0	53.7	49.1
High-techs, Engineering	34.3	40.2	42.3	43.8	40.3	39.4
Management	10.2	8.1	5.0	4.2	3.4	6.9
University professors	5.0	2.3	2.8	2.0	2.6	4.6

Source: Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Immigration Statistics 1980-1990-2002, Ottawa, 1980,1990,2002.

The emigration towards Canada has changed in professional terms, but also as regard as the methods of arrival and of settlement in the new country. The migratory chains have lost their importance and the departure is less experienced as a family reunification. But the Italians haven't stopped networking with each other, in the Internet era we use the blogs and some specialized websites to share the information, to give advice, and to collect stories of the Italian people who moved to Canada. This effect has spread also in the last years in the other traditional destinations of Italian emigration.<sup>51</sup>

The "Voglio vivere così.it" website, composed of the stories of those who left Italy and opted for that as choice of life, also collects various testimonies of people that moved with their family to Canada for work. The

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<sup>51</sup> M. Tirabassi, "Gli Italiani sul web", in P. Bevilacqua, A. De Clementi, E. Franzina, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana, volume II Arrivi*, Roma, Donzelli, 2002, pp.717-738.

economic and productive dynamism, the services' quality and the tranquility of life, also in the metropolis, are listed as the main reasons for those who decided to move to the huge country of Northern America. Sometimes, to the satisfaction to have reached the new country it could be also added a sense of controversy towards Italy, considered by many people a "static" country and with a few opportunities for those who have professional and entrepreneurial skills. The relationship with the Italian communities has also changed: if once people used to take refuge in these, to find a job and to rediscover the motherland's traditions, today it is not the same. In fact the new migrants prove to be more independent and, even if they are still on a friendly footing with their emigrated compatriots, they mostly socialize with the Canadians and with people from other communities.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> For the on-line stories about Canada, see "In Canada senza rimpianti", 2/3/2010:

[http://www.voglioiverecose.com/index.php?italiani-che-vivono-negli-stati-uniti-e-in-canada\\_340/trasferirsi-a-vivere-e-lavorare-in-canada-toronto\\_126/](http://www.voglioiverecose.com/index.php?italiani-che-vivono-negli-stati-uniti-e-in-canada_340/trasferirsi-a-vivere-e-lavorare-in-canada-toronto_126/) > (viewed on November, 17th 2011);

"Una famiglia italiana a Vancouver", 27/5/2010:

[http://www.voglioiverecose.com/index.php?italiani-che-vivono-negli-stati-uniti-e-in-canada\\_340/trasferirsi-a-vivere-e-lavorare-a-vancouver-canada-come-si-vive-in-canada\\_458/](http://www.voglioiverecose.com/index.php?italiani-che-vivono-negli-stati-uniti-e-in-canada_340/trasferirsi-a-vivere-e-lavorare-a-vancouver-canada-come-si-vive-in-canada_458/) > (viewed on November, 17th 2011).



## Chapter 2

### The first Italian sites in Canada: Toronto (Ontario), Ottawa and Montreal (Quebec)

#### 2.1 The arrival of the Italians in Toronto and their commercial role in the city

Toronto, as New York, Chicago, Buenos Aires and San Paolo, can be included among the Italian metropolis outside Italy. About half a million of people of its metropolitan area are Italian immigrants or their descendants. From the early beginnings of the city's story Italians started settling in Toronto, but a substantial presence of Italian people is not seen until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup>.

Most of the Italians chose Toronto and Montreal as their destinations maybe because these cities had intermediaries of chain migration, or *padrones*, who were Italian agents working on behalf of the Canadian government and companies such as CPR to recruit Italian workers. Probably also the fact that these two cities were the closest centres upon entry into the country contributed to this choice. Moreover we can't forget that the first wish of these emigrants who were crossing the Atlantic in very bad conditions was stopping and settling in the nearest destination. Migrant Italian workers, who left their homeland and went to find fortune in western locations or in the undeveloped areas of Ontario and Quebec, had necessarily to pass through these two big cities.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.66.

Unlike other cities of immigration the majority of the Italian population in Toronto arrived after the Second World War. The numbers of Italians arriving in Toronto in the early 50s was higher than that of the Italo-Canadians who were already in the city. The newcomers themselves found the older immigrants very “Canadian” and conservative that perpetuated the myth of the prewar city as “Toronto the Right” (Toronto la “Giusta”), where “right” is synonymous of Puritan laws, Victorianism and of an homogeneous British population.<sup>54</sup> So, the many thousands of Italian immigrants and their children, who lived and worked in Toronto before the World War II and even of the World War, were for the most part ignored. The Italian community of the city was too small, precarious and too satellite of New York and Montreal to receive attention from the Italian consular service.<sup>55</sup>

So, while there were in Toronto vice-consuls, honorary consuls and self-styled consuls, it seems that there were no bulletins of the Commissioner for the emigration in the colony or even reports of some interest in the *Collection of Reports of the Diplomatic and Consular Agents*.<sup>56</sup>

The area of the Italian allocation in Toronto reflects the origins of the community. Located in the core of the city, the original district was part of a real district for foreign people known as the “Ward”, where the Jews were more numerous than the Italians and where also Chinese people and Slavs in significant amounts lived. The ghetto was north of the railway station; in York Street, and along other roads which went to the railway, there were lots of

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<sup>54</sup> R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada 1800-1945*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1984, p.214.

<sup>55</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>56</sup> *ibidem*, p.215.

pensions, employment offices and small shops for the immigrants. On the other hand, the colony and its network of minor roads and paths were just behind the main commercial streets of the city.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike their Jewish neighbours, the Italians hadn't any food standards or secular rituals that would encourage or promote the proliferation of special shops and immigrant experts in some particular trades. One of the major urban tabloids complained that "the Italians who worked in Toronto refused to buy food products that are not Italians "maccheroni", but that kind of food had always been negotiated by "specialists in bargaining" and innkeepers. Then, how can we explain the quick development of commercial initiatives among the newcomers?

The growth of an urban environment in the "Ward" of Toronto depended on three circumstances. The first one is that, despite the easy use of the adjective "not specialized", most of the emigrants who settled in the city knew a job, at least at the level of apprenticeship. They worked as labourers, but they could make shoes, clothes, and work as barbers or stonecutters. Secondly, the seasonal nature of the outdoor work in Canada and the spontaneous commercial initiative of many emigrants induced to a constant search of opportunity to gain in the city during the periods of unemployment. The chronic seasonal underemployment in Italy made it natural to accept a multiplicity of occupations. Finally, and this is the most important element, the demand for unskilled labour passed silently from the countryside to the city. The main occupation of the labourers was the excavation of

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<sup>57</sup> R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada 1800-1945*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1984, p.224.

drains and the tramways setting. After 1905, the year after that a huge fire caused a lot of damage and reconstruction work, the *navvies* became new permanent residents of the city in an increasing number, and the 'Little Italy' of Toronto reached the critical concentration necessary to support and encourage a variety of commercial enterprises and occupations.<sup>58</sup>

The emigrant *navvies* constituted the majority of those who came to Canada at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the early 20<sup>th</sup>. *Navvy* is a term used overall by Canadians, borrowed from the motherland, and that seems not to be passed in the American jargon. A navvy was a labourer who worked for the construction and the excavation works, usually on the railways, bridges and roads. The navvy was considered an emigrant, not a settler; an industrial worker, not rural; a necessity for the economy, but not a desired immigrant. The destiny and the growth of the Italian communities in Canada was inextricably linked to the stereotype of the navvy. Because, even if not all the navvies were Italians, most of the new Italian immigrants were considered as such:

*"The Italian is a good navvy. He obeys to the orders of the head, he is not anxious to go on strike, due that he thinks every increase of salary in the short-term which thinks to pass in the country, the most it could reimburse him with the pay lost during the strike".*<sup>59</sup>

The construction of the urban infrastructures represented the true beginning of Toronto as a metropolis, even more

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<sup>58</sup> R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada 1800-1945*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1984, p.225.

<sup>59</sup> *ibidem*, p.218.

of the factory system; and the Italian immigrant workforce was intimately linked to the growth of the city. The immigrant labour, in the form of street vendors, drain workers, or work teams of the tramways, allowed the middle classes to live outside the urban centre of Toronto. Some Italians, as the Calabrese, Abruzzese and Sicilian sellers of bananas, created a system of sewers, with a gruelling effort, providing comfort to the middle class. Other Italians, instead, were employed in needles factories or they spent the day rolling cigarettes; these people, too, made the life of the middle class easier and more civil, at the same time creating a mass production and consumption without a quick industrialization.<sup>60</sup>

The relation of the Italian labourer with the economic boom of the city seems entirely providential, if not causal. For example, the technological change, started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the wooden walkways and from the dirt roads to the concrete sidewalks and paved roads, corresponds so closely to the entrance of the Italians in the urban workforce that the possibility it was only a coincidence is excluded. The Italian workers, after the hard experience in the northern Ontario or in the stony Italian grounds, could dig, level and shore up the soil, with no difficulty.

After the fire legislation, Toronto became a city of bricks, cement and shingles, starting from the sewers to the new big hospitals of the “Ward”. It is impossible to think that

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<sup>60</sup> R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada 1800-1945*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1984, p.225.

the city could have been transformed so much without the Italian workers.<sup>61</sup>

The outbreak of the WWI had a special importance for the 'Little Italy' of Toronto. The loyalty towards Italy and the opportunity to live well in Canada were put to the test. At the beginning of the war there was some animosity to the Italians, because Italy was member, although faltering, of the Triple Alliance. The social workers recorded an increase of the unemployment and of the discrimination towards the Italian immigrants until 1915. Anyway, when the Italian government joined the war effort of the Allies, came an immediate change of feelings. The British government had the task of helping its allies and getting together the reservists who worked for the British Empire, and the Italian legislation about then emigration introduced a clause which made the diplomatic and consular service responsible for the getting together of reservists in wartime.

WWI represented the end of an age for the Italians of Toronto. Many reservists didn't come back to the city and lots of families moved progressively from the "Ward" to the new western districts. The housing situation of the Ward had been for a long time the main goal of reformers and speculators, and the expansion of institutions, as for example the General Hospital of Toronto destroyed the buildings that would have been the first refuge for the new immigrants in the postwar period. After the end of the conflict, St. Agnes parish became important almost as the Ward. The time of the founding community had passed away. They had to deal with some problems, as the

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<sup>61</sup> R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada 1800-1945*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1984, pp.225-226.

generational one, the Canadian isolationist legislation of the 20s and the struggle for and against Fascism in the community.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.2 Italian presence in Montreal

The Italian emigrants who reached Canada decided to settle, first of all, in Quebec, especially in Montreal, which was the largest city closest to the port of entry to Canada. In fact, we have at our disposal many more detailed stories about the first arrivals in Quebec.<sup>63</sup> Many traces of the Italian presence in Montreal can be immediately noticed, for example in the architecture of its buildings, or churches and streetscapes, too.<sup>64</sup> It seems to be almost a

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<sup>62</sup> R.F. Harney, *Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies. Gli Italiani in Canada 1800-1945*, Roma, Bonacci editore, 1984, pp.234-235-236.

<sup>63</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance*, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.62.

<sup>64</sup> Among the symbols of the Italian presence in Montreal, see:

-*Casa d'Italia*: this building, which is the symbol of the history of the Italian community in Canada, was built in 1936, and it is part of the architectural heritage of Quebec. It is located at the corner of the streets Jean-Talon and Berri. Nowadays, the Casa d'Italia is a community centre and the home of several Italian and Italo-Canadian organizations. For seventy years it represented the point of arrival of Italians in Quebec and the place for the most important events of their social life: community feasts, weddings, meetings of the several associations, etc...

-*Church of Notre-Dame- de-la- Défense*: this Church is located in Montreal Little Italy and it was built by Italian immigrants, above all by the community from Molise, to commemorate the appearance of the Madonna in La Difesa, in Casacalenda (Molise). Its style is Romanesque and it was designed by Roch Montbriant and Guido Nincheri. The Church was inaugurated in 1919; it is famous for the large cupola and brick façade, then for

replica of a European city, a model of southern Europe's culture.



*Casa d'Italia, Montreal*

Montreal was in a central position compared to the chain of workers who arrived from Italy and after that moved out to the western provinces of Canada. Most of these workers, seeing that the Italian community was well established in the urban context, decided to stay, especially when they were aware of the fact that many compatriots already lived there for a long time. Others, instead, attracted by the possibility of easy money in the western regions, continued until reaching Alberta and British Columbia.<sup>65</sup>

What attracted most of the city of Montreal was the variety of facilities that were essentials for assisting the

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the frescos realized by Guido Nincheri, among which the one representing Benito Mussolini is the best-known. This fresco was painted before World War II and it celebrates his signing of the Lateran Accords. Then, there is a statue in front of the Church, that commemorates the victims of all wars.

<sup>65</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance*, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.63.

transportation industry: a harbour, railway stations, junctions, depots, and particularly freight yards. Each of these elements required, first of all, and although in differing degrees, a pool of labour for loading and unloading, and for other unskilled work.

Italian labourers who remained permanently in Montreal were employed in industries that asked for the most labour, for example in commercial sales and utilities, for the construction of new infrastructures and their maintenance, in the harbours, or in the railway stations. These workers started working on the docks of Montreal's harbour around 1895. Among their duties, the most frequent were the repair of trains and railway tracks in the city's downtown stations, Bonaventure and Windsor. Not all workers settled forever in Montreal; some of them were sojourners, who went back to Italy at the end of their employment contract.

Among the major transportation companies that hired Italian labour, there was the Montreal Street Railway Company (MSRC), the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and the Grand Trunk, a railway system that operated in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, as well as in some American states. The Montreal Street Railway Company, thanks to its many facilities, absorbed a large part of the Italian workforce. This company helped to provide work in the installation and maintenance of the railway. Also with regard to this kind of employment, most of the workers were taken cyclically; they started with the beginning of the summer until the advent of winter. In 1904, during the summer, about 300 Italian workers were employed in the MSCR, but of these, less than a third could continue to work for the company in the following winter. Thanks to the expansion of the street railway

network in the years immediately after, the MSCR became one of the most important employers of Italian immigrants.

Some of the other utilities companies that also provided work for them were the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company (MLHP) and the City of Montreal's works Department. The Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company was probably the largest employer of Italian immigrants in those years; in 1904, approximately one hundred of the 250 workers of this company were Italians.<sup>66</sup>

One of the other sectors of the Montreal labour market, which absorbed a significant contingent of Italian labourers, involved the building of urban infrastructures such as sewers, canals, tunnels, streets, as well as huge construction projects. The demand for labour grew more and more and the city started modernizing and expanding. Most of the projects were performed by teams of Italian workers. Some witnesses of that time explained that the excavation work was done by large groups of 200 or 300 people, some of whom required an interpreter to direct their work. The Canadian Pacific Railway was increasingly expanding its buildings: in fact, when it began the construction of a tunnel under Mount Royal, the need for workers was so large that although filled by thousands of immigrants, a large number of whom were Italian, they had to import workers from the United States as well.

The main occupations that the Italians took upon arrival to Canada were different:

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<sup>66</sup> R. Perin, F. Sturino, *Arrangiarsi. The Italian immigration experience in Canada*, Toronto, Guernica, 2007, p.121.

*...In addition to the construction of railways and canals, they find jobs as small travelling vendors of fruit, milk, or heating oil; in industrial establishments relating to cotton and iron; in the production of bricks and tiles; in sawmills or in mineral quarries closest to urban centres; in urban building projects, particularly in snow removal; in the manufacture and distribution of plaster and wood statuettes; in stone and marble works for cemeteries; in railway stations and dock work, etc... Very few have been able to establish a small dry-goods store with items imported or made in Italy, with a boarding house, with a bar to sell beer and spirits; a few have gone into market gardening with a fair degree of success... Very few have reached a fairly good social standing and they have done so by widening their own business interests slowly but surely so as to obtain a share in the public works projects of smaller cities...*

Italian immigrants preferred working and living in the metropolitan area of Montreal as opposed to the more remote, northern sites of Quebec. They had a social network of associations, parishes and hometown groups in Montreal, and there had been some situations in the remote areas, where Italian workers were beaten up by locals. “Italians living in Quebec must have been shocked by the news that three of their countrymen working in the interior on the construction of a canal had been beaten up without provocation by local people and that one of them had died from his injuries. More shocking was the leniency shown by the courts that had let the accused men off with incredibly light sentences.” This was not an isolated incident, but one of the most notorious cases. It illustrates the animosity that many locals felt toward

Italian immigrant workers, whom they perceived as competitors in the labour market.

In Montreal, Italian workers had more networks and felt more protected. They could live, work, speak their own language, worship their religion in the local churches and socialize with other *paesani* (people from the same towns), among whom they often found wives and raised families. This need to socialize and connect with other Italians led them to create social associations and networking groups in Montreal and also led to their success at building cohesive sub-communities in Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s.<sup>67</sup>

The urban labour market was source of attraction for all the Italian people who decided to move to Canada. This attraction was not only economic (the existing demand for common labourers and the Italian immigrants' ability to insert themselves in that market), but also psychic and cultural. The greater sense of protection one felt in being part of a network of social relations from which one could potentially draw solidarity and support, and the greater possibilities for participating in the socio-cultural life of the host society must have exerted a strong influence. But it should be added that these economic and cultural considerations were in fact much more interrelated than one might suppose. The sociability that the Italian immigrant helped to produce by inserting himself in the urban milieu and in a network of relationships made possible the transformation of certain non-monetary resources (family organization, kinship and hometown-

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<sup>67</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance*, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, pp.64-65.

based relationships, technical know-how) into economic benefits.<sup>68</sup>

### **2.3 Ottawa Little Italy: Preston Street or Corso Italia**

The Little Italy of Ottawa, located in Preston Street, is better known as “Corso Italia”. This area is famous for its annual events, typical of the Italian heritage, but, above all, for producing interesting personalities and leading figures in the city’s community. In the years of the first settlements, Little Italy was the first home for Ottawa’s Italian population. Corso Italia is enlivened by numerous Italian occurrences every year, especially in June, when the Italian week takes place.

The Italian week starts with the feast of St. Anthony, which consists of a huge religious procession that goes through the streets of the village. On the last weekend of Italian Week, Preston Street is closed on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights for an amazing celebration with thousands of people dancing and walking on the street, so everybody can enjoy the food and the music. Moreover, an annual cycling race on Sunday afternoon takes place.

After that, in September, there is the “Preston Street Grape Harvest” (la Vendemmia), with some funny activities as the making of wine by a large group of experienced Italian winemakers. The locals and the tourists can entertain themselves with tours, grape stomping, food shows,

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<sup>68</sup> R. Perin, F. Sturino, *Arrangiarsi. The Italian immigration experience in Canada*, Toronto, Guernica, 2007, p.127.

cooking demonstrations, wine judging, workshops and so on.<sup>69</sup>

In the city, the community which is for sure one of the largest ones is the Venetian community. The Venetian community in Ottawa has its roots very far, and it is composed by men and women who honoured their homeland, providing to Canada skills and professionalism that helped to make this country what it is today. The three hubs which characterize this community are the Section of Ottawa of the Associazione Trevigiani nel Mondo, the Associazione Vicentini and the St. Anthony Italia Soccer Club.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many Italian families, especially from the region of Veneto, moved to Canada, with the hope of finding a better life. In Ottawa one of the highest Italian authorities was the Casagrande family: it is an evident example of the social and community progress and contribution that the Venetian emigrants brought to the city of Ottawa. Antonio and Angelo Casagrande went to live in Preston Street, which is today the Little Italy of the city. They worked very hard, doing the worst jobs, but thanks to their long experience they became renowned chefs. During the 60s, they were both part of the Canadian Culinary Federation, an association which is still today internationally estimated.

Many Venetians reached Ottawa in the 50s; the mutual aid and support network was developed, as well as in the other Canadian cities. They helped each other providing room and board, and finding a job for the newcomers.

During the 50s the Italian immigrants started working for the foundation of the St. Anthony Italia Soccer Club,

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<sup>69</sup> [www.ottawakiosk.com/map\\_preston.html](http://www.ottawakiosk.com/map_preston.html), viewed on January 12th, 2012.

which is still the focal point of the Italian community. Although the club is primarily associated to the Italian community, the players come from different ethnic groups, obvious example of the Canadian multiculturalism.<sup>70</sup>

In 1968 the Italians from Vicenza founded the Associazione Vicentini, that is still today vital point for the associations of Ottawa. The first president was Giancarlo Errante, and the current president of the association is Mario Cinel. In 1992 Erminio Zanette, better known as Moro, expressed the desire of strengthening the foundation of the section of Ottawa of the Associazione Trevigiani nel Mondo. When the census was done, the Italian immigrants discovered to their surprise that there were more than seventy-five families of Trevigiani in Ottawa. In 1992, thanks to the success of the census, the Associazione Trevigiani nel Mondo-Ottawa Section was officially founded. Luciano Pradal was president for twelve years. The current president is Delia Giollo Dal Grande.

It can be argued therefore that the Italians coming from Veneto, as well as all the other immigrants coming from the other Italian regions, fully integrated in the local environment in the city of Ottawa, but not forgetting their true roots, are present and active and they contribute in a concrete and positive way to the progress of the Canadian society.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> [http://www.ottawastanthonny.com/about\\_us.html](http://www.ottawastanthonny.com/about_us.html), viewed on January 9th, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, pp.297-298-299.

## 2.4 The spread of Italian press and media in Canada

The Italian media in Canada represented and still reflect a rather lively reality. In fact we can find on the web about fifty publications and, among these, the oldest and the most recent ones, as well as the newspapers, the weekly magazines and other reviews are included.

Among the publications listed there also the ones explicitly dedicated to the activities of the recreational clubs and amateur activities that the Italian state could create and support thanks to its substantial funds. Below we will list some of the still active media, including two particular cases, such as those of *Radio Chin* and *Corriere Canadese*, which are to be highlighted also for their longevity that makes them very peculiar compared to the Italian-speaking media of the rest of the world.<sup>72</sup>

All Canadian-Italian newspapers were, out of necessity, “scissor jobs” – reprinting material from Italian newspapers and adding a little local information. The most generous advertisers were the brewers – Molson, Dow, Ecker’s, Frontenac, Dawes (Molson was the beer of the Italians), Italian record companies, groceries, and other firms doing business directly with Italians.<sup>73</sup>

### *Corriere Canadese*

The *Corriere Canadese* was founded in 1954 by Daniel Iannuzzi, a third generation Italian man; first published twice a week, it became after a newspaper. Nowadays it is published with *La Repubblica*, thus adding to the national

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<sup>72</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, p.183.

<sup>73</sup> A.Spada, *The Italians in Canada*, Ottawa-Montreal, Riviera, 1969, p.110.

and local (Canadian) news also those published by the Italian newspaper. From 1995 *Tandem* was created, charge of the weekend entirely in English for the second and third generations, with the intent to speak about “Italian things” in English. The *Corriere Canadese* is nowadays distributed in Ontario, particularly in the metropolitan area of Toronto, and in Montreal. The project is to extend the distribution at national level, where there are important Italian-speaking communities, as for example in Ottawa, in the Niagara Peninsula, in Windsor (Ontario), in Calgary and in Edmonton (Alberta), and in Vancouver (British Columbia).

Iannuzzi was born in Montreal in 1934, he moved to Toronto at the age of 18 and in 1954 he founded, in collaboration with Arturo Scotti, the *Corriere*. However Iannuzzi had an open view and the printed word was not enough: he founded, produced and direct programs in different languages on CityTV from 1972 to 1979, and in 1978 he consolidated the concept of multicultural broadcasts through the launch of CFMT-TV, nowadays OMNI 1, of which he was president for 10 years.

Still nowadays, a few years after his death, occurred in 2004, the Iannuzzi’s multicultural experience takes the form in the *Multicom Media Services* that, in addition to producing the *Corriere Canadese* in Italian and *Tandem* in English, produces the *Correo Canadiense* in Spanish, *Nove Ilhas* in Portuguese, *Insieme* in Italian in Montreal and nine local newspapers of Toronto in English, grouped under the header of *Town Crier*.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, pp.183-184.

### *CHIN Radio TV International*

Better known as *Radio Chin*, it is another example of longevity and activity which has still many listeners in the Italian community of Toronto and the surrounding areas, up to Ottawa.

It is a multiethnic radio which broadcasts in over 30 languages, but the founder Johnny Lombardi was of Italian origins (of second generation) and the Italian broadcasts have always had utmost importance; nowadays they occupy 80 hours a week. The contribution to the spread of the Italian music is fundamental, because the programming provides Italian music from the 60s to the recent successes, ranging from pop to the opera. The broadcasts also include debates in the studio, radio news, sports programs, and so on. From 2003, also *CHIN Radio Ottawa/Gatineau* works with broadcasts in Italian in the federal capital of Canada.

*Radio Chin* was born in 1966 thanks to the work of its founder: Johnny Lombardi. He was a keen musician, and, from an early age, he played the trumpet in the bands and in the orchestras. After the war, in 1946 he opened a grocery store in Toronto, with an assortment of Italian goods to serve the ethnic community of which he was part. When he left his shop in the safe hands of the family, he began his career as manager, inviting the famous Italian singers of that time to perform in the theatres in downtown. In that period Lombardi rented a space radio on CHUM and, after that, on CKFH, where he produced programs in Italian, which could promote the concerts but also his shop and the community celebrations. He also started a record label (the Bravo Record & Music) to promote the Italo-Canadian talents. In the early 60s, with the arrival of many Italian immigrants, Lombardi asked to

the body competent for broadcasting in Canada, the CRTC, to open a multicultural radio. So *Radio Chin* was born, and it is still owned by Lombardi's family, despite Johnny's death, occurred in 2002.

Every Sunday on CityTV the program "Festival Italiano di Johnny Lombardi" is on air. The *Corriere Canadese* and *Radio Chin* were for many years the only sources of information for the hundreds of thousands of Italian immigrants in Toronto and in the nearby areas.<sup>75</sup>

#### *Lo Specchio*

*Lo Specchio* is a weekly newspaper, in Italian, published from 1984 and it has spread in the suburban areas of Toronto (Maple, Woodbridge), where there is a large concentration of Italians. It deepens and comments news from Italy and it is addressed with particular attention to the Italian community of Vaughan (which is part of Maple and Woodbridge) and to what happens in this municipality.<sup>76</sup>

#### *Telelatino*

*Telelatino* is a broadcaster which airs in Italian, Spanish and English. The broadcasts started in 1984 and from 2003 it airs in Italian some programs of Canale 5-Mediaset and many other sport programs about football.<sup>77</sup>

#### *OMNI 1*

Every night *OMNI 1* airs a very popular TV news in Italian, with local, national and international news,

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<sup>75</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, pp.184-185.

<sup>76</sup> *ibidem*, p.185.

<sup>77</sup> *ibidem*

especially as regards Italy. Every afternoon at 3.00 “Pomeriggio italiano” airs: it concerns the last news from Italy and the transmission of news, information and stories which may be of interest of the Italian community in Toronto. On Sunday afternoon “Noi oggi” airs; it is also directed to the younger generations, with connections to both the Italian culture and the North-American one.

In 2003 RAI International arrived in Canada; it allowed the diffusion of a selection of programs of the national public networks.<sup>78</sup>

The media had and continue to have a huge importance for the diffusion and the support of the Italian language in this far country.

In fact, for example the *Corriere Canadese*, when it went out with *La Repubblica*, helped a lot the Italian immigrants to refresh their mother tongue. For those living abroad for many years the problem is not only that one of the linguistic contamination, but it is also the risk of losing the updating of speech, of its everyday life, of the new expressions that develop into a living language.

From the linguistic point of view the role of the radio and the television is of great importance: both give us a modern Italian language, and also the updating of specific linguistic subcodes. An example of this is given by the specialist broadcastings, as the ones about medicine, or about economy.

Thanks to the linguistic comparison between the new media and RAI International, and the local media in Italian, an updating in the “language of advertising” often

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<sup>78</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, p.185-186.

occurs. The language of advertising in the Italian media in Canada is different and less sophisticated and attractive than what is nowadays produced in Italian in Italy.

The media in ethnic language have played and still play a unique role in mediating among the different cultures, the Canadian one and the culture of the country of origin. Newspapers, radios and televisions explained and still explain nowadays the politics, the information, the Canadian culture, to the Italian speakers in Canada.

The mass migrations (we also consider the Italian emigration towards Canada) are not due to free choice, but they are often due to economic difficulties or to political disasters, or both of them. There are few migrant people who arrived being already masters of the language and of the culture of the host country. So well in a foreign country the task of the ethnic media is also that of explaining in a known language the most the basic rights.

The Italian emigrants who arrived in the host countries to find a job have always been exploited, also because they were unable to understand and to express themselves in the local language. This is what happened to the Italians in Canada, but also in the United States, in Argentina, in Brazil, and so on.

It often happened that the media were resonators of fundamental importance to give voice to the requests of the common people, and they have been promoting important conflicts. We can consider, for example, the campaigns to improve safety in the workplaces, that were conducted for decades by the *Corriere Canadese*, which served as spokesman of the needs of generic workers of Italian origin forced to work in conditions of extreme danger.

The relationship between the Local media and the Italian community has always been very close. The clubs have always made reference to the newspapers, the radios and the televisions to advertise for free the community events, the social dinners, the assemblies, the trips, the summer picnics, and so on. The journalists, or at least those who go on the air, are often invited to the events as announcer, and, sometimes, as special guest. On the frequencies of *Radio Chin* some communities bought spaces of half an hour to address to the members and to the listeners entertaining them with news about the regions, transmitting music of the regional folklore, interviewing the guests, emphasizing their activities. The TVs, too, host headings relating to community events.

The *Corriere Canadese* has a whole page dedicated to the community, and, in *Lo Specchio*, there is a section of community events.

Among the different functions that the ethnic media have played, there is one which is very important: that of comforting.

When somebody is living abroad, the radio and the TV can be very supporting, above all listening to the songs that belong to our life. It is beautiful, for example, to come back home after a tiring day and read a newspaper where everything is understandable.

The Italian media were and still are real points of reference, also for personal issues. The requests that the compatriots addressed to the local media were of various kinds: phone calls or letters, where the private citizens asked for advices with confidence. There was a sort of personal and confidential relationships with the local media.

The role of the Italian media in a foreign country goes beyond its traditional functions, as informing, entertaining, educating; it is as a thread that doesn't stop, it is maintaining the roots.

In fact, the history of the Italian publications and of the radios and TVs in Canada is the demonstration of this.<sup>79</sup>

## **2.5 The “boarding” system: the fundamental role of Italian women**

The adaptation to the new environment was particularly difficult for the majority of married women; the diversity of habits and the misunderstandings because of the language brought many of them to withdraw into the Italian district, not to abandon the traditional dress and the handkerchief.

Despite the precious helps the compatriots offered to the newcomers, it was difficult to come out of isolation which in turn retarded the learning of English, and accentuated the women's feeling of mortification towards the children and the husband, causing a strong nostalgia for the homeland.<sup>80</sup>

Seldom the salary of the husband was sufficient to maintain the family or to compensate for periods of inactivity. To accumulate some savings turned out longer than expected and many emigrants, fearing the consequences of long separations, didn't wait to have consolidated their position before calling their family.

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<sup>79</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, p.187-188.

<sup>80</sup> P. Bevilacqua, A. De Clementi, E. Franzina, (a cura di), *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, vol.II, *Arrivi*, Roma, Donzelli, 2002, p.268.

The difficulties arising from the seasonality of work for the men, mostly engaged in construction and mining, were compounded by the frequency of the accidents. For many months a year the responsibility of the subsistence fell on the women's shoulders, sometimes also children or young girls.

If for the young women at the time of their arrival the job opportunities were multiple, the married women just had to work at home, or "*take in boarders*" (as it was called to keep the compatriots pension).

The profit margin for a family with *boarders* could be high, limited only by the feminine energies and, only secondarily, by the dimensions of the house where the boarder men were welcomed until they could find place. The boarding system, for which women were often forced by their husbands, led to a very painful condition of servitude, very degrading. Among the endless "tragedies in the board", we have to count the sexual violence against teenagers and young women, a fact that happened with remarkable frequency.

The boarder was an economic resource, but also an intrusive presence for the already limited privacy of domestic life. The overcrowding in cramped houses made it difficult the rest after work, and multiplied the daily sacrifices to the necessities of life. For single men, who were undergoing severe hardships not to disappoint the expectations placed on them, being able to count on a cheap accommodation represented an important economic and psychological support. In Canada, or in the mining districts and sites which were opened in Europe, the continued work in isolated places accentuated rude and violent behaviours. Being in a compatriot's family pension could weaken the tension, provide an opportunity for a

conversation in a safe environment, a first step for better care of the body and better control of the language.<sup>81</sup>

But it could also happen that you experienced the tensions and conflicts in the host house, aggravating the discomfort and triggering violent behaviours: quarrels, strokes and mortifications.

The family, especially in the first phases of the immigration, turned out to be the place where the problems of adaptation to the new society were manifested. The precariousness of life, the unmet expectations, caused in many men a sense of personal failure, a malaise that led to depression, to drink, to the abandonment of the family, to the escape from responsibility and, unfortunately, to the violence against women and children. This is demonstrated by the high percentage of Italian families that received the controls and the visits of the social assistance.<sup>82</sup>

In the first phases of the Italian immigration to Canada, the men moved alone. Most of them were very young when they left; they were sometimes single men, but they were often married and came to Canada to make their fortune and, after that, help their families to leave and reach them. During the 30s, however, the Italian women who began arriving to Canada soon outnumbered men. Like their partners, they also came with the incentive of building a better life. Some were single women, often sent

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<sup>81</sup> P. Bevilacqua, A. De Clementi, E. Franzina, (a cura di), *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, vol.II, Arrivi, Roma, Donzelli, 2002, p.269.

<sup>82</sup> *ibidem*, p.270.

for as brides by the single male navvies and settlers, but most arrived with their husbands and families.

At the beginning of the emigration, it was probably harder for the women to move, to leave their homeland, their relatives... They had the multiple tasks of running the household, as well as caring for boarders, preparing meals, washing laundry, taking care of children, tending to a vegetable garden and preparing tomato sauce and other bottled preserves in the fall, which helped to minimize the cost of food for the family. Most of these women also worked outside the home, either as domestics, as workers in factories or in garment sweatshops.<sup>83</sup>

We have many testimonies of women who left Italy to seek their fortune overseas. One of this testimonies is given by Grace Bagnato, a young woman who arrived in Toronto Ward area with her family in 1896. Because she bore 13 children, she received a prize of \$500,000 from the estate of a Toronto attorney, Charles Vance Millar, who had promised to give this monetary prize to the first woman to have the most children in Toronto in the 10-year period after his death. Grace Bagnato happened to be the lucky woman, and she became a bit of a legend because of this, but it wasn't the only reason. Bagnato had an aptitude for learning languages and managed to learn six languages on top of being fluent in Italian and English. Living in the Ward, she came in contact with people of many and varied ethnic groups, and she used her linguistic versatility to assist them with translations, as well as helping them with all sorts of other issues. She became an aid to her Italian

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<sup>83</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance*, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, pp.110-111.

compatriots as well as to other immigrants who needed a helping hand in their new, foreign environment. She dabbled in political issues, was an interpreter in court and spoke out on behalf of underprivileged people. Because of her selfless dedication to others, Bagnato was awarded a car by the Italian community. Her son Vince has stated that besides being a wonderful mother, Grace was definitely one of the first seeds of multiculturalism in Canada.

For the Italian women working and taking care of their children and husbands were tasks compounded by the lack of support of relatives, networks of friends and associations. Once they arrived in Canada the biggest difficulty they have to meet was the deep sense of social alienation and, especially for southern Italian women, who are used to socialize a lot, this was a complicated problem to face.

The lives of most Italian emigrants centred around family, friends and religion (they attended the Catholic churches). It was as if they wanted to maintain a sense of meaning and order within the uncertainty of a new place, so they adhered to their faith values and they congregated with other Italian people. For all of them it was so important to share their social experiences, in order to survive.<sup>84</sup>

The Italian women used to work very hard, they did the most menial and laborious jobs. In Italy most of them were skilled for farm work, house chores and raising family. They had vocational experience in sewing, embroidering and the management of a small family business and started to have a stronger role both in the

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<sup>84</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance*, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.114.

family and in the society. Even if the woman is usually seen as coming from a traditional family culture, Italian women were used to congregate with each other: they associated in the church groups, in the cultural clubs and in the organization of town celebrations.

The voice of the Italian women gives a message of hope for all other women who are moving to Canada nowadays. The content of this message wants to say that they have to hold tight their own identity, the values that are a fundamental part of their culture and tradition, but at the same time they have to be stronger than ever to accept a new life in a new country. Over two centuries, Italo-Canadian women have proved to be hard workers, with a firm self-discipline, adaptability, and a strong and incomparable sense of a family.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance, Canada*, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.130.

## Chapter 3

### The Italian community in Vancouver, British Columbia

#### 3.1 The first Italians in British Columbia

Starting from the 50s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a large number of Italian migrants arrived in western Canada. The first Italian workers began to arrive with the gold seekers of the Fraser Valley gold rush of the 1850s. Many made their way to western Canada through the United States, having first settled in San Francisco, a city that in the 1800s had a large Italian population. Some of these men, lured by the stories they heard from other immigrants of quick fortunes made by finding gold, left for Victoria and the Fraser River gold mines in 1858, and then later, for the Cariboo gold rush of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>86</sup>

In an essay entitled “Beyond the Frozen Wastes”, Gabriele Scardellato explains that the Italian presence in BC “is suggested by reports like the one published by the Victoria Colonist in 1861, which described the good fortune of three Italian miners who left the colony after only three weeks with \$12,000 in gold”. Not many detailed stories of these people exist, though there are a few names of some Italians who settled in those cities with the smallest communities in the western hinterland. An Italian named Carlo Bossi arrived in western Canada with the gold rush from San Francisco and then “decided that there was more

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<sup>86</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance, Canada*, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.47.

to be made by supporting the gold fever than by succumbing to it". He therefore decided to retire from gold mining and become a merchant in Victoria, where he had much success as a businessman and a gold speculator.

Brief accounts of other immigrants of this early period include the name of Giovanni Ordano, who "settled near Cowichan on Vancouver Island, north of Victoria. His residence there from around 1858 as a trader and a hotelier is reflected in the name of Genoa Bay, which commemorates his birthplace", the sea port city of Genova, in the Italian Riviera.

Another name that appears is Francesco Savona, "who established himself on the mainland at about the same time. He operated a ferry on the route to the Cariboo gold fields at the west end of Kamloops Lake". The name of the ferry, now known as Savona, honoured his native city of Savona in the region of Liguria, in Italy.

Scardellato's study explains that in Canada colonial period, before the CPR was ever built, the territory that constituted what is now known as British Columbia was difficult to access. In spite of this, many Italians succeeded in entering the region and made it their home. There were large numbers of Italians recorded living in Vancouver Island in the 1880s. Although many of them also settled in the hinterland as far away as the Cariboo gold fields, the city of Victoria had the largest number of Italians in the province. To this first Italians can be added the names of those that settled in the communities of Vancouver Island's coalfields in the 1870s and in mainland communities such as Kamloops.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance*, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.49.

With the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), western settlements solidified and grew larger, mostly because the railway provided the province with direct access to central and eastern Canada, allowing people to move from one side of the country to the other. Many new settlements sprang up along the railway. Other, already present villages such as Granville, the site of a large sawmill, expanded because of the railway, and the area later became known as the city of Vancouver.

During the 1880s, Italians participated in laying down the CP railway, especially the most difficult stretch through the Rocky Mountains. They arrived at these construction sites from Montreal, as part of the Italian stream into BC, and also from the states of California and Washington. Thousands of Italians arrived as labourers every year during that period. A government document on Multicultural Canada states: “aside from the CPR, the major railways employing Italian labourers included the Grand Trunk, the Canadian Northern, the National Transcontinental and the Grand Trunk Pacific (these lines, together with the Intercolonial, but not the CPR, were amalgamated in 1917-23 to form the Canadian National Railways.)”

Some of the first Italians who arrived in BC for construction of the CPR seem to have settled in small towns, such as Field, in the 1890s. They were mainly sojourners who found jobs with Parks Canada, the CPR, the sawmills and the Monarch Mine. In a heritage article entitled Italian pioneers in Western Canada, Antonella Fanella explains that the stretch of railway built by the Italians through the Canadian Rockies was one of the most

remote wilderness. There were probably as many Italian workers as Chinese ones building the railway, but there is little specific information about the Italian presence there. These migrant workers contributed much to the development of western Canada, and it is estimated that in the early part of the 1990s, 25 percent of the population of BC was Italian. Field, a small, isolated town in BC, was where many Italian sojourners resided during labour periods. It was a remote place, cut off from the rest of the world, especially in winter, when despite its proximity to the Trans-Canada Highway, the road was shut down by snow and ice. Winters in Field were difficult for these men, perhaps as harsh as the working conditions. Although they were used to hard physical labour on their farms or work sites back in Italy, they were not equipped to deal with the physical and emotional toil of this type of life. They didn't have appropriate winter clothing to withstand the bitter cold. The subzero temperatures, the human isolation and the difficult, heavy work all contributed to making a lot of the men homesick. Many workers chose to work throughout the summer but returned home to Italy for the winter months. It was only much later, in the 1920s, that Italian sojourners began to bring women and settle with their families in Canada's west.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> J. Di Sciascio-Andrews, *How the Italians created Canada. From Giovanni Caboto to the Cultural Renaissance*, Canada, Dragon Hill Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.51.

### **3.2 The religious assistance to the Italians in Canada: the Italian parish communities in British Columbia during the migratory boom**

One of the most important aspects which characterized the Italian integration in Canada is the relation between the new immigrants and the religion.<sup>89</sup>

The Christian religion, above all Catholicism, is undoubtedly for Canada and for its people an essential historical-social component. This has created a strong correlation between Italy and the Catholic religion, and the Italians, from the psychological and individual point of view, have assumed a “universal” character, in the sense of “catholicity” (from the Latin etymological root “catholice”= universal), which is not, probably, something found in other populations. In fact, there are so few countries that had in their history so much emigration as for Italy, meaning both the “free movement” all around the world of individual missionaries, religious, sailors, merchants, artists, musicians, and the “gradual and spontaneous moving” of “masses” of workers in new and richer lands.

The Italians immigrants are known to adapt well everywhere, although not being supported in their early stages of settlement by colonial, military, legal associations; and almost everywhere, they maintained an attachment to the religious traditions revealing their spirit

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<sup>89</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.34.

of “acceptance” that, in the Christian conception, has a dynamic value.

Just to stay in the sociological-religious field, in relation to the demographic/migratory factor, in table 7 we can find the results obtained from the “Census of Canada 1971”. The first thing we can deduce from this table is that in Canada, as in all the American continent, the spread of the various religions coincides with the different migratory flows.<sup>90</sup>

Table 7. Religions in Canada

	1951 %	1961 %	1971 %	Canada 1971	BC 1971
Anglican	14.7	13.2	11.8	2,543,175	386,670
Catholic	43.3	45.7	46.2	9,974,895	408,330
United Church	20.5	20.1	17.5	3,768,805	537,565
Presbyteria n	5.6	4.5	4.0	872,330	100,940
Lutheran	3.2	3.6	3.3	715,740	120,335

Source: Census of Canada 1971

According to a detailed study on the distribution of the ethnic groups on the Canadian territory, there would be a correlation of these with the “imported” religions from the country of origin. Also because the religious freedom,

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<sup>90</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.34.

being deeply rooted in Canada, didn't lead to phenomena of forced historical or political conversion.

The second aspect we can deduce from table 7 is that in the period from 1951 and 1971 the Catholic religion gradually progressed from 43.3 % to 46.2 % and it is the only one, among the five most popular in Canada, which hasn't undergone decreases (except for the Lutheran religion that had an increase only in the decade 1951-1961).<sup>91</sup>

If we consider that, between the early 50s and the first years of the 70s, the birth rate of Canadians of the province of Quebec (which is, proportionally, the most Catholic province) decreased even below the minimum value of "repopulation", we can say that the increase of Catholics in Canada is directly proportional to the flows of immigrants from the Catholic countries and, above all, to the Italian one which can be placed in the decade 1951-1971.

At the Eucharistic Congress, which was held in Vancouver in 1976, they came to the conclusion that an half of the involved people was made up of Italians; the choir that was singing was the Italian Folk Choir of Vancouver, directed by Father Rossi, while the liturgical officiating was the Italian priest Padre R. Spada.

These details, even if of secondary importance, reflect the great participation of the Italian community to the liturgical and parish Catholic life in Canada.

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<sup>91</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.35-36.

If someone attends the Catholic liturgies in Italian, in Vancouver, can perceive a style which is at the same time traditional Italian (almost pre-conciliar, although with a genuine participation), and Anglo-Saxon, for the strict silence and observed order, difficult to find in Italy. This style is accompanied by elements of modernity, almost “technological”, applied to the liturgy, with the use of excellent acoustic systems and visual projections of the texts to play together. A striking feature is the seriousness with which these parishes and priests, working for them, act.

Furthermore, the Italian priests, knowing the availability of the media offered in Canada, thought of bringing out their catechesis through the press, too (for example in the weekly “Eco d’Italia” and in the monthly newspaper “Il Messaggio Cristiano”). They also spread their catechesis thanks to the radio (Father Rino Spada with the weekly broadcast of the KARI 550, Father Rosaia with the weekly on Wednesday, in the Italian program of the CJVB, ...) and thanks to the television (in a well-known program of Edmonton and the one of North Vancouver).<sup>92</sup>

It is important to emphasize that, where there are huge parish communities of immigrants, the Canadian bishops (but not always) try having one or more priests who can speak the language of the immigrants and fulfill the liturgy in the language of these.

As far as the participation to the life of the parish is concerned, the results are very good; in fact we can reach the deeper and true dimension of the immigrant’s life. For

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<sup>92</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.36.

example, someone who had to change his spoken language after his childhood or adolescence, can always pray and think with the mother tongue in the relationship with God. This is a very relevant aspect, that has in fact led the Catholic Church, especially after the Vatican Council II, to increasingly adopt a pluralist conception also in the liturgy, with the gradual replacement of Latin with the vernacular languages.

Very often, the Catholic missionaries have played a moral and material function of assistance to the emigrants (Italians, or from other countries).

In the reality of the Italians abroad, the Catholic missions have played and will continue to play functions of assistance, where the local organizations are unable to organize effectively.<sup>93</sup>

### **3.3 The associative phenomenon in the Italian communities of western Canada (the second post-war and the boom of the 70s)**

One of the typical aspects involving the immigrant life, in this case the Italian immigrants in western Canada, is the “associative” phenomenon.

It concerns all human aggregates which were subject to emigration and subsequent immigration in a new nation. In 1973 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in one of its

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<sup>93</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.38.

publications has recorded 2798 Italian associations in the world, although the number was much higher.<sup>94</sup>

But the origin of the Italian associations is very different, depending on the age, the people and the countries of immigration.

As far as western Canada is concerned, the oldest Italian associations had in common the characteristic of being defined as “Mutual Aid Societies”, that had the goal of material assistance, or medical and moral, in a situation that, at the time, didn’t benefit the needs of the workers and, particularly, of the immigrants.

These Italian societies, many of which still exist, usually adopt a statute, that is very long and detailed, where some articles about medical assistance, or the contribution for the burial of a member who dies, for example, and so on, are contained.

These societies are very often called “Logge” and what they have in common is the occurrence of the “Columbus Day”, usually celebrated on the second Saturday of October (it reminds October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1492, when America was discovered).

There are some Italo-Canadian groups who proposed to replace the Columbus Day with June 24, in the day when the Genovese-Venetian *Giovanni Caboto* would have landed on Newfoundland, date which coincides precisely with the discovery of Canada (June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1497).

The fundamental difference between the oldest and the most recent associations is that the first had some

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<sup>94</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.28.

charitable and moral purposes, while the second ones possessed and some particular recreational, regional or sports features. But both of them were designed by a small number of “leaders” who put their commitment to the creation of the group.

Their intent was probably to assert themselves at an individual level, especially since they were part of a society where the immigrant himself, for some socio-cultural reasons, couldn't feel fully involved.

So, in those years of the Italian immigration in Canada, as well as in the other host countries, a phenomenon that was called “*presidentomania*”<sup>95</sup>, typical of some strong Italian personalities abroad, was spreading.

It is necessary to remember, however, that the Italian association had a very alternative development, and, because of this reason, it was not easy to be President of each of them. Among the Presidents, the ones who could last longer in their office were those who had a good spirit of conciliation and common sense. Instead, those who had a more pronounced personality, often created something like a “feuds”, involving their relatives or the family, with the consequence of not being elected successively.

Over the years some associations were able to build their own headquarters, which were usually called “Casa d'Italia”, a source of great pride for the Italian immigrants. The foundation of these “Case d'Italia” was also an effective means to assert themselves in the local society, in fact the premises of these “Case” were used immediately for the meetings, the conferences and the parties.

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<sup>95</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.30.

These meeting points have the characteristic of being built with a very low initial capital, that became increasingly higher with the progress of the constructions and with the contribution of volunteers.

In the “Case d’Italia”, banquets, wedding receptions and societal events usually take place. Some of them contain cultural areas with a library and the equipment for language courses in collaboration with the COASCIT (Italian Committees for Educational and Cultural Activities).

Among the best known there are the “Case d’Italia” of Trail, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, New Westminster, Victoria, Kamloops, Calgary, Lethbrige and Regina.

This series of associations, although positive expression of the Italian community life, are not able to involve enough the younger generations, but are mainly used by the founding members and those who belong to their generation.

The multicultural traditions, that the Italian people loved and still love to preserve, are the “dialects”, the typical songs, which are combined under the name of the Italians’ towns of origin (we can cite for example the “Famiglia Bagnolese”, the “Society of Selva del Montello, the “Society of Santa Cristina”), or of their region (“Circolo Abruzzese”, “Famiglia Molisana”, “Famee Furlane”, “Circolo dei Toscani”, “Gruppo Folcloristico Siciliano”, “Circolo Pugliese” and “Circolo Campano”), otherwise as members of Italian Societies (“Società Dante Alighieri”, “Società Nazionale degli Alpini”), choral associations (“The Italian Folk Choir of Vancouver”, “The Italian Choir of BC”), and sport associations (“Italian Bicycle

Club”, “Italo-Canadian Rod and Gun Club”, “The Italo-Canadian Soccer Club”).<sup>96</sup>

The phenomenon of diffusion of the creation of associations was possible above all in the big centres, as Vancouver, and a little less in smaller towns as Edmonton and Calgary. In the smallest communities it is already a good result to have just one Italian association.

In some places the associations are directed by a predominant regional group, it means that for those Italians coming from the other regions will seem more difficult to feel part of them and participate.

We should remember with particular attention some old Italo-Canadian associations which, with the time, have become important clubs where the participation of Canadians of different ethnic origin has increased remarkably. It happens that their Presidents are not of Italian origin or they cannot speak Italian, but, despite this, these societies remain a point of reference for the community. These are generally groups of people which are assimilated, and for them it can be difficult to support the folkloristic and cultural Italian traditions, because they have been subjected to the phenomenon of “acculturation”.

Especially during the 70s, when the migratory boom became more intense, in western Canada lots of new associations were created, and this shows as Italians and Canadians had a strong interest towards forms of community. Obviously, the effect of this phenomenon was

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<sup>96</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.32.

positive, and, in fact, the associations could concretely suggest a social way of life and create a program to which all people could refer.

### **3.4 The Italian Committee for Educational and Cultural Activities (COASCIT) – The COASCIT of Vancouver**

The Italian Committee for Educational and Cultural Activities (COASCIT) is an institution that was founded in November 1973, through a meeting held in a room of the Consulate. The abbreviation “COASCIT” has been used increasingly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs referring to all the “Consular Committees for Italian Scholastic Assistance”. As far as the Vancouver’s Committee is concerned, the concept of “assistance” has been replaced by that of “activity”, with the addition of the adjective “cultural”.

The Committee decided to maintain its Italian and consular feature, without being registered with a legal status at the Canadian offices. In some countries, for example, the Consular Committees must submit to the local laws, as it happens in France.<sup>97</sup>

Even if the Canadian law turns out to be much more liberal, the problem has been repeatedly subjected to the provincial authority of BC, that is, to the Minister for the Education of the time.

It was proposed to leave to the Committee its “consular” feature, avoiding to speak about the “sponsorship” of the

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<sup>97</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.88.

Provincial Ministry of Education, as it was stated in the first draft of the Statute.

Among the goals of COASCIT there are: the coordination of the Consular activities of educational assistance, which take place under the Italian Law No. 153 of March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1971; the promotion of folkloristic and cultural initiatives in the Italian communities; moreover, a opener cooperation with the Canadian school and cultural authorities, in the context of programs about multiculturalism and Italian teaching in the secondary school, in the manners and time required by the managers of the School Boards, which have exclusive competence in this field (Article 2 of the Statute).<sup>98</sup>

The consular office is the authority which formed the Committee, according to what Article 53 of the law on the Administration of Foreign Affairs (DPR No. 18 of January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967), which states that “the Consular offices, where they recognize the opportunity in the interest of the Italian community, promote the establishment of Committees and, in the local law, of organizations and associations with charitable, educational and recreational aims”.

There is a President, designated by the Consular office, and almost five members of the local Italian community, which are all part of the Consular Committee.

Of course, the President is the one who can take the most important decisions, and who plays the role of manager and of responsible for the organization.

There is a group of people who believe that the takeover of the President could be objectionable, because it goes to

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<sup>98</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.90.

affect the free self-determination of the Italo-Canadian community.

Moreover, there are some Italian organizations that have expressed disappointment against the consular Committee. The reasons which stay behind these two oppositions are completely different: those of the first category don't accept a designation by the Consul, because the Consul is foreign and, then, could interfere with the internal problems of Canada, while those of the second category (the representatives of some political or parapolitical Italian organizations) don't accept the discretionary power belonging to the Consul, because they would like to have, themselves, a higher political influence on the Committees' management.

On the other hand, if we want to get a concrete activity with the Consular Committee, and manage it effectively, we cannot give up to a manager, because it is essentially someone who can carry out a program responsibly.

In the most peripheral COASCIT we have seen that the success of the Italian courses depended heavily on the presence of a competent person.

One of the major problems of the Italian communities abroad, when there is the will of keeping alive some activities, is to find the right people to do this kind of work.

In Vancouver it was not difficult to chose a President: the person elected was Gerolamo Visentin, elected by the founding Committee of COASCIT. Thanks to the actions of this President, lots of things have been done for the district of Vancouver.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Ciongoli A.K., Parini J., *The story of Italian immigration. Passage to Liberty and the rebirth of America*, 2002, pp.30-31.

Since the first years of the creation of the COASCIT, many people of the community contributed to the realization of its goals.

First of all the teachers, who have taught to their students with passion; then, the parents, who have collaborated to the consular and cultural programs; the Presidents of the associations and all the Italian people who have rediscovered the value of the action for the good of the community.

A critical issue of the consular district of Vancouver, and of the COASCIT, was to establish a coordination among the different communities on a wide territory.

Following some consular visits, autonomous local subcommittees were established, always known under the name of COASCIT. They were also designed by the Consular bureau.

The collaboration between the COASCIT and the Presidents of the Clubs has always been functional, but their relation remains a sensitive issue. In those places where there is a relevant Italian community, there are usually some associations that have their own premises. Although these associations have often only some ordinary activities, as annual banquets, for example, they were for a long time the only point of reference for the Italian community and the authorities of the place.

At school level it was necessary to create the “school boards” that could be independent from the associations, while maintaining a partnership with them.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Calvanese F., *Emigrazione e politica migratoria negli anni settanta*, Salerno, Pietro Laveglia, 1983, p.22.

From the beginning the Canadian authorities have welcomed the COASCIT programs, and, especially in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Provincial Government has provided to the funding of the courses.

The School Boards (*Uffici Scolastici Territoriali*) allowed the free use of classrooms for the courses which took place during the week, while for the Saturdays they had to ask for a refund for expenses.

Despite the collaboration between the Canadian authorities and the families, too, which gave a contribution paying the annual school fees, the main problem to make run this organization was to obtain funding from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In fact, from the mid-70s, more and more funds came from the institution.

Surely the ethnic group in Canada was one of those who have been helped more by their own Government. The Italian Government didn't hesitate to make a contribution for a school and cultural activity, that could be enjoyed by the Italian citizens, as well as the Canadian ones.<sup>101</sup>

The COASCIT of Vancouver deserves credit for a series of initiatives which have aroused many interests, both among the Italians and the Canadians. As its first goal, the COASCIT wanted to promote the spread of the Italian language among the children of the immigrants. At the same time everybody hoped that teaching was accompanied by a group of related activities which would make it more attractive.

It was necessary to have a local point of reference and organization; in the first period of life of the COASCIT, the cultural and school activity was organized by the

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<sup>101</sup> Culos R., *Vancouver's Society of Italians*, Harbour publishing, Canada, 1998, pp.40-45.

Consulate, which didn't have suitable rooms. In fact, it was necessary to make the rooms more efficient to be able to do a good work. Because of this general disorganization, they started checking the numerous issues.

During the first years, in which the COASCIT began to be well known, took place its first Conference.

At the end of May in 1976, the first COASCIT Conference was held in a beautiful hotel in Vancouver. At the Congress about fifty people attended, and, among these, there were teachers and the responsible for the courses of the district.

Among the most interesting reports, we should mention that of the Professor Donati, and that of Dr. Azzi.

In the first one, the Italian lady, who was a high school teacher in Vancouver, shows that the English language is tributary to Latin, for more than 50% of its vocabulary; and the teaching of Italian can help the students themselves to learn better English.

Instead Dr. Azzi, who is the author of a thesis about Italian dialects at U.B.C., made a reflection on the regional languages in the psychology and cultural education of the younger generations, and on the problems of coexistence and interference of these dialects regarding the learning of Italian.

The COASCIT of Vancouver, with all its activities, has always tried to improve the Italian regional cultural heritage and to preserve the dialects.

This was obtained not only through the associations, but also with hard studies, and the spread in the libraries of

more numerous volumes about the Italian regions' history.<sup>102</sup>

### **3.5 The Committee for the promotion and organization of Italian Activities in the district of Vancouver (CAIV)**

Inspired by what has been done for school activities, the Consulate thought to institutionalize the collaboration with the different Italian and Italo-Canadian associations of the district.

A central and efficient body was created to promote the initiatives, on a scale of priorities, in the communities.

In January 1974 the CAIV (a Consular Committee for the Promotion and organization of Italian Activities in the district of Vancouver) was born, following a consular decree, based on the Article No.53 of the D.P.R. January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967 No.18, which regulates the establishment of COASCIT.

Dr. Gerry Visentin was elected President of the CAIV, and he could use in the first three years the same administrative services of the COASCIT, of which he had already been appointed President.

The priority among the numerous activities was the project for the Cultural and Recreational Centre in Vancouver, including the activities related to it (magazine of the Centre, advertisement, functioning of the office of the Italian Folk Society, campaigns for raising funds,...)

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<sup>102</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.122.

The CAIV carried out directly other services, as the organization of the four editions of Festival of the Italian Community, the opening of television programs in Italian, the creation of the television studio of the ARTI, the work with sports groups (Italo-Canadian Soccer Clubs), with bands (the Alpine Band), and the establishment of vocational training courses, then managed by the COASCIT.

In its three years and a half of life, the CAIV worked mainly as an operative and coordination centre, rather than as an associative body.

In June 1977, at a general meeting with all the Presidents of the Italian associations in Vancouver, Mr. Loreto Zaurrini was elected new President of the CAIV, at the place of Dr. Visentin.<sup>103</sup>

### **3.6 The Italian Cultural and Recreational Centre of Vancouver. My experience at the Centre and two testimonies of Italo-Canadian life**

The construction of the Italian Cultural and Recreational Centre of Vancouver was possible thanks to the contribution of the Italian Folk Society of British Columbia. The Italian Folk Society is a federation composed of more than 50 associations and Italian and Italo-Canadian groups placed in the Province of British Columbia.

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<sup>103</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.100-102.

The federation was born in May, 1974, following a meeting in which the Consul Giovanni Germano and the Premier of the Province, Davis Barret, were present.

On that day the Premier made some inquiries, and among these he asked to encourage the Italian immigrants to build a community centre, since it would have been possible to obtain a subsidy for it.<sup>104</sup>

There were later some meetings to which also the Mayor of Vancouver, Art Phillips, participated, making this project closer to its realization.

But it was necessary to see if the Italian associations were available to make the project not only “Italian” but also “Canadian”, so it would have been better accepted by the public opinion.

Then it was decided to create a federation of Italian associations on a Canadian legal basis, in order to achieve greater participation of members and not to use the consular office and the Italian administration so much for the Centre.

For years the idea of the Centre was supported by the Italian community, but what was missing was an organization linking the different groups and a joint program. At the end of 1973, in fact, the Consular Committees and the new cultural and school programs were the demonstration that Italian people wanted a link among the associations.

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<sup>104</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.149.

Obviously the economic problem was the first one; it was necessary to buy a land to build the Centre, but it was not easy to find the right place.

The idea of the Centre was accepted with enthusiasm by Mayor Phillips and the councillors. Probably this happened because the project was supported by provincial authorities, as the Provincial Government of BC for the financial aspect, and the Italian Government, for the organization.

The Italian Folk Society not only wanted to buy the land, but possibly to get it for a special price.

At the end of October 1974 it was decided to consider the request of the Italian Folk Society. During this sitting, all the presidents and vice-presidents of the Vancouver Associations were present (about 50), together with the speaker for the Italian Folk Society, Dr. Visentin. The long debate was concluded with six votes in favour and three against: the Municipal Council accepted the proposal to concede three acres of land for 300,000 dollars, in the area between Grandview Highway and Slocan Street.<sup>105</sup>

Many meetings of the Municipal Council took place and a quite few bureaucratic procedures were necessary to modify the whole town-planning scheme. It was advisable to present the project to the residents of the area in a public meeting and discuss it later in a public hearing.

Those who opposed the Centre, who had collected a few hundred signatures to boycott the project, were easily beaten by the enthusiastic and persuasive speeches of those in favour. All the Councillors, after the debate and

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<sup>105</sup> Culos R., *Vancouver's Society of Italians*, Harbour publishing, Canada, 1998, pp. 50-53.

before the decision was made, expressed good appreciations on the Italians. Then, they voted unanimously in favour of conceding the site for the Centre.

Although the Councillors ensured the granting to begin the work in a few weeks, the “development permit” to reclaim the land was obtained only on December 7<sup>th</sup>. 1976. Even if the Italian Folk Society had finished all payments on the land by April 1976, without any restrictions having been mentioned regarding the change of ownership, in January 1977 the Legal Department of the Municipal Council, taken from overzealous, pushed through by the Council a series of guarantees to be added to the deed of sale; on the basis of these guarantees, if the Italian Folk Society had not fulfilled some conditions (among others, building was to start by a certain date, there was to be no speculation or profit-making, etc...), the Municipal Council would have reserved the right to buy back the land, including the Centre, for the original sum of 300,000 dollars at any time and without any conditions attached.

The Provincial Government’s contribution seemed the safest and most important guarantee of the project’s success. Officials of the Department for Tourism and Recreation in Victoria, suggested dividing the building into two parts, the recreational section and the cultural section.

If we observe the final draft of the plans, that is different from the original one, presented to the Municipal Council, we will see two separate buildings. The reason for this

goes back to the fact that they hoped so to receive two subsidies.<sup>106</sup>

But another problem occurred at that moment: the political situation changed drastically, and, to everyone's surprise, the New Democratic Party, that held all the Government posts, called for the elections a year and a half earlier, in November 1975. The situation had become complicated both because of the change in policy proclaimed by the new cabinet in terms of new economic restrictions and because the Italian community was generally favourable to the New Democratic Party (which had, and still has its stronghold in the Italian quarter), and, last but not least, because the usual individuals were trying to make people at all levels turn a deaf ear to our requests.

For sure the features, the inspiring principles of the Centre and the reasons that pushed to give support to it, by the municipal and provincial authorities. What convinced the authorities was the fact that the project seemed valid and serious, and for the Vancouver's Community and the Province of BC there were only positive aspects about the issue.

So, the support of the Canadian Government and the Italian one was justified by the fact that the Centre could meet the primary needs, in the social field, as: the care of old people, recreational, educational and social activities for children and teenagers, the organization of free time activities both for adult workers and young people, Italian

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<sup>106</sup> Culos R., *Vancouver's Society of Italians*, Harbour publishing, Canada, 1998

culture and civilization for those interested in the knowledge of “multiculturalism”.<sup>107</sup>

Another basic element, which had affected not a little the opinion of the Canadian authorities, was the finding that a relevant part of the running costs of the Centre, would have been responsibility of the Italian Administration. In the previous years, thanks to the Consular Committees, the Italian Administration itself had shown to be competent, as organizer and source of financing, and to create and manage assistance and cultural activities useful and open to all.

As it is explained in point h) of Article 2 of the Constitution, one of the statutory aims of the Italian Folk Society is to keep active the Italian Cultural and Recreational Centre of Vancouver.

Since the construction of the Centre was possible thanks to a large number of donors, it was right that these had an active part as regarding the management of the complex.

After many meetings, it was decided that an Administrative Council composed of 12 members, 6 of whom coming from the Board of Directors of the Italian Folk Society (comprising the President, the Consul and the President of COASCIT and CAIV) and other 6 of them coming from the “founding members”, was the one responsible for the administration of the Centre. The members of the Administrative Council would remain in office for two years, with the elections at the end of that term.

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<sup>107</sup> Romanato G., *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, pp. 21-23

The Administration of the Italian Centre should be based on a democratic system: on the one hand, there would be the representatives of the Italian Folk Society (which continues to be the owner of the whole building and holder of the activities), that are elected through a two-stage, or three-stage system, that is, first the Presidents of the individual associations are elected, then they become part of the Executive Body of the Italian Folk Society which, then, elects the Board of Directors (in the second-stage of the election).

Among the Presidents of the Board of directors, three representatives are elected to the Administrative Council of the Centre (the other three representatives of the Italian Folk Society have the right of membership, that is the President, the Consul and the representative of COASCIT, or the Consular Committees).

On the other hand, besides the 6 representatives of the Federation, there are the 6 representatives of the two categories of donor: the three from the group which has pledged 1,200 dollars or more (founding members) and the three from the group which has pledged 120 dollar or more (sustaining members). All the amounts would be both contributions in money and voluntary work.

The Centre, therefore, will be administered by the associations through a system which can be called two-stage representative, and by the numerous donors, through their representatives. As regard as the management of school and cultural activities, that are by nature a public service, so financially passive, there was an agreement between the Italian Folk Society and the Italian

Government for the management of the cultural wing of the Centre.<sup>108</sup>

So it was that, finally, in June 1977 the Centre was opened and in September it was inaugurated.

After this preamble, in which I wanted to explain the different stages of formation of the Italian Cultural Centre from its conception until its effective construction, I'd like to add something about my personal story during my stay in Vancouver in 2011.

I left to Canada at the beginning of March with the premise of living an unforgettable adventure and finding a good internship opportunity. Immediately in the first three days I met many Italian immigrants, who habitually shopped in my favourite supermarket or took the bus to my stop. Neither in Italy I could have known so many people in so little time... And the fact of being surrounded by so many compatriots, made me feel good. After having met a man of Italian origins, along with his entire family, I started visiting the Italian Cultural Centre, which was also not very far from my home.

I was immediately fascinated by this place, where everything reminded me of my homeland: the furniture of the building and the typical Italian tavern in it; the old men who were playing cards in the "Osteria", or others playing bowls... Then, the atmosphere was very Italian!

Many Italian immigrants, above all those who arrived in Canada just after WWII, are used to visit the Centre, and almost every day. The events are numerous and of various kinds, but even if there are no special events in some periods of the year, the Centre is always a vital place of

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<sup>108</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.157.

aggregation. I was interested from the first time to the activities of the Centre, so I decided to stay there and begin my internship, particularly by helping with the organization of events. One of the most positive things is that in 2011 there was an important recurrence for Italy: the 150 years anniversary of its Unification.

Having the fortune to be there in such a significant moment, I attended all the events for the celebration of this anniversary, especially those of June, “*The Italian Heritage Month*”.

One of the most beautiful celebrations organized by the Italian community in Vancouver was the *Italian Day on the Drive*, on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011. This is a typical recurrence at the beginning of June, in which every year the Italo-Canadians who reside in Vancouver and Burnaby meet together in a very particular location: Commercial Drive, the street with the highest number of Italian shops and restaurants in the city. During that day on Commercial Drive there were stands representing many Italian regions, as the one for Veneto region, with their typical dishes and wines, as well as the immigrants from Friuli Venezia Giulia, Molise, Calabria, Abruzzo had one.

Furthermore, we of the Italian Cultural Centre had a stand with recreational activities for the children, like painting or making bracelets and necklaces with the typical Italian “pennette”, that is with the pasta which they had painted before. In addition to the stands along Commercial Drive there were also several stages, where some Italo-Canadian singers performed: a perfect day for everyone, for Italians, Canadians, tourists, to walk along a colourful street, with music, enjoying a real good Italian dish and drinking fine wine.

Besides this Italian Sunday on Commercial Drive, there were many events during the whole summer: in June, for example, we had the Festa della Repubblica (June 2<sup>nd</sup>), the Italian Architecture Week (June 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>), the Italian Movie Night (June 13<sup>th</sup>), the Festa delle Regioni (June 25<sup>th</sup>), the Italian Cinema under the Stars (June 29<sup>th</sup>), etc...; in July the Italian Cultural Centre organized a three weeks Italian course, “Vacanze in Italiano”, for children and adults (July 4<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>), then the event “Taste of Italy: Veneto” (July 26<sup>th</sup>) and in August “Taste of Italy: Sicilia” (August 9<sup>th</sup>) and “Taste of Italy: Puglia” (August 23<sup>rd</sup>).

During my experience in harness with the members of the Italian Cultural Centre, and all the other people who gravitate daily around it, I can say I was lucky to meet some kind people who, besides welcoming me with open arms, told me their history as emigrants (and immigrants, too).

In one of my first days in Canada, I was invited by an Italo-Canadian family for dinner, and it was an unforgettable evening for me, a real mix of Italian traditions and Canadian habits acquired over the years.

The householder, Mr. Carlo, immediately struck my attention with his sympathy and with his very young aspect, considering his real age.

He is native of a small village near Castelfranco Veneto, where he used to live with his family, but at the age of 20 he decided to move to Canada as many other Italians who wanted to find their fortune overseas. As first step, Carlo settled in Trail, a remote location in western Canada characterized by the highest concentration of Italian emigrants; here, he found employment as baker and pastry man. After some years, in 1963, he and his wife moved again, to Vancouver, because they wanted to settle close to

the city where the everyday life was more active and where their children would grow up with more possibilities. Burnaby is the village where they found the ground in which they built their house, and Carlo soon began a 26-years career with Safeway's bakery department.

Carlo has been part of the Italian Cultural Centre since its birth, in 1977. He immediately joined the ranks of the volunteers, and in the occasion of the inauguration of the Centre he performed assembly and clean up duty, at the invitation of Mr. Dotto, one of the Centre's founding members. In the 35-years life of the Centre he never denied his sincere contribution. One day he said: *"The Centre is like my church. If they ask me, I won't say no. Anything I can do, I do."*

This nice Italo-Canadian man, who has certainly become one of my best friends in Canada, can be considered one of the most interesting and willing personalities that helped the Italian community in Vancouver to fit well into Canadian society. He served for many years as a member of the Board of Directors and did committee duty on many tasks. In addition to his regular work as a volunteer, we must mention the other Carlo's passions: the Bingo, the Italian choir of the Centre, computer graphics, translations, office routine and customer service, etc...; furthermore, he has been the unofficial photographer for the Centre's most important events.

Mr. Carlo is, and will always remain, one of the kindest people known during my Canadian experience, since he was able to show me all his passion in what he does, day after day, to keep alive the Italian community in Vancouver.

Thanks to Mr. Carlo, I also had the opportunity to know his entire family: his wife and his three sons, who in turn are married and have children. So, for me, it was the perfect occasion to meet not one, but three generations of the same family. The three Carlo's sons have children who are slightly younger than me, and this was important for me: I spent a lot of time with them, I lived for a short time as if I was the daughter of an Italo-Canadian immigrant. Mr. Carlo's grandchildren told me how they spend their life at school, in the family environment, and it was nice and great to see how they care about their Italian origins and how they have a deep reverence for their grandfather.



*June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011 – Italian Day on The Drive, Commercial Drive, Vancouver BC*

Another personal story that I found interesting to investigate is that of Laura, a young woman, daughter of

Italians emigrated to Vancouver after WWII, who is well known as an example of the new generation of Italo-Canadians involved with the Italian Cultural Centre's activities.

I learnt about her history during the bibliographic research I was doing for this work, when one day at the Vancouver Public Library I came across her thesis, entitled: "I was a strong lady: Italian housewives with boarders in Vancouver, 1947-61" (Laura Quilici).

The factor that drove this woman to explore and expand her Italianness consisted of an Italian history course at university and, as aforesaid, the thesis she wrote for her graduation in 1995. This written work dealt with the subject of the Italian women's experience in operating boarding houses in Vancouver during the 50s.

The author highlighted the big sacrifices made by the Italian women and wives and their struggles in order to establish themselves in the Canadian society.

So, thanks to this work and the inspiration it gave her, Laura decided to find out her parents' past, because she thought to be deeply related to their emigration experience, even if in an indirect manner.

She decided to join the Centre's museum committee, and she worked on many projects which involved the Italian Cultural Centre, as the Festa Italiana. She collaborated with other important figures of the Centre: Mr. Rudy Bonora, Miss Stella de Giorgio, Mr. Ray Culos, etc... They worked all together for the participation of the Centre in the Museum of Canadian Civilization's Italian exhibit in Ottawa.

By the whole Italian community in Vancouver there is hope that the efforts made by Laura help to illustrate the

real and authentic community history, available to all the members and the visitors to the Italian Cultural Centre.

Laura thinks that it is important for descendants of Italian people to learn as much as possible about the emigrants journey as it evolved in the different parts of Canada. And so do I.

Thanks to the written support that is given us by many Italo-Canadian authors, we all can learn and know the stories about our ancestors' travels and settlements overseas.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Canada-Italy cooperation: the cultural and political relations linking the two nations**

#### **4.1 The relations between Canada and Italy**

The relations between Canada and Italy are characterized by the absence of contrasts and by a common vision of international politics. The strong multilateral vocation between the two countries had led them to take similar positions in contexts as the United Nations and the G8. Both of them are engaged in problematic scenes with Afghanistan. An important convergence has been tested within the G8: since after Italy just Canada will host the summit, in 2010, the two governments have increased their cooperation in order to develop stronger initiatives about the main global issues.

The good relations which have linked Canada and Italy for a long time, raised by the presence of a large Italo-Canadian community in the North-American country, is reflected in terms of economic integration. Canada is an important export market for Italian products, particularly for expendable goods, typical of Made in Italy, for the person and for the house, and offers good opportunities for settlement in those companies that want to expand their own activity in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) markets.

In the present phase of trade international relations, which is characterized by a more intense competition on shares and by the search for new spaces for expansion, the possibility of a further development of the economic relations between Canada and Italy seems to be important

for both countries. The Italian economy tends to follow the global cycles of the developed economies, but with less consistent expansion phases and more prominent slowdown phases than the other developed countries; and this shows the presence of unsolved structural problems. On the contrary the Canadian economy seems to be more dynamic, thanks to the general context of the country, more lively and functional, and its strong international opening. However, Canada also shows the difficulties which affect the developed countries to the overall world economy, and it is strongly affected by the slowdown of the U.S. economy, to which it is closely interrelated.<sup>109</sup>



*The Canadian and Italian flags*

#### **4.2 The Canadian multiculturalism: multilingualism, bilingualism, multicultural policies**

Canada is certainly one of the countries with the highest ethnic differentiation that manifested in a very short time. This is the result of a set of numerous migratory flows that

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<sup>109</sup> Istituto Affari Internazionali - Documenti IAI – Progetto ITACA. Collettività italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti. Rapporto finale, p.8.

had already begun from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when together with native people (gradually indicated as aboriginal people, first nations, native people), French and English people, other European or Asian emigrants coming from everywhere began to be more present.

The strong interest for the Canadian model derives from the fact that, hoping to overcome the Anglo-French federal system, in 1982 Canada aimed at making constitutional the principle of multiculturalism with the *Canadian charter of rights and freedoms*. Instead of undergoing the migratory processes, Canada worked in order to build the national identity thanks to the recognition of the newcomers, combining their rights with those of the first nations and the two historic communities.

This mixture of peoples and cultures, which should not be confused with the so-called “melting pot” U.S. assimilatory model, would rather follow its own original path, capable of making this mosaic of cultures as a completed work in which the rights of all the communities can be protected and the interaction can be promoted for a possible final integration.<sup>110</sup>

The end of World War II is for sure a first divide to which we refer about the model of society pursued in Canada.

Before this, a socio-political reality strongly dependent on the motherland, Great Britain, was present; a reality markedly polarized between a French Canada and an English Canada, the first one French-speaking and the second one English-speaking.

After the end of World War II, on the other hand, we begin to be aware of the linguistic and ethnic plurality of the country, orienting the new political choices above all

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<sup>110</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, p.22.

at the native peoples, the immigrant peoples and their different languages and cultures.<sup>111</sup>

The premises that led to these new political interventions may be sought in the way the Canadian leaders were able to manage some serious international crises, which were causing marked domestic relapses, with a view of national cohesion: in the Boer war in 1899, which was able to arouse a sense of pride and belonging although some violent clashes between French-speakers and English speakers occurred; in World War I, when Canada, thanks to its success, could enter the League of Nations and gained its political independence with the Statute of Westminster; in World War II, that gave the country a strong self-confidence, despite the serious human and financial losses.<sup>112</sup>

In this context of opening and confidence we find the passage of the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1946, the first legislative intervention in the world that didn't include differences between citizens by naturalization and citizens by birth. In 1967 the Immigration Act was passed, and with it the entrance fees based on religious, cultural and geographical criteria, were abolished.

Because of the immensity of the territory and the demographic shortage, the growth policies of the country cannot be understood outside the migration policies. Therefore, the significant socio-economical and demographic development of Canada can be read correctly flipping through the pages written by immigrants, and these events should be considered closely related to the critical moments concerning the unity and the national

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<sup>111</sup> G. Romanato, *Veneti in Canada*, Ravenna, Longo editore, 2011, p.22.

<sup>112</sup> *ibidem*, p.23.

identity in the conflict, never solved, between English-speakers and French speakers.

Moreover, there is the statement of a new Canadian way in arts and letters, with the so-called Group of Seven<sup>113</sup>, and in literature and music.

The civic national commitment is quite evident in this period, always in relation to the influence given by the contact with other cultures, from those from Great Britain, France, USA, and the first nations, up to other cultures to which immigrants referred.

The 60s and 70s are very significant in order to describe this civic commitment, and they can be emblematically illustrated by three actors, considered particularly important in the Canadian history: the Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1968-1979; 1980-1984), of the Liberal Party of Canada, and the premiers of Quebec Jean Lesage (Liberal Party, 1960-1966)<sup>114</sup>, and René Lévesque (1976-1985), of the *Parti québécois*.

Lévesque, from the 60s as Minister of Local Government and from the 70s as premier, was a prominent figure in the revolution that should lead to a greater autonomy in Quebec, up to ratify the independence of the latter.

Despite the referendum, promoted by Lévesque himself in 1980, had rejected with 60 percent of the votes the proposal for an independent Quebec, Lévesque fought until the end of his life for this idea.

Lesage government as much as Lévesque government introduced significant and radical reforms, which greatly

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<sup>113</sup> J. O'Brian, P. White, *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007.

<sup>114</sup> D.Latouche, [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/jean-lesage](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/jean-lesage), viewed on May 2nd, 2012.

increased provincial power. Lesage became the promoter of the so-called *révolution tranquille*, with which ambitious reforms on social policy, education, health, economic development and nationalization of big enterprises<sup>115</sup>, were initiated.

During his mandate, Lévesque, with other reforms that tended to strengthen the identity of Quebec, introduced the *Charte de la langue française* with the goal of making French “the normal and everyday language of work, education, communication, trade and business”.

It is the Law N. 101 of 1977, invalidated by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1984 for the sections which provided French as single language, amended in 1988 with the Law N. 178.<sup>116</sup>

At national level, on the contrary, the Prime Minister Trudeau, native of Quebec, devoted his political commitment to federalism, in an attempt to find a mediation among the pushes for independence of Quebec, in its conflict with the English-speakers part, and the desire to keep the country together.

In regard to this, the action taken by his Government is particularly important, because it was able to bring out Canada from the difficulties arising from a contrast between two ethnic-political parts to situate it, on the other hand, in a wider context that would involve Canada-combined but different-starting from the native peoples, also including immigrants.

Thanks to Trudeau, Canada opens to multiculturalism, to diversity, to multiplicity, and it works for the clearing of

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<sup>115</sup> M.Durand, *Histoire du Quebec*, Paris, éditeur Auzas Imago, 2002.

<sup>116</sup> [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com), viewed on May 2nd, 2012.

polarizations and dichotomies with the aim of unity. The basic idea was that Canada was, indeed, a mosaic of cultures that had to be reconstructed according to an unified design. John Porter's studies refer to this new national sensibility; in fact, he argues that in Canada during the 60s there was a social stratification in which, compared to the income, health, education conditions, some ethnic groups lived very well (Anglo-Canadians), other groups not so well (French-Canadians and immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe), and others lived worse (first nations, inuit and métis). This was the situation for the simple reason that some groups could exert a larger power and influence than others in national decision-making.

These analyses were also confirmed by the report prepared by the *Royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism*, established in July 1963 by Lester B. Pearson Government, and co-chaired by André Laurendeau, of the newspaper *Le Devoir*, and by Davidson Dunton, President of Carleton University.

After six years of work, in 1969, the Commission recommended:

- a) that the French and English language were declared official languages at federal level throughout Canada, and at provincial level in Ontario and New Brunswick;
- b) that some linguistic districts, English or French, were created in the Canadian regions where there was a linguistic minority at least 10 percent of the population;
- c) that the possibility to choose, for their children, a school in the language of their choice in those regions where there was a satisfactory demand was guaranteed to parents;

d) that Ottawa could become a bilingual city.<sup>117</sup>

Once in power, Trudeau<sup>118</sup>, starting from the results of the *Royal Commission on bilingualism and biculturalism*, in 1969 managed to get approval of the *Official Language Act* by the federal parliament; with it French and English languages were established as official languages and, on the basis of this act, all the federal institutions must provide their own services in French and in English at the customer discretion. Moreover, the Commissioner for the official languages was created. In 1987 this law, applied only to French and English languages, adapted to the multicultural Canada, promoting the official rights of the languages of minorities, as awareness of the presence of many linguistic communities as a consequence of the migratory processes.<sup>119</sup>

According to the policy settings given by Trudeau, the main goals of multiculturalism can be summarized as: 1) “to support the cultural development of ethno-cultural groups; 2) to help the members of those groups to participate fully in the Canadian society; 3) to promote meetings and exchanges among the different groups; 4) to help the newcomers to master one of the two Canadian official languages”.<sup>120</sup>

The concept and practice of multiculturalism find a socio-political consistency in Canada, as an alternative to the

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<sup>117</sup> G.Laing, *Commission royale d’enquête sur le bilinguisme et le biculturalisme* (Commission Laurendeau-Dunton), Ottawa, “L’Encyclopédie Canadienne”, 2010.

<sup>118</sup> R.Whitaker, *Pierre Elliott Trudeau*, Ottawa, “L’Encyclopédie Canadienne”, 2010.

<sup>119</sup> B. Saint-Jacques, J.K. Chambers, Ottawa, “L’Encyclopédie Canadienne”, 2010.

<sup>120</sup> T. Groppi, *Canada*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006.

concept of biculturalism (English-French), just because it is considered by Trudeau more suited to meet the country's problems. The idea of multiculturalism began to spread from Canada to all around the world.<sup>121</sup> The second Trudeau's mandate as Prime Minister is particularly fruitful, and not only referring to multiculturalism. In 1980, with the first defeat of the referendum clerks in Quebec<sup>122</sup>, his vision of a unified Canada is strengthened and invigorates his political initiative.

In fact, the Prime Minister, with the *Constitution Act* of 1982 could introduce important news in the balance between the federal government and provinces, and in the device which must govern the rights and duties of everybody, whether they are individuals, societies, systems.

The Constitution Act is a law that entered to force April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1982, and it seems to be much more significant because inside it contains the *Canadian Charter of rights and freedoms*, and has the objective of protecting the citizen from the will of the State, and the minorities from the will of the Parliament majorities. It intervenes and regulates various sectors such as: the legal guarantees, the rights to equality, the linguistic rights, the fundamental freedoms, the democratic rights, the freedom of movement and residence, the gender equality, to which is reserved a specific article (art.28), and the rights of indigenous.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> G. Therborn, *Società multiculturale*, Roma, Istituto dell'enciclopedia italiana Treccani, 2010.

<sup>122</sup> C. Archibald, *Souveraineté-association*, Ottawa, "L'Encyclopédie Canadienne", 2010.

<sup>123</sup> P. Hogg (1985), *Constitutional Law of Canada*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997; G.A. Beaudoin, *Charte*

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Constitution Act* of 1982 marked what is called the *patriation* (rimpatrio) of the constitution, that is the clearing of the constitutional law of 1867, the *British North America Act*, with which the United Kingdom fixed the political, legislative, judicial systems of the *dominion* of Canada.

With the 1982 act, Canada finally acquired its full sovereignty and became effectively independent from Great Britain. From that heated debate, the present Canada came out, integrated in a balanced system between federal government and provinces, and its development is not yet concluded (québécoise question).<sup>124</sup>

This kind of constitutional structure in some ways helped to understand the meaning of multiculturalism<sup>125</sup>; a philosophy not only declared, but that has its foundations in the same legal structure of Canada. Here, multiculturalism is seen as will of admit and defend the cultural and linguistic identity of the various ethnic components on the country. This concept, at least in its political practice, was born in Canada and it became part of the political-institutional language from 1971, when the

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*Canadienne des droits et libertés*, Ottawa, “L’Encyclopédie Canadienne”, 2010.

<sup>124</sup> R. Boadway, *The State of the Federation 1999-2000: Recent Developments in the Economics of Federalism*, Kingston, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen’s University, 2000.

<sup>125</sup> For a specific, conceptual close examination of Canada, see: W. Kymlicka, *La cittadinanza multiculturale*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1999; C. Taylor (1991), *Il disagio della modernità*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1994; M. Sanfilippo (cur.), *Migrazioni, identità interculturale: il contributo di Charles Taylor e Will Kymlicka*, “Studi Emigrazione”, 173, 2009.

creation of a ministry on multiculturalism, the *Minister of citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism*, occurred.

This socio-political feeling is shared by all Canadian parties, beyond particular specificities, and was realized with the approval, in 1988, of the *Multiculturalism Act*.

On the basis of this legal-institutional pattern, in the last decades there are many measures taken to actively promote multiculturalism: the review of school plans for the fair value of minorities, the flexibility of working hours to allow the religious practice, the antiracist education programs, trainings on cultural diversity, the linguistic-cultural literacy programs funded with public money, the bilingual education programs, etc.

Beside a positive promotion of multiculturalism there is also a passive promotion, that is rules designed to reject practices considered detrimental to human rights, as precisely the rejection of repudiation or of arranged marriages, the female genital mutilation, the application of Islamic family law, etc.<sup>126</sup>

In this articulated and structured pattern, the constitutional structure and the daily application of the laws are making Canada very different from that country which is dual and polarized on Franco-Anglo-Saxon issues. The feelings of identity and national belonging find, in fact, a translation in the recognition of equal rights independently from ethnicity or other belonging.

In this process we find the “*Canadian style*”, that is able to establish relationships of respect, civic pride, propriety, solidarity and readiness to help other people, creating social contexts of good interchange. These modes are not difficult to find also in cosmopolitan cities as Toronto,

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<sup>126</sup> T. Groppi, *Canada*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006.

maybe the most U.S. city among the Canadian cities of the Confederation.

The 27<sup>th</sup> general Governor of the Confederation, Michaëlle Jean, has become an emblematic example for different reasons: because she is a woman, a black woman, a cultured person, immigrated to Canada from Haiti as political refugee in 1968, fleeing from François Duvalier regime. She took the oath on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and completed her mandate on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

We can say with certainty that multiculturalism is nowadays one of the main characterizations of Canada.

Another very important issue, that is closely related to all things aforesaid, and that many scholars have examined, is the concept of *acknowledgement* of the Other, positive and mutual. Concerning this, the studies conducted by the already mentioned Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor are interesting; he considers first the studies of Franz Fanon<sup>127</sup>, according to which “the main weapon of the colonizers was the imposition of their image of the colonized to the submitted peoples; the latter, to get free, first of all need to purge of such a demeaning image of themselves”<sup>128</sup>. Taylor supports the need to change the image of oneself both of the dominator (that is led to believe he deserves prestige, power, and richness becoming arrogant and vain), and of the dominated (he believes that he deserves less in terms of goods and awards losing self-esteem and feeling inferior). Starting from this, the multiculturalist approach, recognizing that non-enhancing style undermines self-esteem and self-confidence, insists on the need to reverse this process by

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<sup>127</sup> F. Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris, Maspero, 1961.

<sup>128</sup> J. Habermas, C. Taylor, *Multiculturalismo. Lotte per il riconoscimento*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1998, p.53.

adopting “policies of acknowledgement, encouragement, solidarity, and not of selection”<sup>129</sup>

A challenge that is exactly embodied by the general Governor M. Jean, that, in her speech for the installation, underlined the need of solidarity and to approach and to integrate the “two Canadian solitudes”<sup>130</sup>, which are still source of concern for the country:

“The time of the two solitudes is over. It has defined for a too long time our approach to this country. The narrowness of the “every country for itself” has no more space in the contemporary world, that requires we learn to see beyond our wounds and our divisions for the good of the community. Conversely, we have to banish the specter of all the solitudes and make possible a solidarity pact among the Canadian citizens. We have to make good use of our prosperity and influence in all those places where the hope that we represent gives the world an extra-dose of harmony...”.

Apart from being significant about cultural integration, the story of Michaëlle Jean<sup>131</sup> is extremely eloquent as regards social mobility, above all if we compare this reflection to the Italian situation. In the Canadian society, the growing socio-professional mobility of its members

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<sup>129</sup> F. Rigotti, *Le basi del multiculturalismo*, in C. Galli (cur.), *Multiculturalismo. Ideologie e sfide*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006, p.41; B. Henry, A. Pirni, *La via identitaria al multiculturalismo*, “Studi Emigrazione”, 173, 2009.

<sup>130</sup> Reference to John Hugh MacLennan’s novel, *Two Solitudes*, whose title is the symbol of troubles in the relation between French-Canadian and Anglo-Canadian (J.H. MacLennan, *Two Solitudes*, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1945)

<sup>131</sup> A.M. Zampieri Pan, *Ritratto di Michaëlle Jean*, Governatrice generale del Canada, “Il Messaggero”, gennaio 2007.

tends to be possible, on merit and regardless of the ethnic origin and/or family origin.

#### **4.3 The hypothesis of an Italo-Canadian political entity - The Italian participation in the public and political life of Canada**

In the press we have found very often that in the Canadian federal, provincial or municipal elective bodies the presence of members of Italian origin is rare. In fact, apart from the Hon. Carlo Caccia of Toronto, there are no Italian federal representatives, and so unfortunately the Italo-Canadian group is under-represented in public life.<sup>132</sup> Only in 1977, two members of Italian origin were elected as member of the Senate: Mr. P. Zizzuto from Montreal and Mr. L. Bosa from Toronto. This phenomenon of law participation of Italian people in the Canadian public and political life with the passage of time will change, in a spontaneous manner, more than for some planned interventions.

The majority of Italians emigrated in Canada consists of a group of people who came very recently, with a not well defined plan. They saw Canada as America, the country of conquest where they finally made their fortune. These Italians didn't go abroad - as it happened to many anarchists at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, towards South America or France - to seek their own political ideas, their own culture, as well as they were not able to benefit from their academic or professional titles.

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<sup>132</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.60.

They had the fear of running into some regulations they didn't know, sometimes they unconsciously feared the deportation, that would have broken forever their dream of making a fortune, laying on the pavement their families and themselves, after spending all the savings to face the long journey. Politics requires a certain courage, that the Italians have with no doubts, but which could still get them into trouble.

The emigrants, during the 50s, came in large part from an Italian historical experience in which the public life had been polluted or distorted by the dictatorship, followed by a ruinous and sad war.

The problem about the participation of Italians and Italo-Canadian in the public life is probably a false problem; first of all, it is a long-term phenomenon, which coincides with the process of integration of Italians in Canada, and, secondly, it is closely a Canadian problem, where the common good of the state must prevail over any ethnic derivation of the person.

Politics is a mission in which, by the life and the organisation of the parties, the individual tries to provide his service for the common good: he must start from the assumption to be first of all a citizen, and, in Canada, a Canadian who belongs to the state.

Another important problem, that is prejudicial, is the problem of the *naturalization* of Italian immigrants.<sup>133</sup> The political participation, in fact, regards only the Canadian citizens, and not the Italian ones, though, until a few years ago, the owners of a house, of any nationality, could vote in municipal elections.

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<sup>133</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.62.

The Canadian Secretary of State encouraged the immigrants to become naturalized, especially since the 70s. Moreover, the federal Government led to three years, from five, the minimum period necessary to require the naturalization (Law C 20, 13/4/1976).

About this, Canada is one of the most liberal countries in the world, in which there are no ethnic, linguistic distinctions, in the selection of immigrants, even giving shares to the different countries of origin, as it happens in the USA.

The Italo-Canadian National Congress, too, seems to have given priority to this problem, pushing all the associations to a campaign to naturalize Italian immigrants.

For the Italian law, that doesn't allow a dual citizenship, the naturalization involves the waiver of political rights and Italian full civil rights.<sup>134</sup>

For some people, the naturalization is felt as a "repudiation" of their own original citizenship. It could mean neither more nor less a change of residence.

However, the phenomenon of naturalization, considered as the legal crowning of integration, is an irreversible process which will find no obstacles in its implementation. 100 percent of children, who went to Canada when they were minors, having to wait till the age of majority for the Italian or Canadian citizenship, choose the Canadian one. So the problem arises only for those people who, emigrated in adulthood, wish to retain the citizenship of origin. These people often keep the Italian citizenship for a "defensive" attitude. Maybe they don't speak or write well in English and are ashamed to become Canadian citizens

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<sup>134</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.62.

of second level. They prefer hiding behind the fact of being foreign people, hoping to have some extenuations.<sup>135</sup>

The numerous consular activities in the recent years have greatly contributed to the Italian integration in Canada, and therefore also to their naturalization.

The problem of political integration of Italian immigrant people refers to their integration in the Canadian life, then to the participation to the Canadian constitutional system through those social components which lead to political life, that is the parties. Therefore, it doesn't seem necessary for Italian immigrants (the naturalized ones) joining together because of the ethnic derivation, to increase their power of election eligibility.

In December 1976, in a small Conference held in Vancouver, the President of the Italo-Canadian National Congress (Laureano Leone) dwelt on the opportunities for the Italians to become Canadian citizens and, secondly, to direct actively the C.N.I.C., through their associations, in order to have more power to safeguard their interests.

Italian people have, for sure, a millenary history, a religion which is mainly Catholic, as key-elements that favoured their unity, but what keeps them closer together is the fact to be born and emigrated from a country with which they are linked through juridical and definite structures, safeguarded by the international law.

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<sup>135</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.64.

#### **4.4 Law N. 153 of March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1971 – Italian educational and cultural activity abroad**

Italian and Canadian people who participated to the activities promoted by the consular organizations were always interested to the Italian legislative provisions that made start a new era in the international policy of Italy and of the support to its emigrated communities.<sup>136</sup>

The Italian Parliament approved, between the 60s and the 70s, a large allocation in the section referring to educational aid (section 3577). In section 3577 this allocation is indicated in the official Italian state budget as “contributions in money, books and teaching materials to bodies, associations and committees for educational and cultural assistance and for the training of Italian professionals abroad, and for their families”. The whole matter is regulated, in turn, by Law N. 153 of March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1971, which grants to the Minister of Foreign Affairs the right to undertake, directly or indirectly, initiatives abroad designed to:

- a) facilitate the enrollment of Italian children in the public schools of the country (in this case Canada) by creating classes and preparatory courses in the local language;
- b) maintain and increase the knowledge of the Italian language and culture by organizing courses designed for children and adults, both by introducing them into local educational programs and by organizing extra-mural courses;
- c) kindergarten classes, out-of-school assistance (before, during and after classes, school meals, transport,

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<sup>136</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.79.

scholarship) and courses for professional training are also provided.

The first purpose of the legislation is not, however, to substitute the educational regulations of the recipient country with a parallel structure of courses in Italian but, above all, to integrate the young children of Italian immigrants into the local environment and to allow them to learn Italian in case they should return to their country of origin.

However, there are numerous groups abroad in which Italian immigrants have established themselves and, in each of these, the goals and the policy methods of the Italian government vary by necessity.<sup>137</sup>

One of these groups is the group of countries defined as having “non-integrated communities”; among them we find Germany and Switzerland and, to some extent, Belgium and Luxembourg. In these countries Italian immigrants, for different reasons, social and/or personal, face a great deal of friction in the process of integration. The policy is set in order to help young people to learn the local language, and also adults, if they need. In the meanwhile, Italian is taught them, in the case in which they return to their home country. From these countries, the final return for a family happens, on average, every three to four years.

The question is different for some reasons for those countries in which Italian immigrants are in the process of integration (France, the Netherlands, Great Britain) or where there exists a so-called “open integration” (Latin

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<sup>137</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.79.

America); the orientation for those countries in which the Italian community is well “integrated” is clearly different. Among these countries we find Canada, United States and Australia.<sup>138</sup>

The stabilization of immigration in these countries, observed in the small percentage of immigrants who return to Italy, guarantees that the carrying out of cultural, educational activities is not aimed at an eventual re-introduction of the child into the Italian system, nor into the local system, as much as at the maintenance of Italian as a way of improving the child’s identity and social progress. It is known that a person who has two cultures and two languages will have many advantages in the social scale.

The potential for culture and the increase of Italian educational and cultural assistance is bigger in the countries with an “integrated community” than in others. That is, the increase in the number of courses resulted much higher in these countries than in others, to equal ministerial contributions. This is the situation because, while the families can contribute through fees, the local educational authorities often facilitate the expenses of renting classrooms, etc.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1975, there was a new law, the Law N. 327<sup>139</sup>, which was intended to give a legal status to the teachers who serve in Italian educational establishments abroad, giving them a stable employment and income. However, there is still a lot of uncertainty and lack of clarity in the application of the law, with the negative

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<sup>138</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.80.

<sup>139</sup> *ibidem*

result that these uncertainties - in addition to labour union claims and following disputes – stand out in the educational establishments abroad. The same process also occurs in the Italian schools.

Also for technical reasons, for what the application concerns, the educational assistance in countries abroad was not able to fit itself in the expected plans of Law N. 327, that was inspired above all by European environmental conditions.

It is important to mention something about the recent past of the Italian cultural policy abroad, that was held, above all, through the Italian Cultural Institutes and, indirectly, through the Dante Alighieri Committees. This policy aimed to separate, from the institutional point of view, from the policy of assistance to emigration.<sup>140</sup>

The Italian communities abroad, of first, second and third generation, may constitute with no doubts the privileged vehicle of a cultural international policy with a great potential for development. These communities will be a part of the support of a new dimension of the relations between Italy and the country in which they have formed.

In the context of bilateral relations, for Italy the best guarantee is to know that it can rely on an integrated, identified community, which has kept alive the culture and the relationships with the country of origin. And this statement is mutually true for the country of origin.

The fact that, in the last Governments, the Undersecretaries for Foreign Affairs for emigration received from the Minister also the proxy for Cultural Relations, starting together with the General managers at

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<sup>140</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.82.

the administrative level an interpenetration between cultural matters and emigration, is certainly a positive phenomenon.

The Italian Government, thanks to the funds allocated to support the Italian school abroad, created an extensive network of cultural presence abroad that could eventually become larger than that of other countries which have valid but much more expensive organizations (an example is given by the Alliance Française).<sup>141</sup>

The Italian school assistance abroad is mainly developed through the consular offices, whose head, the consul, is also the local Director of Education. The consular activity is governed by international law, by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1963) whose Article N. 5 establishes the duties of a consul.

These duties are specified in detail in the internal legislation of every country to which the Vienna Convention explicitly refers. The Italian legislation, in this case, can be found in Articles 45 and 53 of the D.P.R. N. 18 of January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1967. We must point out that the provisions regulating the activities of a consul presuppose an Italian community: a community of people who have, from a legal point of view, Italian citizenship.

The Canadian citizens of Italian origin, in the sense that they feel attached to their country of origin by spiritual and emotional ties, can be considered compatriots: this means that they are united not by chains of “citizenship” but of “nationality” in the broad sense, that is in other words belonging to the Italian ethnic group, as the Canadian authorities observed when they took a census for

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<sup>141</sup> G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.84.

the different groups. The action of the Consulate and the consul is, then, made available to Italian citizens with full judicial powers, while within the cultural, recreational and commercial initiatives, they promote programs in which everybody can participate, whether they are Canadians of Italian origin or Canadians of other origins.<sup>142</sup>

#### **4.5 The ITACA Project: “Italo-Canadian communities for the internationalization of the districts”**

The ITACA Project “Italo-Canadian communities for the internationalization of the districts” is part of the activities for the training of the Italians who reside abroad, in countries outside the European Union.

The group, formed by the Institute Guglielmo Tagliacarne (IGT), which played the leading role of the initiative, by the Institute of International Affairs and by ELFA Spa has developed a project which had as partners the Veneto Region, the Campania Region, Unioncamere Veneto, the Chamber of Commerce of Treviso, the Club of the Districts, the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Montreal–Quebec in Canada, the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Vancouver-Edmonton-Calgary.<sup>143</sup>

The main objective of ITACA was to give new prominence to Italian people resident in Canada and to all their descendants, transforming them into intermediaries of business and relation between the Canadian and Italian

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<sup>142</sup>G. Germano, *Gli Italiani del Canada occidentale. Come nasce un centro comunitario = The Italians of Western Canada. How a community centre is born*, Giunti editore, 1978, p.84.

<sup>143</sup> Istituto Affari Internazionali - Documenti IAI – Progetto ITACA. *Collettività italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti. Rapporto finale*, p.6.

territorial systems/districts. At a time like the present one, in which the competition coming from the emerging regions becomes increasingly fierce, the identification of new useful ways through which mastered the economic relations is essential for a country as Italy, that has, moreover, difficulties in retaining its market shares. In this perspective there is the need and will to develop a network of institutions and companies that, participating with a common fund of knowledge and valour, can develop strong economic and commercial relations.

The network formed by ITACA led to the establishment of relations between the traders of the two countries, opening prospects of business which may go beyond the process. But, in order to develop lasting relations between the two realities, the project needed to rethink the idea of “Italianness” (to be Italian) abroad, abandoning the old view of the Italians abroad as defenders of customs and traditions. The young descendants of the Italian immigrants, perfectly integrated in the Canadian reality, were the first to perceive as segregational the reference to a folkloric way of being Italian. Because of their receptivity to the new trends, the young Italo-Canadian were chosen as central players in the ITACA project, that put them in a process of professional qualification: through a training the knowledge about the Italy System was reported to them, together with other interpersonal and managerial skills useful to the conduct of intermediations between the Italian and Canadian business systems.

Even the world of Italian associations in Canada was involved. Taking advantage from the good practices and model of these realities, it is possible to implement a revitalization of the entire association system, allowing it

to establish new ties with Italy and to involve more the new generations.

In order to develop an effective action in the long term, some Advisory Boards of the ITACA project were formed in Quebec as in British Columbia; these groups consist of senior representatives of the Italo-Canadian institutional and business world responsible for setting new strategies of network and of adaptation to the new context of the bilateral relations.<sup>144</sup>

The ITACA Project was divided along three operating guidelines:

- 1) Networking;
- 2) Training;
- 3) Associative Empowerment.<sup>145</sup>

The activity of networking had as main target to give life to a network of entrepreneurial and institutional actors, chosen for the revival and strengthening of the economic relations between the Italian and Canadian economic systems. Consistent with this approach, the networking has developed starting from an analysis of the desk on the compatibility and the complementarity between the economic systems, according to the following process:

- preparatory phase of desk analysis (analysis of potential complementarity among sectors): in this phase the actors proceed to a list of sectors which could be potentially involved in the networking. For this purpose, we focus above all on the results achieved by Veneto Region and Campania Region, in their process of internalization towards Canada.

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<sup>144</sup> Istituto Affari Internazionali - Documenti IAI – Progetto ITACA. Collettività italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti. Rapporto finale, p.7.

<sup>145</sup> *ibidem*, p.21.

- phase of reconnaissance on the field (realization of sector choices and pre-selection of important stakeholders): the practical implementation of networking resulted in a definition of projects about specific sectors and defined businesses. According to Campania, there is a problem affecting the ability of the institutional system to support, in a difficult socio-political moment for the region, the networking initiatives. The networking realized by Veneto Region was more significant; it concerned the identification/selection/engagement of the companies and other stakeholders, and the definition of the targets of the networking actions; development of pilot projects of networking; connection with the training and associative empowerment activities; realization of final events.

- creation of an institutional pilot group, for the development of strategic and long term initiatives.<sup>146</sup>

The path of networking which was initiated between Veneto and the two Canadian provinces involved (Quebec and British Columbia) must be considered a real good practice for the organizational modes and the results obtained. The districts of the rubber-plastic and of the green building were selected as beneficiaries of the institutional, and also corporate, networking.

The training involved a group of Italo-Canadian young people, with Italian citizenship, who followed a series of lessons/exercises at the offices of the Italian Chambers of Commerce of Montreal and Vancouver. The course, which was entitled “How to do business with”, was divided into teaching modules about the following areas: the problems of economy and international trade; the Italian economic

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<sup>146</sup>Istituto Affari Internazionali - Documenti IAI – Progetto ITACA. Collettività italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti. Rapporto finale, p.21.

and productive institutional system; communication methodologies; management skills; planning activities; Italian language (for business).

At the end of the path, the participants did a final exam to verify the correct understanding of the key-contents. After the exam, they did the work for the Project, as final module. This activity allowed the participants to put into practice some key-contents learnt during the course.<sup>147</sup>

To give greater effect to the Project Work activities of the participants, the ITACA team decided to insert a Study Tour in Italy for some participants selected in Montreal and Vancouver. During the Study Tour, the participants could meet in person the companies of Veneto and the corporate referents interested in the activities of internationalization.

In parallel to networking and training, there is the “associative empowerment”, that is a set of activities for the revitalization of Italian associations abroad and their revival in the international circuit. The associations contributed to the safeguard of Italian identity for the emigrants, but incapable of updating their activities to the contemporary themes.

It is difficult to stimulate the interest of the youngest generations about themes and activities for the development of traditional relations; in fact, the Italo-Canadian association system appears for some aspects “folded on itself”, as it is shown by some indicators: high average age of members; lack of dynamism; fragile relations with contemporary Italy.

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<sup>147</sup> Istituto Affari Internazionali - Documenti IAI – Progetto ITACA. Collettività italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti. Rapporto finale, p.22.

The task force of ITACA Project has relied on those associations that could develop significant actions and are bearer of good practices, as the CIBPA (Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association) and the main associations of Veneto and Campania. These subjects were involved in the networking process, then in the training, and have carried out supervision to the project activities of the young participants. In this way, the associative world was inserted in the network of ITACA Project, with a medium-long term goal of increasing the involvement to the other associations, which are interested in it.<sup>148</sup>

Synthesizing, the ITACA experience has produced a set of important results and high impact on the territories and on the network of the involved actors:

- a group of young Italo-Canadian strongly motivated to act as “task force” in the processes of matching between the two business communities (the Italian one and the Canadian one);
- a large group of companies of the districts of Regione Veneto that has benefited from the accompanying process and has started or planned its own process of internationalization with Canada;
- the initiation of the sharing-process of know-how, exchange of experiences and building of common design procedures among key-actors of the territories which are involved in the target-sectors of ITACA, that is rubber plastic or green building;
- a more conscious and widespread sensitivity or attention in the Italo-Canadian association system (both regional and for the business community), the need to place in a

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<sup>148</sup> Istituto Affari Internazionali - Documenti IAI – Progetto ITACA. Collettività italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti. Rapporto finale, p.23.

different way the activities and services and to focus on the young component (for example, with the start of “junior clubs” and youth sections);

- a new unusual relation between the association system of the business community (above all Chambers of Commerce) and regional association system (formalized in memoranda of understanding and with the establishment of mixed working groups).<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Istituto Affari Internazionali - Documenti IAI – Progetto ITACA. Collettività italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti. Rapporto finale, p.25.



## Conclusion

Through this dissertation I wanted to highlight a topic that, in my opinion, could affect a large part of the Italians. The Italian emigration abroad, in Canada as well as in Australia, Latin America, or in other European countries, represented a chapter of the Italian history that we could define “painful” if we think about the reasons that pushed our ancestors to leave the homeland.

The Italian people has a history made of travels, of departures and arrivals, that in most of the times were forced by negative factors: the war, the poverty, the inability to survive, etc... For this reason, I chose as title the expression “Escape from Italy”, because it gives the idea of escaping from something difficult, which is no longer tolerable.

In the case of Italians emigrated to Canada, having previously tried to settle in the big cities of the USA, the push factor was mainly the precariousness of the life in Italy. The war had caused destruction, many people had nothing to survive with, the premises for a reconstruction, also in economic terms, were not good. The most obvious solution for the majority of Italians was packing and leaving.

This work analyses the main phases of the Italian immigration in Canada starting from the Unification of Italy, but I would like dwelling on the Second postwar period when there was an unprecedented migratory boom. Since 1945 the departures were massive, Italian people felt the weight of not one but two World Wars and there was the desire to start a new life but in many opted to do it elsewhere.

Canada, following the example of the USA, was growing as emerging economy and its labour market was greatly expanding.

Once in Canada, the Italian emigrants of the Second postwar period adapted to the humblest jobs and their only strength was the moral force. In order to feel less the separation from their families, wives, from their homeland, Italian people gathered in groups up to establish, during the years, some associations which operated starting from the 70s. Some of these associations still exist and continue to play an essential role for the Italian community in Canada.

The situation of the last Italian migratory phases is, for certain aspects, similar to the postwar phase, but the figures change: in the migratory period which began in the 90s, a new generation of Italians arrived in Canada. Compared to the past, the Italians' professional profiles have changed and the newcomers covered the most significant job positions (technicians, entrepreneurs, specialized workers, researchers).

Furthermore, in the last decade, Canada has become the destination of a migration characterized by Italian people with high academic and working skills, with a significant cultural background and several experiences abroad.

Nowadays Canada has become one of the destinations for the youngest Italian generations. Young people leave with the hope of finding fortune, as well as their grandparents or relatives did sixty years ago. The causes, the economic context and the needs are different, because of the progress, the modernization, the changes of trends, the globalization but, in the end, history is repeated again.

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- ❖ [www.ottawakiosk.com/map\\_preston.html](http://www.ottawakiosk.com/map_preston.html)
- ❖ [www.ottawastanthy.com/about\\_us.html](http://www.ottawastanthy.com/about_us.html)
- ❖ [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com)

## **Abstract**

La mia tesi di laurea si intitola “Escape from Italy. The Italian immigration experience in Canada from the Unification of Italy to the present day”.

L'intento di questo lavoro è quello di analizzare gli aspetti storici, socio-culturali e politici che hanno caratterizzato una delle principali migrazioni nella storia italiana: l'emigrazione degli Italiani in Canada, e la conseguente immigrazione nel Paese ospitante.

Ho scelto di trattare questo argomento in seguito alla mia esperienza di stage e volontariato presso il Centro Culturale Italiano a Vancouver (British Columbia), durante la mia permanenza tra i mesi di marzo e luglio 2011.

Il Capitolo 1 consiste in un'introduzione storica su quelle che sono state le fasi dell'immigrazione italiana in Canada. Il primo flusso migratorio include tutti gli Italiani che emigrarono oltreoceano a partire dall'Unità d'Italia fino alla Seconda Guerra Mondiale. In questa fase, la corrente fascista ebbe un ruolo politico e sociale molto forte all'interno delle comunità Italo-Canadesi, specialmente nelle province del Quebec e dell'Ontario, dove si stabilirono i primi pionieri.

Negli anni subito dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, iniziò il secondo periodo di immigrazione italiana in Canada; questa è la fase del “boom migratorio”, in cui gli emigranti Italiani partirono numerosissimi, e per ragioni diverse: ad esempio, gli accordi bilaterali tra Canada ed Italia, che annullarono le precedenti politiche restrittive; la grande espansione del mercato del lavoro canadese; le politiche del Governo canadese con il nuovo strumento della cosiddetta “sponsorizzazione”, etc... Durante la terza fase di immigrazione italiana in Canada, che va all'incirca dagli anni '90 fino ai giorni nostri, vediamo l'arrivo di una nuova generazione di Italiani che si differenzia dalle prime due ondate migratorie poiché più limitata, e caratterizzata da nuove tendenze.

Nel Capitolo 2, invece, vengono descritti i primi siti italiani in Canada: Toronto, Ottawa e Montreal.

Toronto, situata nella provincia dell'Ontario, può essere considerata una delle più grandi metropoli italiane all'estero. Qui si iniziano a vedere i primi insediamenti italiani dalla seconda metà del XIX secolo, ma una presenza significativa si può notare più tardi, verso la fine del XIX secolo e i primi anni del XX. La scelta per

molti Italiani fu Toronto, come anche Montreal, poiché in queste due città c'erano degli intermediari delle migrazioni a catena, detti *padroni*, che erano agenti italiani che lavoravano a nome del Governo canadese e delle aziende. Il gruppo più numeroso di Italiani arrivò a Toronto dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale. L'area in cui gli Italiani si stabilirono inizialmente era nel cuore della città: il distretto originario era parte di un distretto fatto apposta per gli stranieri, noto come il "Ward". Lo sviluppo di un ambiente urbano nel Ward dipese da tre fattori: 1) a dispetto del facile utilizzo dell'aggettivo "non specializzato", la maggior parte degli immigranti che si stabilirono a Toronto conosceva bene un mestiere; 2) la natura stagionale del lavoro all'aperto in Canada e l'iniziativa commerciale di molti immigrati indusse ad una costante ricerca di opportunità in città per i difficili periodi di disoccupazione; 3) il fattore più importante è questo: la domanda di lavoro non qualificato passò silenziosamente dalla campagna alla città. Tra la fine del XIX secolo e l'inizio del XX, inizialmente a Toronto e più tardi in altre grandi città, una nuova figura, quella del *navvy*, si affermò. Il *navvy* era un operaio che lavorava per la costruzione e le opere di scavo, soprattutto per le ferrovie, i ponti e la costruzione di strade.

L'altra grande città dove gli Italiani si stabilirono fu Montreal. Il fattore che attraeva maggiormente gli stranieri era la varietà di strutture essenziali per l'assistenza all'industria dei trasporti: il porto, le stazioni ferroviarie, etc...

Nella città di Ottawa la Little Italy, situata su Preston Street, raggiunse grande fama grazie ai suoi annuali eventi, ma soprattutto per aver dato prestigio a dei personaggi interessanti della comunità italiana.

Il mantenimento dell'identità italiana da parte degli immigrati fu possibile anche grazie alla presenza ed al ruolo dei media. Molti giornali Italo-Canadesi consistevano nella ristampa di giornali italiani con l'aggiunta di piccole notizie locali. Tra i media che sono ancora attivi, troviamo *Radio Chin*, una radio multietnica che trasmette in più di 30 lingue, ma che ha come fondatore un personaggio italiano, Johnny Lombardi. Il *Corriere Canadese*, invece, è un giornale fondato nel 1954, che esce con *La Repubblica*. Esso viene distribuito in Ontario e Quebec, ma c'è il progetto di estenderne la distribuzione anche in altre parti del Canada.

I media hanno avuto, ed ancora oggi hanno un ruolo importante per la diffusione ed il supporto della lingua italiana in Canada, ma anche negli altri Paesi di immigrazione: Australia, USA, Latin America.

Un altro aspetto dell'immigrazione italiana in Canada, che ho voluto approfondire poiché molto importante dal punto di vista sociale, è il ruolo delle donne durante le fasi migratorie. Se per le donne più giovani, al loro arrivo in Canada, le opportunità lavorative erano molteplici, per le donne già sposate la situazione era diversa: dovevano rimanere a casa, perché i loro uomini erano impegnati a lavorare per guadagnarsi la paga. Le donne italiane si adoperarono per trovare un mezzo di guadagno alternativo, e così si diffuse il *sistema del bordo*. Alcune di esse davano vitto e alloggio a quegli Italiani che erano lì per cercare lavoro, ma che non avevano una famiglia. Questo sistema era un'ottima risorsa economica, anche se aveva comunque dei lati negativi: le donne spesso erano forzate dai loro uomini a svolgere tale compito, che le costringeva a sopportare la servitù nelle peggiori condizioni, e che purtroppo molto spesso le vedeva vittime di violenze sessuali tra le mura domestiche. D'altro canto il sistema del bordo rappresentava una sistemazione economica conveniente ed un supporto psicologico per tutti quegli uomini single che giunsero in Canada.

Nel Capitolo 3 viene trattato l'argomento dell'integrazione degli Italiani nel Canada Occidentale, con particolare attenzione alla città di Vancouver ed alla regione della British Columbia.

I primi Italiani che si stabilirono in British Columbia, a partire dagli anni '50 del XIX secolo, arrivarono assieme ai cercatori d'oro di quel periodo. L'integrazione dei gruppi di Italiani in British Columbia fu resa più semplice e più rapida grazie all'aiuto di un'importante istituzione: la Chiesa Cattolica. Infatti, l'assistenza religiosa agli Italiani che inizialmente arrivarono in questo nuovo Paese fu fondamentale. Durante il boom migratorio le comunità parrocchiali italiane in British Columbia si diffusero rapidamente e diventarono un punto di riferimento per molte famiglie italiane, ma soprattutto per gli uomini single che arrivavano da soli in un Paese così lontano dalla loro patria.

Uno degli aspetti tipici che caratterizzano la vita degli immigrati italiani nel Canada Occidentale è il cosiddetto "fenomeno associativo", cioè l'iniziativa presa da molti immigrati di raccogliersi in gruppi o associazioni, con interessi ed obiettivi comuni. Per esempio dobbiamo citare le Società di Mutuo Soccorso, le più vecchie associazioni italiane all'estero che hanno come scopo l'assistenza materiale, medica e morale.

Le società italiane erano solitamente chiamate Logge ed erano provviste di uno statuto molto lungo e dettagliato. Tra le società italiane più famose, ricordiamo anche le Case d'Italia.

Il fenomeno di diffusione e creazione di tutte queste società fu possibile specialmente nei centri maggiori, come Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal ed Ottawa.

Per le comunità italiane in Canada anche la fondazione del COASCIT fu rilevante. Il COASCIT è il Comitato per le attività culturali e scolastiche e fu creato negli anni '70. Questa istituzione voleva mantenere la sua caratteristica italiana e consolare, senza dover essere registrato con uno status giuridico negli uffici canadesi. Esso ha numerosi compiti ed obiettivi, tra i quali il coordinamento delle attività consolari di assistenza scolastica, la promozione di iniziative folcloristiche e culturali nelle comunità italiane, una maggiore cooperazione con le scuole canadesi e le autorità culturali, etc...

Il CAIV (Comitato per la promozione ed organizzazione delle attività italiane nel distretto di Vancouver), invece, è un ente nato nel 1974, che operava specificatamente. Tra le varie attività che esso promuoveva, il progetto per la costruzione del Centro Ricreativo e Culturale a Vancouver aveva priorità su tutto.

La sua costruzione fu resa possibile grazie al contributo dell'Italian Folk Society della British Columbia, una federazione composta da più di 50 associazioni, e gruppi italiani ed italo-canadesi. Per molti anni l'idea del Centro fu supportata dalla comunità, ma ciò che mancava era una vera organizzazione che mettesse in collegamento i vari gruppi. Il Governo canadese assieme al Governo italiano conclusero che il Centro avrebbe potuto incontrare tutti i bisogni sociali primari, come la cura per le persone anziane, attività ricreative, scolastiche e sociali per ragazzi ed adolescenti, l'organizzazione di attività per il tempo libero.

In questo paragrafo troverete un collegamento tra la storia del Centro e la mia esperienza personale a Vancouver e, soprattutto, l'attività di collaborazione con l'Italian Cultural Centre Society.

Nel Capitolo 4, l'argomento trattato è la cooperazione tra Canada ed Italia, con particolare attenzione alle relazioni politiche e culturali che collegano le due nazioni. In questa sezione troverete l'approfondimento di un aspetto molto rilevante della politica e della cultura canadesi: il multiculturalismo.

Un'importante tappa della politica del multiculturalismo in Canada è stata la *Carta canadese dei diritti e delle libertà* (1982), contenuta nel Constitution Act del 17

aprile 1982, una legge che ha come obiettivo quello di proteggere il cittadino dall'arbitrio dello Stato e le minoranze dall'arbitrio delle maggioranze parlamentari. Grazie a tale atto, il Canada finalmente acquisì piena sovranità e diventò indipendente dalla Gran Bretagna. Il personaggio che più di tutti rese possibile questo fu il Primo Ministro *Pierre Elliott Trudeau* (1969-79; 1980-84) del Partito Liberale canadese. Grazie a Trudeau, il Canada si aprì al multiculturalismo, alla diversità, alla molteplicità.

Altri due fondamentali attori della storia canadese furono i premier del Quebec, Jean Lesage del Partito Liberale (1960-66) e René Lévesque del Partito del Quebec (1976-85).

Lesage è famoso per essere stato il promotore della cosiddetta "révolution tranquille" (rivoluzione tranquilla), con la quale furono avviate importanti riforme, mentre Lévesque fu una figura rilevante nella rivoluzione che avrebbe condotto ad una maggiore autonomia in Quebec, fino alla ratifica della sua indipendenza.

Per concludere tutte queste tappe della storia canadese, nel 1988 fu approvato il *Multiculturalism Act*.

L'argomento che verrà poi trattato è la partecipazione degli italiani alla vita pubblica e politica del Canada, ed il conseguente problema della *naturalizzazione* degli immigrati italiani. Infatti la partecipazione politica riguarda solo i cittadini canadesi sebbene, fino a pochi anni fa, chi possedeva una casa ad esempio, di qualunque nazionalità egli fosse, poteva votare alle elezioni municipali. D'altro canto, per alcuni, la naturalizzazione viene vista come un "ripudio" della propria cittadinanza. Per gli immigrati italiani il problema dell'integrazione politica si riferisce, prima di tutto, al loro inserimento nella società canadese, e poi alla partecipazione al sistema costituzionale canadese. Per quanto riguarda altri temi, come ad esempio le attività scolastiche e culturali italiane, vi è una legge che è stata stabilita nel 1971, la Legge N. 153 del 3 marzo 1971. Questa legge garantisce al Ministero degli Affari Esteri il diritto di intraprendere, direttamente o non, iniziative all'estero volte a: 1) facilitare l'iscrizione di ragazzi italiani nelle scuole pubbliche del Paese, creando classi e corsi nella lingua locale; 2) mantenere ed incrementare la conoscenza della lingua italiana e della cultura, organizzando corsi per bambini ed adulti; 3) sono inoltre forniti: classi dell'asilo per i bambini, assistenza extra-scolastica e corsi preparatori professionali.

L'ultimo approfondimento per quanto riguarda le relazioni che legano i due Stati, Canada ed Italia, è quello relativo al Progetto ITACA (comunità italo-canadesi per l'internazionalizzazione dei distretti). Questo Progetto è parte delle attività per la formazione degli italiani che risiedono all'estero, in Stati non europei. Il suo obiettivo primario era quello di dare nuova prominenza agli italiani residenti in Canada ed ai loro discendenti, trasformandoli in intermediari per il business e la relazione tra i sistemi/distretti territoriali canadesi ed italiani.

Il Progetto ITACA è stato suddiviso lungo tre linee-guida operative: 1) Retizzazione; 2) Formazione; 3) Empowerment Associativo.

Nel capitolo finale queste tre fasi verranno spiegate nel dettaglio.