

# Italian immigration to Kelowna and its lasting legacy

By Erik Christiansen

## *Introduction*

The harrowing pilgrimages made by émigrés to North America are nothing short of astonishing. The decision to leave their communities, families, and friends for a new beginning on a distant continent is hard to appreciate. Upon their arrival, immigrants who were headed to Canada's West often had little to no knowledge of the English language. They had to travel "across the inhospitable lands with its harsh climate most of the year, by primitive transportation [that] was arduous and slow."<sup>1</sup> British Columbia's vast territory would have seemed unimaginable compared to Italy, particularly for those Italians who experienced the terrain by rail.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, Italy was engulfed in political and social chaos. Events such as Italy's unification between 1815 and 1870, their conflict with Turkey from 1911 to 1912, and the rise of fascism in 1919 led to a change in fortune for many Italians. Twenty years of class violence between the rich landowners and poor peasants only aggravated the social conflict.<sup>3</sup> Eager to escape the turmoil, many Italians came to Canada during the late 1880s through to the 1920s and "in several waves of immigration, they arrived to build the province as agricultural farmers, early miners, brick masons, industrial workers, community founders, industrious citizens and community leaders." The majority of Italians came through Ellis Island from 1892 to 1925.<sup>4</sup>

Though most of the scholarship focuses on Italian immigration to Ontario and Quebec, their immigration to Canada's West is less thoroughly documented. Italians settled in many of British Columbia's communities such as Vancouver, Trail, Rossland, Revelstoke, Kamloops, Vernon, Kelowna, Kitimat, Powell River, Nanaimo, Duncan, and Port Alberni.<sup>5</sup> These regions, and British Columbia in general, were undergoing immense transformation during the turn of the century. The province was becoming a resource-based center that brought employment in mining, railway construction, and smelting. This influx of capital investment also facilitated the growth of these communities into larger centers, where various farms and businesses flourished. The industries and employment partly defined "both the ethnic and national identities of Italians in this first era of settlement."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DeVito, F.E., "The Italians in Trail, B.C.," April 18, 1986, Italian Community in Trail file, Trail Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia K. Wood, *Nationalism from the Margins: Italians in Alberta and British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Wood, *Nationalism*, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Brenda Shaw, "The History of the Italian Families in Kelowna B.C.," Kelowna Museum and archives, 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Wood, *Nationalism*, 4, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 6-7.

## *Italian Immigration to Kelowna and the Central Okanagan*

The central Okanagan's Italian population was probably not as widespread as communities in the West Kootenays or Columbia Mountain Region. Regardless, the Italian immigrants who called this part of the Okanagan home were often successful entrepreneurs, made large contributions to infrastructure projects such as the Kettle Valley Railway (KVR), and played a pivotal role in developing the region's agricultural sector – including the establishment of the wineries. Unlike other regions of British Columbia where Italian immigrants tended to reside in specific areas of town, those who came to the Kelowna area were more scattered. Despite this, these Italians displayed the same level of community through various social events.

The Okanagan was a haven for many Italian families who aspired to a better life, and the Central Okanagan represented an opportunity. In many respects, Italy was tumultuous compared to Canada and many of the Italian families who immigrated might have been stuck in the lower classes of Italian society had they remained in their home country. In Italy, lower-class Italians were often farmers who worked under a feudal system and lived a subsistence lifestyle. The more fortunate families were able to grow enough crops to keep them alive through the winter months.<sup>7</sup> Even the most basic commodities were cherished. When families had long journeys to make, they packed only the bare necessities. Even shoes were commonly shared among family members and priority was given to those who needed to walk to nearby towns.<sup>8</sup> High levels of education were rare, and even a grade six education was considered an achievement. Many Italians were persuaded by their friends and family to immigrate to Kelowna – being told that “in Canada, money was growing on trees.”<sup>9</sup> More often than not, Italians were sponsored by their Italian-Canadian contacts to move abroad. Immigrants made their way to Kelowna via boat from Italy to Ellis Island, New York, followed by a long train ride to Canada. These immigrants would temporarily live with their host families until they were employed and self-sufficient.

The construction of the Kettle Valley Railway was also a draw for immigrants to the region. The project employed many newly landed immigrants (not just Italian), despite the difficult working conditions. The discovery of various ores in British Columbia's Kootenay region by American prospectors resulted in the establishment of several mining communities. These prospectors realized that the easiest way to transport ore was by using existing rail lines connected to Spokane, Washington. To avoid economic annexation by the United States, it became obvious that a 'Kootenay-to-coast' rail line would be required to protect the province's sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> Kelowna resident Caesar Turri, in a 2010 interview, described the long treks his father would make from the KVR camp back home every weekend (typically on a Saturday afternoon) only to return to work the following day.<sup>11</sup> Hiring unskilled Italian workers (who often came from the Naples region) was preferable, as building contractors perceived Italians as being

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<sup>7</sup> Caesar Turri (Kelowna resident), interview by the author, July 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Maurice Williams, *Myra's Men: Building the Kettle Valley Railway, Myra Canyon to Penticton* (Kelowna: Myra Canyon Trestle Restoration Society, 2008), 18.

<sup>11</sup> Turri, interview.

less likely to integrate into the broader community and less likely to unionize. Recruiting practitioners, known as *Padrones*, sought out Italian workers and were in charge of organizing their transportation, correspondence, sending wages home, locating native cuisine, guaranteeing them work, and carrying out disciplinary measures.<sup>12</sup> Like other immigrant groups, Italians who worked on the KVR project encountered racism. Canadian workers did not refer to Italians as ‘white,’ as they reserved that privilege for Americans, British, Swedes, and Germans. To sustain themselves, the Italian diet consisted mainly of bread and wild game.<sup>13</sup> Dangerous accidents occurred regularly on the KVR. According to one account, an accidental explosion of dynamite resulted in the death of six Italian men.<sup>14</sup> Despite these dangers, working on the KVR was a positive experience for some Italians. Jack Buttici, who landed in Kelowna during the turn of the century, acquired a position with the KVR at Hope, and later worked at the Osprey Lake Princeton Section. Despite being the youngest member of the crew, he had the honour of driving the last spike to commemorate the line’s completion at the connection point between Midway and Princeton.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Casorso Family*

The British Columbia directories show that Italian immigration might have been sparser – or at least not as well documented – until the 1920s. During the period from the 1920s to the 1930s, there is a greater number of Italian family members listed. For example, in the 1922 directory, there are ten listings about the Casorso family and their occupations, as well as a listing for the Casorso Bros family store.<sup>16</sup>

The Casorso family was arguably the most recognized Italian family to settle in Kelowna during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Giovanni (or ‘John’) Casorso came from the Oblate order of Italy. According to author Lynn Bowen, the Casorsos had been landowners near Alessandria in Piedmont at some point in their family’s long history. However, “several centuries worth of disasters – poor crops, rising costs, political upheaval, droughts, loss of markets – had left the family with nothing but its pride and the eleven-room house in which [Giovanni] was born.”<sup>17</sup> Giovanni was 22 years old in 1870, during the creation of Italy’s first parliament. By 1880, he was married with two children and was registered as a horse driver, but he had also taken an apprenticeship as a miller. Following Italy’s unification was a series of political upheavals in Europe that convinced many European immigrants to flee to North America. In 1882, with the birth of his third child, Giovanni left for New York by boat and then made his way to British

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<sup>12</sup> Williams, *Myra’s Men*, 76.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 106; Turri, interview.

<sup>15</sup> Win Shilvok, “Jack and Lily and the last spike,” *Kelowna Capital News*, July 4, 1984, Jack and Lily Buttici folder, biographical records, reference library, Kelowna Public Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Wrigley’s British Columbia Directories, 1922, reference library, Kelowna Public Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Lynne Bowen, *Whoever Gives Us Bread: The Story of Italians in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011), 77.

Columbia. He spoke almost no English when he arrived in Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island, with his friend Paolo Guaschetti.<sup>18</sup> At that time, only back-breaking logging jobs were available. In 1883, Giovanni met Jean-Charles-Jean-Baptiste-Félix Pandosy (or ‘Father Pandosy’) in New Westminster. Father Pandosy led the Oblates’ Okanagan Mission and functioned to educate the native population and spread Christianity, and it was he who offered Giovanni and Paolo jobs.<sup>19</sup> The two Italians admired father Pandosy’s mission, and they agreed to work for him for 6 years for \$15 a month, on the condition that the mission would help them build homesteads.<sup>20</sup> Giovanni’s wife Rosa and his three children later arrived in 1884.<sup>21</sup> During his employment with the mission, Giovanni learned valuable skills, including native interaction, equipment packing, rudimentary food preparation, and navigation.<sup>22</sup>

There is some historical debate regarding Paolo Guaschetti’s true given name. According to the Casorso family history, the name Paolo is based on family recollection, though author Victor Casorso notes that historical documents from this period refer to Gauschetti as ‘AJ’.<sup>23</sup> The existence of an AJ or ‘Antonio’ Gauschetti is confirmed by newspaper and directory sources from this period.<sup>24</sup> These documents suggest an Antonio Gauschetti attended elementary school in Victoria in 1885 and later lived in Kelowna in 1890. However, the 1885 British Columbia directory lists a miner named ‘Chas’ Gauschetti, living in the Nanaimo region, and pre-emption records from the 1902 British Columbia Gazette refer to a ‘C, Gauschetti.’<sup>25</sup> It is likely that a Carlo Gauschetti (aka ‘Chas’ or ‘Charles,’ and phonetically similar to ‘Paolo’) arrived in Nanaimo with Giovanni Casorso in 1882 and later filed a pre-emption next to Casorso in Kelowna. It was Carlo’s son Angelo (or ‘AJ’) that attended school in Victoria and later joined his father and Giovanni in Kelowna.

Giovanni’s wife, Rosa Casorso, is arguably one of the more influential Italian women in Kelowna’s history. Rosa was often referred to as a kind and energetic person, an active

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<sup>18</sup> Victor Casorso, *The Casorso Story: A Century of Social History in the Okanagan Valley* (Okanagan Falls: Rima Books, 1983): 1-5.

<sup>19</sup> “Third Casorso House,” City of Kelowna, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://www.kelowna.ca/our-community/arts-culture-heritage/heritage/heritage-register/third-casorso-house>.

<sup>20</sup> Casorso, *The Casorso Story*, 16-17.

<sup>21</sup> “Third Casorso House,” City of Kelowna.

<sup>22</sup> Casorso, *The Casorso Story*, 17-49.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>24</sup> “St. Louis College,” *The British Columbian*, 1885, British Columbia Historical Newspapers, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/bcnewspapers/dbc/items/1.0346067#p2z-3r0f:Guaschetti>, accessed May 18, 2020; *Henderson’s British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory*, 1890, British Columbia City Directories, [https://bccd.vpl.ca/index.php/browse/title/1890/Henderson%27s\\_BC\\_Gazetteer\\_and\\_Directory](https://bccd.vpl.ca/index.php/browse/title/1890/Henderson%27s_BC_Gazetteer_and_Directory), accessed May 18, 2020; *Williams’ Illustrated Official British Columbia Directory*, Part 1, 1892, British Columbia City Directories, [https://bccd.vpl.ca/index.php/browse/title/1892/Williams%27\\_Illustrated\\_Official\\_BC\\_Directory\\_Part\\_2](https://bccd.vpl.ca/index.php/browse/title/1892/Williams%27_Illustrated_Official_BC_Directory_Part_2), accessed May 18, 2020. While the *British Columbian* article clearly shows Antonio was a student in Victoria in 1885, he is listed as a farmer in Okanagan Mission/Spallumcheen region in the 1890 and 1892 BC directories.

<sup>25</sup> *British Columbia Directory*, 1884-1885, British Columbia City Directories, [https://bccd.vpl.ca/index.php/browse/title/1884-1885/British\\_Columbia\\_Directory](https://bccd.vpl.ca/index.php/browse/title/1884-1885/British_Columbia_Directory), accessed May 18, 2020; *British Columbia Gazette*, October 2, 1902, Kelowna Public Archives.

community leader, and someone who would never turn away a traveller in need, especially those who were hungry or sick.<sup>26</sup> Like many Italian men, she was an experienced horse handler and could doctor animals and people which earned her respect from her peers. She had considerable experience setting bones, cleaning infections, curing fevers, and sewing wounds. Like most Italian women, she lived to take care of her family, making clothes from animal skins and raw wool. She never wasted anything that could be put to practical use.<sup>27</sup>

Rosa Casorso's journey to reunite with her husband was nothing short of breathtaking. Before her voyage, Giovanni had sent Rosa funds – a parcel of wrapped gold – to pay for her travel to Canada.<sup>28</sup> Giovanni had no idea if the money had reached Rosa until she arrived in Kelowna in October 1884 by stagecoach. Rosa arrived in San Francisco six-weeks after receiving the package. She did not speak a word of English and though she tried desperately to seek out those who spoke her native tongue, her attempts seemed futile. Luckily, she noticed some people unloading a bell from a nearby ship; the bell was addressed to the 'Okanagan Mission.' She was instructed to follow that bell and she never took her eyes off it until she reached her destination. Travelling with three children – Caroline, Tony, and Charles – she was only able to take essential goods. One of those goods was a present for Giovanni – a bottle of fine wine from the family's winery in Italy.<sup>29</sup>

Life at the Okanagan Mission had no resemblance to present-day Kelowna. The Casorsos lived a spartan existence in a small cottage home. They ate with wooden plates and utensils, and they had hand-sewn mattresses made from straw and animal skins.<sup>30</sup> Giovanni was honest with his wife, explaining that life in Canada would be challenging. He told her that goods would have to be handmade, resources would have to be gathered by hand, and that there would be few other Italian settlers in the Valley. He explained to Rosa that only the fittest would survive. Yet, Rosa was fearless. She helped support the family by obtaining a job with the Mission, which paid \$7.50 a month.<sup>31</sup> Despite the rudimentary supplies she had to work with, Rosa often prepared meals three times a day, with cast iron for groups of twenty or more, and she did all the cleanup. She and her children regularly dug for roots and gathered berries for cooking. The Italian men helped by bringing water and gathering firewood.<sup>32</sup> Rosa Casorso died in 1921.<sup>33</sup>

By the time of Giovanni's death in 1932, the family had accumulated a fair amount of wealth and land. They had thousands of acres of agricultural land stretching from Vernon to Oliver, and thousands more for grazing animals. Perhaps the best-known story about the

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<sup>26</sup> "Rosa Casorso," date unknown, John and Family Casorso folder, biographical files, reference library, Kelowna Public Archives, 1

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 1; Casorso, *The Casorso Story*, 51-52

<sup>28</sup> "Rosa Casorso," 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>33</sup> "Third Casorso House," City of Kelowna.

Casorsos was their affinity for sheep herding. The sheep were taken across the lake by ferry so they could graze. Corrals were built on the other side of the lake before the voyage to ensure that no sheep would escape. Once grazing season was over, the corrals were disassembled, and the sheep were herded back.<sup>34</sup> After two years of homesteading, Giovanni transplanted his family to a large 160-acre home (which now resides on Casorso Road) where they grew vegetables, tobacco, grains, and fruit. In 1903, John purchased part of an old mission and grew onions. They also raised pigs, cattle, and sheep, and were known to supply travellers with homemade smoked meat. Goods set aside to be sold at markets were packed on horses and sent to Vernon, Kamloops, and Penticton, as well as by boat to more remote areas.<sup>35</sup> The Casorsos were also entrepreneurs. Once they became more successful in agribusiness, the family opened the Casorso Brothers Meat Market in 1912, and later started wholesale and retail outlets throughout the Thompson-Okanagan.<sup>36</sup> The Casorso Bros Store (located in downtown Kelowna) was operated by Claude Newby and Leo Casorso; the venture was encouraged by Leo's brother Joe Casorso.<sup>37</sup> The store was considered to be one of the finest establishments in the province – equipped with ample cold storage and a wide variety of meats and produce for customers.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Capozzi Family and the Birth of Kelowna's Wine Industry*

Another one of Kelowna's more recognized Italians was Pasquale "Cap" Capozzi, a successful grocery and wine entrepreneur. Cap arrived in Nelson, British Columbia by train in 1907, carrying only 1500 lire in his pocket.<sup>39</sup> He was first employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) laying railway ties, working ten hours a day, making \$1.25 a week; unfortunately, he was fired from this position for his apparent lack of productivity.<sup>40</sup> He worked in four different CPR jobs before settling on work at the shop. Eventually, Cap left the CPR due to the strikes of 1909.<sup>41</sup> After a brief stint at the Yale Lumber Company and the Castlegar Sawmill, in 1910 he moved to Revelstoke to work for the Bregolisse Grocery Store. He later entered the grocery business himself and opened stores in Revelstoke, Phoenix, and Trail British

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<sup>34</sup> Gordon Isfeld, "The Casorso Story," *Kelowna Courier*, 1983, John and Family Casorso folder, biographical files, reference library, Kelowna Public Archives.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> "Casorso Block," City of Kelowna, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.kelowna.ca/our-community/arts-culture-heritage/heritage/heritage-register/casorso-block>.

<sup>38</sup> "New meat market soon to be opened," *Kelowna Record*, August 28, 1913, British Columbia Historical Newspapers, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/bcnewspapers/xkelownarec/items/1.0180869#p0z-10000r0f>, accessed May 15, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> "The Good Padrone has done his job well," *Okanagan Life*, April 1975, Cap and Family folder, biographical files, reference library, Kelowna Public Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Nikki Moir, "The Capozzi Clan," *Macleans Leisure Guide*, January 1971, Cap and Family folder, biographical files, reference library, Kelowna Public Archives.

<sup>41</sup> "The Good Padrone has done his job well," *Okanagan Life*.

Columbia.<sup>42</sup> Cap first became interested in Kelowna when he saw a boy selling cans of tomatoes for 25 cents at the side of a dusty Kelowna farm road. Shocked by the affordability of the crop, he decided to stay in the area, saying that “an Italian will never go hungry where tomatoes are that cheap.”<sup>43</sup> He moved to Kelowna in 1919 and opened The City Grocery (and later named ‘Capozzi’s Cash Grocery’) on 279 Bernard Avenue. The store operated until 1962.<sup>44</sup> In 1923 he married the Swiss-born Maria Mussatto.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, his grocery store burned down in 1931, at the height of its success, and he had to start over.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to being successful farmers and merchants, the Italian population in Kelowna played a pivotal role in the development of the region’s wine industry. Angelo Pioli, an Italian from the Lucca Province, lived in France with his sister and her husband before immigrating to Kelowna.<sup>47</sup> Following his immigration to Canada, he returned to France twice between 1910 and 1913 to bring back grapevine cuttings. Though his first cuttings did not survive the season, subsequent cuttings began to grow – signalling the start of the Okanagan wine industry. Cap Capozzi along with W.A.C. Bennett (a local hardware store owner and British Columbia’s future Premier) and Joseph Ghezzi, later pooled their resources and founded one of Kelowna’s most successful franchises – Calona Wines.<sup>48</sup>

While many historical documents regarding the founding of Calona Wines credit Cap Capozzi and W.A.C. Bennett as the primary originators, there is evidence that the Casorso family played an important role in the initial financing of the franchise. As stated in *The Casorso Story*, an agreement from November 10, 1931 “drawn between John Casorso, N.P. Casorso, Joe Ghezzi, and John Maggoria established a group, and referred to as ‘Syndicate’, and the Interior Co-operative Association in which it states that Syndicate [loaned] the Interior Co-operative Association [\$10,000] for the purchase of machinery...”<sup>49</sup> In return, Syndicate was to receive an annual eight-percent interest rate on the loan and 5,000 shares in the future company.<sup>50</sup> Though the details surrounding Calona Wines is debatable, the Italian community in Kelowna is responsible for starting what has become one of the Okanagan’s most defining industries.

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<sup>42</sup> “Cap Capozzi: Persistence and Prosperity,” *Daily Courier*, March 28, 1996, Cap and Family folder, biographical files, reference library, Kelowna Public Archives; “Capozzi House,” City of Kelowna, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.kelowna.ca/our-community/arts-culture-heritage/heritage-register/capozzi-house>

<sup>43</sup> Moir, “The Capozzi Clan.”

<sup>44</sup> “Cap Capozzi Persistence and Prosperity,” *Daily Courier*; “Capozzi House,” City of Kelowna.

<sup>45</sup> Donald Day, “Capozzi left mark on Kelowna,” *The Daily Courier*, 1998, Cap and Family folder, biographical files, reference library, Kelowna Public archives

<sup>46</sup> Moir, “The Capozzi Clan.”

<sup>47</sup> Shaw, “The History of the Italian Families in Kelowna B.C.,” 5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid; Carli Berry, “Examining the Okanagan’s wine history,” *Kelowna Capital News*, April 28, 2017, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.kelownacapnews.com/news/examining-the-okanagan-wine-history/>; “10 great moments in Okanagan wine history,” *Penticton Herald*, September 29, 2018, accessed May 13, 2020, [http://www.pentictonherald.ca/life/article\\_896a3f32-c45f-11e8-9079-179ccbdb56ba.html](http://www.pentictonherald.ca/life/article_896a3f32-c45f-11e8-9079-179ccbdb56ba.html)

<sup>49</sup> Casorso, *The Casorso Story*, 160.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

## *Community Life and the Turri Family*

The Italian social community in Kelowna was vibrant. According to resident Caesar Turri, Kelowna was unlike other communities because Italians did not congregate in one particular area. Instead, pockets of Italian immigrants were scattered throughout the town and surrounding regions. Yet, this lack of a ‘Little Italy’ did not hinder communication between families. Church, picnics, bocce ball, and card games were organized to gather the local families together. The building of the Italian hall in 1966 was a significant event, as the structure housed many local dances on Saturday nights.

Caesar recalled many fond memories from his childhood and recounts the lives of his parents and the many notable community events. His mother, Maria Dapavo, was from Piedmont in Northern Italy (near Asti), and she immigrated to British Columbia with her sister in 1905. Caesar’s father, Samuele Turri – who was originally from Grafana, Tuscany – followed suit in 1912. Like many Italian families, Caesar’s was large. His mother, who was a housekeeper in Italy, practiced her profession in Kelowna and was first hired by the Lloyd-Jones family.<sup>51</sup> Caesar recalled his father taking on odd jobs when not busy working the KVR lines; he referred to his father as a very capable man with much integrity.<sup>52</sup> Samuele Turri was an avid outdoorsman and enjoyed the simple pleasures of hunting and fishing. In particular, Caesar remembers going on fishing trips with his father and his friends at Belgo. Samuele would rent a truck (which the group slept in) and take Caesar and his siblings camping at Joe Rich alongside the creek. His mother sewed together old four sacks, creating a makeshift tent. Caesar was often put in charge of chopping and collecting wood. His mother and other Italian women were all excellent sewers, and they passed those skills onto their daughters while also teaching them songs. Unlike the environment on the KVR, racism was not an issue in the Kelowna area. There was virtually zero conflict between Italians and other immigrants, as schools were integrated, creating an atmosphere of cultural appreciation.<sup>53</sup> Like many young Italian children, Caesar remembered picking and packaging onions at local farms. The packages were sold for 10 cents each, which was a considerable profit at the time. He also worked for Mr. Ambrozzi at his farm picking beans. His most memorable moment is when the old farmer instructed him to “just pick the yellow ones,” teaching the boy to leave the un-ripe beans alone.<sup>54</sup>

## *Conclusion*

Though Kelowna’s Italian population was perhaps not as tightly localized compared to Revelstoke and Trail, the town exhibited many of the same immigration trends. In all three examples, Italians left Italy in search of work and opportunity. Italian immigration to these communities was fuelled by a lack of upward mobility in Italy. Canada’s West not only offered

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<sup>51</sup> Turri, Interview

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



decent employment, but Italians also had the opportunity to own land, a scarce commodity back home. They made the best of their situation by establishing microcosms of Italy, which helped bring families together, and preserved their Italian traditions. It would be an understatement to say that Italian immigrants demonstrated great ingenuity, for they brought something different to each area they settled – Kelowna included. It was common for Italians in Canada to be at the forefront of new industries, while also contributing to the evolving cultural mosaic of British Columbia. Italian immigration to Kelowna had a meaningful and lasting impact on the region, and the legacy of these early immigrants is visible today.

*About the author and this research*

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