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*The Italian-Canadian Archives Project  
A National Conference at Brock University,  
St. Catharines (Niagara), Ontario  
October 25-26, 2019*

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The Italian Program of the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Brock University is hosting the Ninth Annual Conference of the Italian Canadian Archives Project on the theme:

***Italian-Canadian Experiences in Canada's Work Force***

Papers focusing on industrialization and contributions by Italians in the Niagara Region will be given special consideration. ICAP's ninth conference will feature the history and the many contributions of the Italian worker to their local community and in particular to the Niagara Region. Archival evidence (such as letters, family photographs) of Italians in Canada during any of the waves of immigration that demonstrate their contributions to industrial projects, loss of work during WWII, or as fallen workers are welcomed. We also invite students, local community groups, artists, authors, poets, and archivists to share their perspectives and stories of Italian immigration and work experience in Ontario and across Canada. The organizing committee invites paper proposals on the following topics, although proposals on other areas of research are also welcome:

- Italian workers and early settlements in industrial projects across Canada;
- Rome's General Commissariat for Emigration and reports about working Italians in Canada;
- Immigration of Italian Labourers and Practices of Employment Agencies;
- Restriction of Italian workers by the Italian and Canadian governments;
- Discrimination of Italian workers and labour disputes;
- Changing Face of a Nation: Builders, Entrepreneurs and Trend setters;
- Contributions of the Italian community to the construction of the Welland Canal, paper mill, textile industry, power plants, rail and mining, and the establishment of wine industry etc;
- The Italian fallen worker and memorials in Niagara and across Canada;
- Social assistance organizations (Sons of Italy, the Catholic Church, Italian Immigration Aid Society, COSTI) who supported Italian immigrants and Italian-Canadian workers;
- Cultural development of Italian communities around industrial projects 1800s to the 1960s;
- Memory, cultural heritage, or archives related to the Italian-Canadian work force and their families

Please send a 200-250 word abstract and a brief 50-word CV to the organizing committee at this email address: [ICAP2019@brocku.ca](mailto:ICAP2019@brocku.ca) by Friday, June 7, 2019. Confirmation of acceptance will be communicated by June 28, 2019.

The organizing committee is also pleased to announce the photography exhibit of Vincenzo Pietropaolo, titled *The Italian Immigrant Experience Revealed*, to be held at the Marilyn I Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts Gallery in St. Catharines, next to the site of the conference.

Pre-Conference Tour of the Brock Archives with the Ziraldo Papers and other collections in this area of research will be offered with Brock University's Archivist of Special Collections.

**CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS:**

Carmela Colella, Teresa Russo and Ernesto Virgulti

*Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Brock University*

### *Italian-Canadians in the Niagara Region*

Several waves of Italian immigration came to the Niagara Region to work on industrial projects and to build Canada's infrastructure: an initial seasonal and permanent wave of migration (1800s-1924); another phase between the two World Wars; and the Post-World War II "boom" of Italian immigration to Canada (following the lifting of the Enemy Alien Act).

During early settlements, in the Niagara Region, Italians built the Welland Canal and worked in the Paper Mill, forming settlements and cultural centers around the canal and other industrial projects in the region. The Welland Canal, a ship canal in Ontario, connects Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. The canal forms a key section of the St. Lawrence Seaway and transverses the Niagara Peninsula from Port Weller to Port Colborne, enabling ships to ascend and descend the Niagara Escarpment and bypass Niagara Falls. The canal was built in three phases between the late 1800s and early 1900s. Near the banks of the canal a paper mill was constructed and designed to be powered by hydroelectricity from Niagara Falls. In 1913, the Paper Mill's No. 1 Paper Machine began production of newsprint for *The Tribune*. This entailed shipping pulp wood to Southern Ontario from Lake Superior and Quebec's North Shore. Employees of the mill formed the first papermaker's union in Canada, Local 101. The area saw a growth of a broad range of ethnic groups living near and around the canal and paper mill. By 1931, Crowland township according to Jackson, was "one of the most ethnically heterogeneous communities in southern Ontario. More than two-thirds of the 5,000 inhabitants were continental European immigrants, belonging to no less than 18 ethnic groups" with various minority languages and diverse cultures around the canal and in neighboring cities (*The Welland Canals and Their Communities: Engineering, Industrial*, 349). Italian was - and remains - a prominent language and culture not only in the cities surrounding the Canal and the Paper Mill (St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne), but also in Fort Erie and Niagara Falls.

Historians and records reveal that many casualties occurred during the construction of the canal due to language barriers and harsh working conditions. In addition, Italian immigrants were discriminated against when looking for work on the canal and in other industrial projects in Ontario. As early as 1917, engineers wrote to company owners urging them "to reduce using Italians". Strayan and Taylor state: "...local people were alarmed at the arrival in the neighbourhood of workers speaking with strange accents or not speaking English at all." (*This Colossal Project: Building the Welland Ship Canal, 1913-1932*). Prior to WWII, Italian immigration to Canada was halted by both Italy and Canada. Canada passed the Enemy Alien Act that interned many Italian and Italian-Canadian men, leaving their families without monetary support. When the Act ended in 1947, Italian-Canadian men returned home to unemployment. From 1951 to 1961, Italian immigration to Niagara contributed to the wine industry, agriculture, and hospitality. In the 1970s, the Niagara Region experienced a new era in winemaking with Donald Ziraldo and his partner, Karl Kaiser. Ziraldo, born to Italian immigrants, founded the Vintner's Quality Alliance (VQA), and in 1996 helped establish the Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute (CCOVI) at Brock University, an internationally recognized research institute on cool climate viticulture, oenology, wine business and wine culture.