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# The New Ethnohistory of the Pacific Canadian Region Could Teach Italian Canadians How to Be Worse Settlers and Better Human Beings

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Résumé de l'article

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# THE NEW ETHNOHISTORY OF THE PACIFIC CANADIAN REGION COULD TEACH ITALIAN CANADIANS HOW TO BE WORSE SETTLERS AND BETTER HUMAN BEINGS

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*Abstract:* This article explores the history of the Italian diaspora in British Columbia through the lens of the New Ethnohistory, focusing on the tensions between the perceived continuity of tradition and cultural change. It argues that Italians have actively participated in three different types of colonialism in the Pacific region. First, even though Italian newcomers were almost absent in the early-nineteenth-century “exploitation” era associated with the fur trade and the salmon fisheries, they were later the backbone of the local extractive industries in the second part of the century. Second, the earliest consistent wave of Italians arrived during the “extraction” colonial era (1858–64), associated with gold mining, which also continued in certain areas long afterwards. Third, Italians benefitted from the ongoing structures of “settler colonialism” since the 1860s. This latter type of colonialism is associated with displacing Indigenous peoples and reshaping the landscape through the imposition of European-style agriculture. Indeed, this essay examines some British Columbian case studies of Italian-Indigenous peoples’ interactions as hermeneutical examples that problematize some historiographical tropes. Moreover, it presents the New Ethnohistory, particularly the Community Engaged-Scholarship (CES), as a methodology that could provide Italian Canadians with new historiographical perspectives. Finally, this article invites newcomers to engage in a meaningful reconciliation/conciliation with Indigenous peoples and their flourishing cultures to better comprehend their shared past.

Participating in a global colonial diaspora of great magnitude, the Italian newcomers in the Pacific Canadian region have, in the last two centuries, actively engaged with three diverse modes of colonialism. This article proposes a new way of looking at past intersectional interactions between

Italians and Indigenous peoples in British Columbia, and focuses on the revolutionary impact that the New Ethnohistory methodology, particularly Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES), could have on present and future approaches to those interactions. It examines Italian-Indigenous peoples' interactions using case studies from British Columbia during the period from the Fraser River Gold Rush in 1858 to the 1960s. Relying on humanistic interpretations of meanings rather than statistical information, this article problematizes historiographical tropes such as the idea of an unprecedented late nineteenth-century Italian wave of immigration in BC and the arrival of organized crime in the 1960s. The inspiration for my argument is a question that Italian Australian historian and theorist of settler-colonial studies, Lorenzo Veracini, has asked Italian Canadians: How can we be worse settlers and better human beings?<sup>1</sup> Even though it is still not widely recognized, Italians, like other Europeans, benefited from privileges rooted in patriarchal and heteronormative ethnocentrism, but also, sometimes, from organized crime.<sup>2</sup> Italian-Canadian post-colonial scholarship – inspired by, among others, the literary-anthropological critique of Calabrese scholar Vito Teti – has highlighted the intersectional dynamics of power only among Italian ethnicities and between the latter and other Europeans.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the rhetoric of victimization and the downplaying of Calabrese agency obscured the impact that the Southern Italian colonialist diaspora has had on Indigenous land and peoples. Italian Canadians were thus placed, via a diffused epistemological

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<sup>1</sup> Veracini, "Decolonizing Settler Colonialism," 2.

<sup>2</sup> In 1967, there was an estimated population of 700,000 Italian Canadians, but the Dominion's politically motivated reduction of immigration threatened the Italian emigration of primarily working-class men. Worldwide, an estimated five million Italian men were working abroad while retaining their Italian citizenship, with a total of twenty-five million first-generation emigrants and descendants. Some analysts considered the proposed Canadian migration rules "a blow to pride and pockets here." Referring to Calabria, one of the regions most affected by emigration, the Canadian press correspondent from Rome commented, "From the deep-south province of Calabria – starting point of much overseas emigration – two peasant families out of three have lost their young men. From the end of the war until today some 3,500,000 people, nearly all young and at the height of their productive capacity, have emigrated permanently." Black, "Italy's Silent Tragedy," 4.

<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, a little-known historiographical fact is the profound and constant influence that Canadian culture and intellectuals exert on Italian society, as well as a connection fostered since the 1950s by the settler-colonial migratory waves from Southern Italy. Teti, *La Razza Maledetta*, 22.

ambiguity, as simultaneously victims and perpetrators of different modes of colonialism.<sup>4</sup>

Because of the lack of a systemic process of decolonization and the absence of reconciliation policies, Italians often struggle to understand the difference between various types of colonialism. In particular, the ultraconservative so-called “neo-Bourbon” movement portrays Southern Italians as victims of colonialism and this is fuelled by the popular anti-Italian conspiracy theories of journalist and amateur historian Pino Aprile.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that Southern Italians do not fit the definition of Indigenous peoples recognized by the United Nations,<sup>6</sup> Southern Italians nevertheless portray themselves as the “Indigenous people” of the Mediterranean peninsula and, in doing so, commit cultural/identity appropriation.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, there has been in recent years a renewed interest in the hybridity of Indigenous, Inuit, and Métis people, as well as the Registered or Treaty Indian status of those who also self-identify as Italians.<sup>8</sup>

Without doubt, Italians have actively engaged in different types of colonialism. The historian Harold Innis, writing in the first half of the twentieth century, underscored the role of “exploitation colonialism” in shaping North American institutions, economies, and cultures. The production/extraction, shipping, and exchange of staples from Indigenous territories to Europe (for manufacturing) influenced the enterprises, markets, and ideologies of European empires and kingdoms, as well as their relationships with other civilizations on different continents.<sup>9</sup> Australian historian Patrick Wolfe counterposed colonial extractive industries to settler-colonial agriculture, framing the former as a parasitic exploitation of Indigenous labour and land (fauna, flora, and minerals) and the latter as intrinsically genocidal and predicated on removing Indigenous peoples from their land.<sup>10</sup> For example, Italian crime organizations act like fur trade companies when they traffic illegal drugs: they

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<sup>4</sup> Wood, *Nationalism from the Margins*, xv, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Aprile, *Terroni*, 9–26; Armino, *Cinque Ragioni Per Stare alla Larga da Pino Aprile*, 5–30.

<sup>6</sup> “Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations”; “Who Are Indigenous Peoples?”

<sup>7</sup> Arya, “Cultural Appropriation,” 3–4.

<sup>8</sup> “Indigenous-Italian-Canadian Connections.”

<sup>9</sup> Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 298; Innis, *Staples, Markets, and Cultural Change*, 158.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 395; Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*, 1.

exploit Southern American Indigenous peoples' land and labour to produce cocaine that they resell wholesale on a global scale.

According to a post-colonial periodization, British Columbian exploitative colonialism started at the end of the eighteenth century. The Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 inaugurated the brief but violent extractive-colonial era (a subgenre of the previous one). In the end, settler colonialism arrived in the first half of the 1860s, and by the early twentieth century these different types of colonialism often overlapped. The case of Domenico Nasso exemplifies the epistemological ambiguity of Italian newcomers to Canada. He was exploiting Indigenous land and fighting his *paesani* but was not considered "white" by the Anglo-Saxon working-class mainstream. To the Vancouverite Anglo-Canadian upper portion of the middle class, manliness was a combination of public Christianity marked by honesty, modesty, honour, and a private manly code of success marked by aggression and ruthlessness. Nevertheless, as noted by Robert A.J. McDonald, not even the lower ranks of the middle class, with their more aggressive and less educated shared values of masculinity and domesticity, could have understood the cultural diversity at play in Nasso's human tragedy.<sup>11</sup>

On 10 December 1928, "26-year-old, tall, dark and muscular Domenico Nasso" murdered Tony Agostino and attempted to kill his fiancée after a pursuit on foot along Keefer Street in Vancouver's East End.<sup>12</sup> Despite the presence in the city of Calabrese organized crime, the offence was of another nature. Indeed, many Italians interpreted this kind of homicide as a "crime of passion."<sup>13</sup> Commenting on the killing of Tony Agostino and the complexity and variety of Italian cultures, the journalist noted the following:

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<sup>11</sup> McDonald, "He Thought He Was the Boss of Everything," 12, 14–16.

<sup>12</sup> Fishing in Calabria, Domenico collected enough money to emigrate. At twenty-five, he worked in a coal mine near Nordegg, Alberta. In 1928, Domenico booked a holiday in Vancouver, encountering another Calabrese family: Tony Agostino, a labourer in the CPR shops, his wife, Maria, and their children. He fell in love with their nineteen-year-old daughter, Concetta. However, inspired by a central Mediterranean idea of patriarchy, her father did not consent to a marriage because of Domenico's poverty. Therefore, Domenico kept mining and entertaining correspondence with Concetta until his country fellows told him she would marry another newcomer from Italy, "Salvatore Di Facio" (Fazio?). Clark, "The Strange Dream of Dominico Nasso," 8.

<sup>13</sup> Mandolini, "Il femminicidio raccontato in Artemisia," 5; Merli, "Violenza di Genere e Femminicidio," 11, 28, 31, 37.

To most Italians, the Anglo-Saxon idea of restraint is considered not only fanciful, but downright injurious to health. [...]

On the map you'll see a heel, an instep, the ball of a foot, then a toe. The toe seems to be kicking an object called Sicily. The ball of the foot is roughly the province of Calabria, bounded east and west by rocky headlands and beaches that mist to the spume of waves from the Ionian and the Tyrrhenian Seas.

Inland there are mountains, the so-called "Heart of La Sila" where the limestone Apennines end. In this region a headstrong and tumultuous breed of men have lived since the dawn of history.

Greeks, Romans, Normans and Crusaders have all been here in 13 centuries, not to speak of Moors and Gypsies and a fair sprinkling of mountain bred Albanians fleeing from Turkish rule. Cutthroat *banditti* have held sway in these mountain passes and once, when their outrages provoked the governing French to reprisal, 1,500 men were executed in one year.

From the age-old tangle of blood feuds, banditry, and violence Dominico Nasso sprang.<sup>14</sup>

Its long history of racism, colonial oppression, exploitation, land dispossession, violence, and plundering notwithstanding, Western Canada and its Italian-Indigenous relationships offer examples of esteem, cooperation, alliance, and sometimes love. However, those "invisible generations" often did not belong to Indigenous bands or white society, as Jean Barman has pointed out.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Roberta, a Stó:lō mother of mixed Indigenous and Italian ancestry living on a reserve, expressed her concerns about the stigmas driving tensions between her European family and the community.<sup>16</sup> Most recently, the Community-Engaged Scholarship methodology of the New Ethnohistory provides newcomers and Italian Canadians, whose "whiteness" is only a few

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<sup>14</sup> Clark, "The Strange Dream of Dominico Nasso," 9. On a different note about Southern Italian restraint, in the 1960s, cabinet maker Guido Trozzo, forgetting to mention people screaming and yelling in the streets, told a journalist that "'everywhere there is music in my country – outside, inside, in store's, in clubs here there is no music except the radio.' But he is making more money and thinks there is more for his children here and wouldn't want to go back to Italy to live." "Cabinet Maker Guido Trozzo," 19.

<sup>15</sup> Barman, *Invisible Generations*, 110–114.

<sup>16</sup> Dertien, "Irrevocable Ties and Forgotten Ancestry," 34–35.

decades old, with a respectful and conscious procedure for building solid intercultural relationships.

### *European Internal Colonialisms*

The epistemological ambiguity of the Italian diaspora colonial character stands in a millenary history of stratified layers of internal European colonialism and migrations. Donna Gabaccia and Walter Temelini underscored the diasporic complexity, variety, and history of unrecognized Italian de facto multiculturalism.<sup>17</sup> Looking at the vicissitudes of Italian internal colonialism, Lorenzo Veracini reflected on Garibaldi's ideological engagement with displacement as a political alternative to revolution.<sup>18</sup> The colonialist impact of Italian Unification and the Expedition of the Thousand reverberates into the myth of Garibaldi as the "hero of the Two Worlds." In particular, in British Columbia, British captain and surveyor George Henry Richards named a mountain "Mount Garibaldi," even though it already had Indigenous names.<sup>19</sup> This colonialist performative imperial naming was reiterated later in the names of a National Park, a lake, and a town.

In 1916, confusing "internal" and "exploitation" colonialisms, Italian American A. Caratozzolo compared Calabria under the Kingdom of Savoy-Piedmont-Sardinia (and the Expedition of the Thousand) to British India. Complaining about the economic and cultural backwardness, poverty, and low standards of life, Caratozzolo distinguished the Calabrese ethnic identity from the other Southern Italians.<sup>20</sup> In large part, though, his complaints were

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<sup>17</sup> For a macro-history, see Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*, 1–13, 35–57, 174–191. For a micro-history in the Ontarian-Italian community of Leamington, see Temelini, *The Leamington Italian Community*, 21–22.

<sup>18</sup> "The unbridgeable distance that separated him and his associates from the peasantry they would 'liberate' in Sicily also acquires a different meaning if seen through a settler-colonial lens. These were in a way as incommensurable as the 'indigenous' peoples Garibaldi had met in Latin America and the Pacific." Veracini, "Postcolonial Garibaldi?" 99, 109.

<sup>19</sup> Richards, Mayne, and Powell, "North America."

<sup>20</sup> The Indiana magazine *Il Patriota [The Patriot] Settimanale Indipendente Bilingue Illustrato* published this letter: "An illustrious engineer, director of a barrack in Bagnara, often willingly told me that he would go to Calabria to colonize if he had known Calabria 20 years earlier rather than to Africa, where he had been an explorer. [...] The Courier is an old author but more modern than the Bourget who arrived in Calabria with his infallible 'Baedeker' and with the plot of his legend about banditry, which was ready as a novel

directed at the political and cultural project, envisioned by many Italians in North America, of an Italian colonialist empire, later attempted by the fascist regime.

Italy is a multicultural country and Italians are split into different cultures and dialects that, before Unification, were diverse languages within heterogenic states and fiefdoms. Over the centuries, various complex historical events led to the settlement of numerous minority communities in Italian territory – communities embodying different languages, cultural traditions, and socio-economic conditions.<sup>21</sup> The fascist regime overlooked cultural diversities in its attempt to frame a totalitarian Italian national identity.

Like a set of mirrors within diverse levels of European colonialism, at the end of the nineteenth century, the first generation of Euro-American academic ethnologists reflected their elitist readings about the aristocratic Grand Tours when they compared the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific region to those of Southern Italy. “The milder climate of California, resembling that of Southern Italy, begins to prevail, and the soft Italian pronunciation pervades all the languages.”<sup>22</sup> Assumptions about physiognomic and racialized identities drove positive and negative interethnic misunderstandings, appropriations, and biases in the Canadian Pacific region. Non-Indigenous treasurer and editor of the *Native Voice*, Maisie A.C. Armitage (Armitage)-Moore, introduced the March 1947 issue with a vibrant note of political activism:

Race hatreds explode suddenly. We read about them daily in the papers the world over. When we read these news items we probably say “Too bad, why can’t people do as we do in Canada,” but think-do we? In stories and news items the “bad” characters are nearly always labelled as belonging to one of the minority groups – Negroes are labelled lazy, Jews wily, Irish superstitious, Italians criminal. Natives shiftless, etc. The tagging goes on in our DAILY THINKING.<sup>23</sup>

Physiognomic assumptions tied to a biased association between scientific notions of race and culture were at the core of the identity appropriation case by

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plot for his Parisian readers. Calabria must still be known by the Calabrians and discovered by the Italians (translation mine, Ed.)” Caratozzolo, “La Calabria e la Nuova Italia,” 6.

<sup>21</sup> “Lingue di minoranza in Italia”; De Mauro, *L’Italia delle Italie*, 13–32.

<sup>22</sup> Hale, “Remarks on the Ethnology of British Columbia,” 556.

<sup>23</sup> Armitage-Moore, “Minorities,” 4.



the second-generation Italian-American impostor “Iron Eyes Cody.” Floridian Oscar De Corti (“Iron Eyes”) was the son of Sicilian Francesca Salpietra and Antonio De Corti (who escaped the vendetta of a local settler-colonial Southern Italian crime organization). Oscar became a notorious Indigenous impersonator and award-winning actor in the Hollywood cinematographic industry. He married Bertha Parker, daughter of Seneca anthropologist Arthur C. Parker.<sup>24</sup>

In a recent academic workshop in Sicily, award-winning poet and essayist Sejal Shah also noted the apparent skin colour similarity among Americans of South Asian descent and Southern Italians and their divide with Northern Italy.<sup>25</sup> In 1961, back from her ten-month travel to eleven European countries, Stó:lō Philomena Douglas, daughter of Charlie Douglas, Chief of the Cheam (Xwchíyò:m) First Nation, released an interview to the local newspaper. Philomena and her settler friend Marie de Pfyffer drove from Germany to Rome with her cousin Shirley Ned, née Pettis (Seabird Island First Nation). Philomena recalled that they “had no trouble but the people overseas had a great deal of trouble trying to figure out my nationality. Some thought I was from the Philippines, Spain or Italy. [...] We could not understand them too much but it was funny the way their eyebrows would raise when they found out I was a Canadian Indian.”<sup>26</sup> Again, racialized assumptions about identities show the limits of single-axis perspectives.

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<sup>24</sup> Aleiss, “Iron Eyes Cody,” 31.

<sup>25</sup> “Sicilians are darker than Northern Italians, their ancestry reflecting a mixed heritage of peoples passing through the island. The Greeks, the Moors, the Normans and the Romans were among these peoples whose presence helped to create what we now think of as Sicilian culture. This culture includes a long history of conquerors, travelers, and the inevitable cross-pollination of race and ethnicities that such a history produces. More recently, as a result of its falling birth rate since World War II, Italy has begun to allow more immigrants into the country.” Shah, “Ethnicity, Indianness, and ‘Where Are You From?’”

<sup>26</sup> “Phil” was born on 30 May 1938. She was the eldest of sixteen children of Chief Charlie Douglas. Phil graduated from two Catholic schools, St. Mary in Mission and Notre Dame College in Nelson. She and Marie de Pfyffer, “of Swiss and German descent,” were colleagues at the latter. Then, Philomena was a Stó:lō teacher “north of Dawson Creek,” teaching Grades 1 and 2 in a school with settler students. Shortly after, she and de Pfyffer taught at the Lena Shaw elementary school in North Surrey. Finally, they left Chilliwack in July 1960, working for the American Army in Europe. They bought “motor scooters” to visit Florence, perhaps Vespa Piaggio or Lambretta Innocenti, later sold in Genoa. Back from Europe, she worked as a nurses’ aide at the Coqualeetza Indian hospital. F.P., “Community Portrait. Phil Douglas,” 2, 4.

Southern Italy, or *Mezzogiorno*, was marked by a history of economic exploitation, political oppression, and cultural discrimination long before the coming of Garibaldi and the Unification of Italy. Crucially, historians like Gabaccia and Peter G. Vellon have pointed out that Italians did not arrive in North America with a collective Italian consciousness. In Canada and the United States, they retained their “social, educational, and cultural divides.”<sup>27</sup> While it did not create inequality, the Unification of Italy did not solve it, either, chiefly because it did not address the protofeudalism, uneven social arrangements, and poverty-level existence of the rural proletariat in Southern Italy. Vellon has highlighted the complexity of the Southern Italian immigrants’ intersectional dynamics, in which questions of race, civilization, and colour complicated their position within the settler society of North European ancestry.<sup>28</sup> In the last two centuries, Italian newcomers to North America have often formed white supremacist identities that framed Indigenous people within a paradigm of civilization versus savagery.<sup>29</sup>

### *Xwelítəm Italians in the Extraction-Colonial Era*

The first considerable wave of Italians arrived in BC’s lower Fraser Valley in 1858, at the end of the so-called “fur trade era” (1827–1857), locally considered by the Coast Salish Stó:lō people as the salmon trade era.<sup>30</sup> The exploitation-colonial enterprise was grounded in exploiting the labour of Indigenous fisherpersons, trappers, hunters, and harvesters to facilitate the supply of local fauna and flora.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, in 1832, at the mouth of the Columbia River,

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<sup>27</sup> Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 16; Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas*, 35–57.

<sup>28</sup> Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> Vellon, *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race*, 60. Jesuit Joseph (Giuseppe) Giorda, superior for the Rocky Mountain region, wrote some letters in Italian between 1863 and 1865. In 1872, Robert McClelland, United States secretary of the interior, reported the translated correspondence. According to Giorda, Indigenous peoples previously exposed to the Euro-American vices were less prone to convert or listen to the missionaries’ advice. In this case, the Indigenous peoples’ “brutalization” is an effect of the disruptive influence of colonialisms. As members of a supposed superior civilization, the missionaries felt that their duty was to protect Indigenous peoples from the vices of the Euro-North American ways of life. De Smet, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean de Smet*, 1341–1342.

<sup>30</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 145–148, 157–163; Carlson, *You Are Asked to Witness*, 9, 42, 51, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Pares, *The Historian Business*, 56.

Chinookan and other Indigenous peoples accused a rare Italian fur trader, Captain Dominis, commander of the brig the *Boliver*, “to have let loose the Intermittent Fever amongst them, in revenge for their not giving him all their beaver.” The fever spread along the Salish Sea, and the *Boliver* set sail for other oceans.<sup>32</sup> Ethnohistorians Keith Carlson and Colin Osmond underscored that the *xwelíttem* (i.e., white people, literally the “starving-ones”) introduced the subsequent extraction-colonial era (1858–1862), which rapidly erupted into brutal violence, the long-lasting consequences of which prepared the ground for settler colonialism.<sup>33</sup> In this context, 1858’s famous gold rush was a traumatic event, with worldwide press coverage, that saw the arrival of roughly 30,000 men from the United States, Europe, and China in Stó:lō territory.<sup>34</sup>

On 25 March 1858, according to Governor James Douglas’s letter to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s secretary in London, William G. Smith, a few Italians arrived in Victoria and headed to the Fraser River Gold Rush.<sup>35</sup> The following year, journalist and politician Amor De Cosmos complained that Italians were coming to the mines from California, registering as Americans, which made their count problematic.<sup>36</sup> One year later, George Hills, bishop of the Church of England, counted sixteen Italians at Douglas, a village on the route to the upper mines.<sup>37</sup> Many other Italians arrived in the following months, supplying Salish peoples with low-quality alcohol and raping Indigenous women.<sup>38</sup> Miners returned Indigenous “hospitality by stealing animal traps and food from Indian caches, ‘something other Indians would never have done.’”<sup>39</sup> Such nefarious exploitation-colonial activities by Italian miners

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<sup>32</sup> Tolmie, *Physician and Fur Trader*, 288–289.

<sup>33</sup> Carlson, “Clash at Clayoquot,” 160–163. “If the term [Xwelíttem, Ed.] originated as a reference to physical hunger it lasted because of its applicability to non-Native appetites for natural resources, land, and even children.” Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 161.

<sup>34</sup> Carlson, Sutton Lutz, and Schaepe, “Introduction: Decolonizing Ethnohistory,” 6; Carlson, McHalsie, and Parrier, *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 2; Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 164–165; Herbert, *Gold Rush Manliness*, 79–80, 95, 103; Innis, “The Bias of Communication,” 474–475.

<sup>35</sup> Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Copies or Extracts of Correspondence*, 13.

<sup>36</sup> De Cosmos, “Editorial,” 2.

<sup>37</sup> Hills, “An Occasional Paper,” 1.

<sup>38</sup> “From the North,” 3.

<sup>39</sup> Coccola, *They Call Me Father*, 41. For the Italians in the subsequent Cariboo Gold Rush, see Milton and Cheadle, *The North-West Passage*, 359–360, 347–348.

during the 1858 Fraser River Gold Rush are still tied to the toponym “Italian Bar,” a colonialist name for a sandbar on the Fraser River below Lytton.<sup>40</sup>

Communication theorist Harold Innis has underscored how economic, political, and technical convergences between a metropolis (e.g., London) and staples (i.e., the main item of trade or production, such as gold in the 1858 Fraser River Gold Rush) can create an instant event covered by the press worldwide.<sup>41</sup> Carlo Gentile arrived at the Fraser River goldfields from Naples, the chief city (metropolis) of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. As a colonialist photographer astonished by the beautiful land of the Salish peoples, Gentile was attentive to placing Europe at the top of his comparisons while exploiting the images of Indigenous people, particularly children, for commercial purposes.<sup>42</sup> While Gentile’s story links his historically defined Southern Italian mentality to the white supremacist European mainstream of that time, the case study of Andrea Lorenzetto/i shows that Northern Italians sometimes behaved differently from the Anglo-settler mainstream concerning Indigenous people.

By the end of the Fraser River Gold Rush, in the early 1860s, the first generation of permanent missionaries discouraged mixed marriages between Indigenous people and newcomers.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, during the previous exploitation-colonial era (1800–1858), missionaries and fur trade companies promoted interethnic marriages on the cusp of the contact zone.<sup>44</sup> On 19 October 1866, Andrew (Andrea) Joseph (Giuseppe) Lorenzetto (Lorenzetti) pre-empted a piece of land in the Yale district, at Ohamil (Ohaunil), near Hope.<sup>45</sup> It was the beginning of agricultural settler colonialism in the lower Fraser Valley. By around 1862, Lorenzetto had settled eighty acres of land at Ruby Creek (St. Elmo) with his Stó:lō “wife, Ouillet aka Marie” (Mary), with whom he had five children. She was the daughter of a chief and hailed from Boston Bar.<sup>46</sup>

Our knowledge of Lorenzetto is far from clear. He was apparently born somewhere along the Adriatic Sea, between what is now Italy (Trieste) and

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<sup>40</sup> On 17 July 1882, by falling a tree to build a canoe, P.O. Charles, together with three helpers, caused the death of a Québécois from Coteau Landing. See “Dominion News,” 7.

<sup>41</sup> Innis, “The Bias of Communication,” 474–475.

<sup>42</sup> Marino, *The Remarkable Story of Carlo Gentile*, 3, 5–6.

<sup>43</sup> Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 71.

<sup>44</sup> Barman, *On the Cusp of Contact*, 212–216.

<sup>45</sup> Laing, *Colonial Farm Settlers*, 216, 528; “Andrew Lorenzetto.”

<sup>46</sup> John, “Jack Lorenzetto.”

Croatia (Rovinj/Rovigno), probably in 1833, coming to the Fraser Valley during the gold rush and creating a well-known Italian-Stó:lō family, similar to what Chinese men would do later in the century.<sup>47</sup> There are different oral accounts of his job when he first arrived in the valley; a branch of the family remembers him as a wine merchant,<sup>48</sup> while others remember him as a miner.<sup>49</sup> A record from the Yale Gaol could also be the reason for the ambiguity surrounding his birthplace and last name. Between 31 October 1883 and 1 November 1884, Andrew Lorenzetti was condemned to fourteen days' imprisonment and a \$10 fine for "drunk & disorderly" conduct. However, an accusation of "supplying liquor to Indians" was dismissed.<sup>50</sup>

His neighbour recalled that, by the time of his death, Andrew Joseph Lorenzetto's estate "consisted of 160 acres of pre-empted Crown land, about ten acres cleared, a small orchard, and pigs, chickens, and barn and dwelling houses, but no money, for the long sickness of deceased had made them poor."<sup>51</sup> Over time, the Lorenzetto family spread over the Interior, originating toponyms such as the Lorenzetti Creek in Laidlaw. Andrew's daughter, Euphemia Kathrine Rabbitt, was born in 1875 at St. Elmo and was a "pioneer" in Tulameen.<sup>52</sup> In the twentieth century, the Lorenzetto upper-class family's private knowledge was the object of academic interest, proving to be instrumental in developing Canadian and American anthropology, ethnography, and linguistics.<sup>53</sup> This heritage was passed down orally from one generation to another within rigorous procedures and ceremonies.

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<sup>47</sup> Lorenzetti self-identified as Italian. His last name is spelled differently in some documents. In private conversations, Naxaxalhts'i (McHalsie) told me that Andrew Lorenzetto came to the Fraser Valley from Trieste via the United States. Another source indicates that he came from Rovigno, Italy (today Rovinj, Croatia), an ancient Venetian town on the Istrian peninsula. In a profile uploaded by his descendants on Geni (a commercial genealogy networking website), Andrew Lorenzetti appears to be born from Pietro and Califarina Lorenzetti. According to this second hypothesis, Trieste could be the port of departure from Italy when he emigrated. See "Andrea Giuseppe Lorenzetti." For the marriages between Chinese and Indigenous people in the late nineteenth century, see Barman, *On the Cusp of Contact*, 232–235.

<sup>48</sup> About upper-class Salish private knowledge, morality, and ideology, see Suttles, "Private Knowledge," 501–503.

<sup>49</sup> John, "Jack Lorenzetto."

<sup>50</sup> "List of Prisoners Confined in Yale Gaol."

<sup>51</sup> British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, "Petition," 380–381.

<sup>52</sup> "Rabbitt, Euphemia Cecilia Lorenzetto."

<sup>53</sup> Suttles, "Private Knowledge," 497–507; Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians*, 9; Galloway, *Dictionary of Upriver Halkomelem*, xviii, xix, xxi–xxiii; Wells, Galloway, Maud, and

At the end of the gold rush, the building of the CPR transcontinental railway drew more immigrants from Europe and Asia, attracted by the fertile agricultural land. At the beginning of settler colonialism, “Yale, a dying town since the end of the gold rush, sprang to life. The Hudson’s Bay Company opened a store, ‘the Italians opened fruit stands and the Chinese opened restaurants.’”<sup>54</sup>

### ***Italians and Their Settler-Colonial Hunger for Indigenous Land***

As suggested by Carlson, the existence of diverse modes of colonialism complicated the conditions of Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. In the early 1860s, the initial phase of agricultural settler colonialism, paired with the advancement of the BC gold rushes in the central and northern parts of the province, was encroaching on Indigenous resources. Likewise, the exploitation-colonial fisheries industry at Victoria counted “on a few Italian fishermen and the native Indians.”<sup>55</sup> The Italians also dried fish with the Cowichan, blending Mediterranean and Coast Salish techniques.<sup>56</sup> They provided food for 7,000 inhabitants, with a rising population of settlers, in a city ruled by authorities willing to compete with the American logging industry in supplying European dockyards.<sup>57</sup> In the years of Italian Unification, Victoria furnished wood for the ships of the Kingdom of Sardinia and those of Italy, indirectly supporting Garibaldi’s military expedition in Southern Italy.<sup>58</sup> In Victoria, the “Italian Question” was so popular that the local newspaper reported rumours about Garibaldi’s supposed Canadian origins that made him the son of an Iroquois Chief called Garrabaldeh, meaning “Mighty war,” who emigrated from western New York to Lower Canada.<sup>59</sup>

In 1858, Lorenzo Lebrum (Lertora) was another example of Italian encroachment on Indigenous resources. He was among the rare settlers at Fountain (Xaxli’p), about twelve kilometres north of Lillooet, securing a

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Weeden, *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors*, 59–69; Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 49.

<sup>54</sup> Cocola, *They Call Me Father*, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Husdell and Churchill, *Extracts Relating to Vancouver Island*, 12; Anderson, *The Dominion at the West*, 34; “Stealing Nets,” 3.

<sup>56</sup> “Robbery at Cowichan,” 3.

<sup>57</sup> Husdell and Churchill, *Extracts Relating to Vancouver Island*, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Husdell and Churchill, *Extracts Relating to Vancouver Island*, 41; “A Large Vessel,” 3; “Shipping,” 3.

<sup>59</sup> “Where Garibaldi Was Born,” 3.

160-acre pre-emption three years later. Lebrum imported vines to produce grapes for the Lytton area market in the traditional land of the St'at'imc (Lillooet). He built stone wall terraces in the pre-empted land, exploiting the underpaid work of three Italian newcomers.<sup>60</sup> According to the BC minister of agriculture, Frederick William Laing, Lebrum appropriated the local bubbling spring that gave the name to the place ("the Fountain") with "special arrangements" made with the Indian Agent, cutting off the Interior Salish village's running water.<sup>61</sup> Subsequently, a group of Xaxli'p people purchased the farm of "Joseph Italian for \$1,200."<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, in 1861, at the Whyeek reserve on Kanaka Bar, Indian reserve commissioner Gilbert Malcolm Sproat tried to grant the Nlaka'pamux access to their fisheries on the Fraser River, which as occupied by an Italian settler named "Parma."<sup>63</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Southern Italians were an active part of the colonial workforce that endangered Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples, flora, and fauna. Newcomers from Calabria, for example, actively cultivated invasive species and were involved in mining operations to the detriment of local ecosystems. During the interwar period, the Dominion minister of agriculture, Simon Fraser Tolmie, praised the Mediterranean olives growing on Vancouver Island as a viable new cash crop for a nation stereotypically deemed frozen land. In addition, farmers cultivated tea and olives on the Saanich Peninsula, and fig trees were famous and fashionable from Victoria to Nanaimo in settler-colonial gardens for forty years. Professor L. Stevenson, superintendent for the Sidney area, recalled domesticated olives being introduced at the Dominion Experimental Station in Bazan Bay in 1915.<sup>64</sup> Settler Diego Zarelli ran a shoeshine parlour when he first arrived in Victoria, and subsequently specialized in the agricultural breeding of Calabrese fig species.<sup>65</sup> "You tella them everybody in city should have nice, fine fig tree in garden," said Diego, as transcribed by a *Daily Colonist* reporter.<sup>66</sup> By 1921, Diego had been in Victoria for ten years, having left the province of Cosenza forty-one years earlier. He owned a vacant lot on Rudlin Avenue with eighteen fig trees: "No matter how bigga your mouth [...] you bite six,

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<sup>60</sup> Laing, *Colonial Farm Settlers*, 20, 244.

<sup>61</sup> Laing, *Colonial Farm Settlers*, 254.

<sup>62</sup> Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report*, 165.

<sup>63</sup> Harris, "Land, Fish, and Law," 67–68.

<sup>64</sup> "Fig Trees Go Well in Victoria's Gardens," 21.

<sup>65</sup> Greene, "Some Notes on D. Zarelli," 49, 51.

<sup>66</sup> "Fig Trees Go Well in Victoria's Gardens," 21.

seven time at one fig in my country. Ah, that fine, bigga, beautiful fico, that citrolare,” he’s quoted as saying.<sup>67</sup>

Diego was the brother of Diamante Zarelli, born in Calabria in 1878. Diamante is a polysemic name related to mining (diamond) and to agriculture. Indeed, the latter meaning derives from the toponym of a village on the Calabrese Tyrrhenian Coast, the origin of the *Diamante citron*, which has an ancient relevance in the diasporic Jewish tradition.<sup>68</sup> The Italian siblings, Diego and Diamante, arrived in Victoria after two years in New York. Diamante initially engaged with the exploitation-colonial enterprise of the Klondike Gold Rush, often working in saloon businesses in Yukon and Alaska. He returned to Calabria to marry in January 1909. Back in British Columbia, he and his wife, Rosina, ran the Royal Hotel in Prince Rupert and another one in the Interior, at Gold Bridge, near the relevant gold mine of Pioneer.<sup>69</sup> Upon their arrival in 1898, the Zarelli siblings embodied the terraforming of both settler-colonial agriculture and extraction-colonial mining. They represented the double face of Southern Italian colonialism in the Pacific region.

### *Calabrese ‘Ndrangheta and Criminal Colonialism*

In addition to agricultural and other settler-colonists, Italian crime organizations are a fundamental part of the colonial impact on Indigenous land and peoples. Culturally driven mafias represent Italians’ most violent and cruel contribution to the genocidal implications of settler colonialism, although in a way that recalls exploitative colonialism. In 1973, the *Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs* reconstructed the influence of the Sicilian mafia in North American narcotics-smuggling syndicates. They took over the main importation of opiates, particularly heroin, from the Asian trade in Vancouver and its connections to Toronto and Montreal.<sup>70</sup> Forty years later, Europol defined the ‘Ndrangheta as “among the richest and most powerful organized crime groups at a global level.”<sup>71</sup> Grounded on the enormous

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<sup>67</sup> “Fig Trees Go Well in Victoria’s Gardens,” 21.

<sup>68</sup> Isaac, “Influence of Religion on the Spread of Citrus,” 184, 186.

<sup>69</sup> Greene, “Some Notes on D. Zarelli,” 49, 51.

<sup>70</sup> LeDain, *Commission of Inquiry*, 571–572, 593.

<sup>71</sup> “It has a dominant position on the European cocaine market due to excellent relations with the producers. The ‘Ndrangheta is trying to colonise new territories and attempts to exert its influence over Calabrese migrant communities. It reproduces abroad perfect copies of its operational structures, the ‘Ndrine (or Clans) and the Locali, which



span of the settler-colonial incumbency of Calabrese people worldwide, the organization employs an exploitation mode of colonialism. As recently as 2021, Canadian historian of medicine Erika Dyck suggested looking at the historiography of drugs/medicines through the interpretative lens of Harold and Mary Quayle Innis' economic theory of staples and metropolis.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the *'Ndrangheta* exploits southern American Indigenous labour and land to produce cocaine (staples). The Calabrese organized crime runs the whole-some global trade of cocaine down until the heart of the North American metropolises.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, they first appeared in British Columbia's biggest city in the 1910s.<sup>74</sup>

In a 2015 pamphlet, I presented an ethnohistory of the *'Ndrangheta*, showing how Calabrese people in general, and *'ndranghetisti* in particular, are engaged with a dialectical accommodation of cultural values that frame and are framed by intersectional dynamics of ethnicity, class, and gender.<sup>75</sup> A post-colonial interpretative model grounded on change and continuity accommodation – within the historical consciousness of what historian Ramsay Cook defined as “limited identities” – challenges popular social Darwinist tropes supported in Italy and Canada, for example, by the jurisprudential and experiential studies of Antonio Nicaso and Nicola Gratteri.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Italian Canadians engaged with affirming their idea of whiteness within a British-centric society not yet ready to share privileges with other “Europeans,” although marking racial boundaries with people from other continents. At the turn of the century, the City of Vancouver noticed that many Japanese residents were on the municipal voters' list. With a quick and efficient response, they added their names to the list of Chinese and Indigenous people who were not entitled to vote. Patricia E. Roy noticed that the federal government did

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still fall under the supreme authority of the Calabrian Crimine.” Europol, “Threat Assessment Italian Organised Crime,” 3.

<sup>72</sup> Dyck, “Canada Dry or High Times?” s346; Belisle and Mitchell, “Mary Quayle Innis,” 469.

<sup>73</sup> Tarsia, “Etnostoria.” Italian researcher Francesca Calandra literally refers to a “Cocaine Empire” in Calandra, “Between Local and Global,” 79–82. Anesi, “The *'Ndrangheta*'s ‘Little Kiss’”; Donadio, “Can Italy Defeat Its Most Powerful Crime Syndicate?”

<sup>74</sup> Dickie, *Blood Brotherhoods*, 641.

<sup>75</sup> Tarsia, *Perché la 'Ndrangheta?* 38–48, 103–117, 156–179.

<sup>76</sup> Gratteri and Nicaso, *Fratelli di Sangue*, 13–26. Antonio Nicaso is Queen's University's expert on Calabrese organized crime. See “Antonio Nicaso”; Cook, “Canadian Centennial Celebrations,” 663; Careless, “‘Limited Identities’ in Canada,” 1; Cook, “Identities Are Not Like Hats,” 266–268.

not repeal the municipal act, “despite the protest of the Japanese consul that Japanese paid taxes ‘just as Italians, Swedish and other nationalities in the City who are often not well educated.’”<sup>77</sup>

Aware of the many European framings of white manliness, McDonald highlighted the intersectional and complicated dynamics of discrimination against Italian newcomers during the pre-World War I economic boom in Vancouver. Indeed, although ethnicity erected significant “barriers between Italian or Asian minorities and the British-born majority,” it was not the only single-axis intersection used as a ground for bias.<sup>78</sup> For example, in the years preceding the 1911 strike, the unskilled workers, such as newcomers from Italy and England, were organized into the Industrial Workers of the World union and politically counterposed to the unionized skilled workers, who mainly were “male, skilled, and of British heritage.”<sup>79</sup> As a result, some Southern Italian families in Vancouver were already organizing their ethnical-based syndicate as a countermeasure.

In 1909, Vancouver’s authorities pursued two members of the Calabrese crime organization called “Black Hand” and later known as *Ndrangheta*.<sup>80</sup> “Nicodemus” and Giovanni Alvaro from Reggio Calabria were “believed to have murdered Salvatore Andrea in the neighbourhood of the Goldstream hotel.”<sup>81</sup> In the same year, the alleged “Black Hand” leader, a member of the Alvaro family, was arrested in Mexico for the murder of the Italian-American New York City Police Department detective Joseph Petrosino.<sup>82</sup> The Alvaro name belonged to several extended families in Calabria. In particular, some kinship groups lived in San Luca, the village in Reggio Calabria’s province that is considered to be the worldwide organization’s cultural, spiritual, and political sanctuary.<sup>83</sup> Branches of the family/clan may or may not have belonged to the *malavita* (mob). For example, the colonialist, patriarchal, and conservative novelist Corrado Alvaro, tormented by the fascist regime, belonged to a non-affiliated family. On the contrary, the Alvaro *ndrina* (clan),

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<sup>77</sup> Roy, *White Man’s Province*, 21.

<sup>78</sup> In 1991, the seasonal Italian labourers in Vancouver numbered 4,000. McDonald, “Working Class Vancouver, 1886–1914,” 39–40, 67.

<sup>79</sup> McDonald, *Making Vancouver*, 182–183.

<sup>80</sup> “Reward Offered for Andrea’s Murderer,” 8.

<sup>81</sup> “Give Reward for Andrea’s Slayers,” 7; “After Fugitives,” 7.

<sup>82</sup> “Believe They Have Petrosino’s Slayer,” 11.

<sup>83</sup> Freeman, “On the Road to Nowhere,” 2, 30; Sciarrone and Storti, “The Territorial Expansion of Mafia-Type Organized Crime,” 48–49, 52.

which originated in the town of Sinopoli, relies on about 2,000 members in Italy and Australia.<sup>84</sup>

Oklahoma State University historian Holly Karibo underscored the leading role of the American-Sicilian mafia on the Canadian side of the Detroit-Windsor Borderland between the 1930s and 1960s.<sup>85</sup> During post-World War II economic expansion, Italian Canadians accessed the middle class, often becoming entrepreneurs. However, organized crime targeted their businesses on Vancouver Island and, in 1967, eighteen-year-old Mario Fata was killed at his Pizza Place restaurant in Victoria.<sup>86</sup> Orlando Trozzo was charged with shooting him.<sup>87</sup> Mario played with the Victoria Steelers soccer team, and his family lived in Vancouver.<sup>88</sup> In the end, Diego Fata sold Pizza Place to Canadian novelist and short-story writer William Patrick “W.P.” Kinsella, who named the pizzeria Caesar’s Pizza.<sup>89</sup>

On 16 March 1944, Ross Alexander Gibson from the Agassiz Dominion Experimental Station, one of five farms established to test experimental farming practices, and young Stó:lō railway section hand Louis William Bobb found the cadaver of fifty-eight-year-old Italian-born CPR foreman Angelo Sernagiotto in a two-storey section man’s house on the Seabird Island Reserve. In an episode that the police called an “unsolvable” crime, the local

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<sup>84</sup> Alvaro theorized philosophical justifications for the white supremacist settler-colonial destiny of the Calabrese abroad. “The Southern emigrant has a remote reason. Change state, change condition, be the founder of a new lineage. He not only does not avoid responsibilities but seeks them. From the dark ages of his race, a will arises in him, as if a voice were saying: This is your turn! Later the men also tried to leave, also brought by the first colonial expeditions. But poor people still lacked that mentality of emigration that had to be formed with long experience and felt terrible about it (translation mine, Ed.)” Alvaro, “Giornate Dell’Emigrante,” 14. “Alvaro paints a picture of a mafia which has emerged as a result of the failure of the Italian state to impose any kind of order or justice, and which is deeply connected to the socioeconomic situation of the region”: Phillips, “Corrado Alvaro and the Calabrian Mafia,” 184. Corrado Alvaro signed the “Manifesto of the Anti-Fascist Intellectuals,” which was published on 1 May 1925 by the newspaper *Il Mondo*. Nonetheless, his vision of the emigrant is very much aligned with fascist propaganda. Giordano, “La Denuncia di un Tradimento,” 43. In 2008, investigators found out that the famous Via Veneto’s “Cafè de Paris” in Rome was in the hands of the Piromalli, Vottari-Pelle, Alvaro, and Giorgi *ndrine* (clans). Viviano, “La ‘Ndrangheta al Cafè de Paris.”

<sup>85</sup> Karibo, *Sin City North*, 90–91.

<sup>86</sup> “Pizza Vendor Slain by Hit-Run Gunman,” 1.

<sup>87</sup> “Charge of Murder Claimed Improper,” 17.

<sup>88</sup> “Pizza Vendor Slain by Hit-Run Gunman,” 1.

<sup>89</sup> Obee, “Book Review.”

police officers noticed that someone had tried to set fire to the two-storey section house at the whistle stop of Waleach. Further investigations revealed that Sernagiotto's death was caused by "a diamond-shaped stiletto."<sup>90</sup> Sernagiotto had emigrated to Canada in 1911 after serving in the Italian army; he would go on to enlist in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in World War I. Described as methodical and frugal, non-alcoholic, non-gambler, and with a non-suspicious sum in his bank account, Sernagiotto had connections with the Italian community in Vancouver and a close friend, Joe Sarto, who had immigrated from the same province. Fuelling ethnic stigmas, Cecil Clark commented that "the little Italian was inclined to be afraid of the dark and always kept his doors locked and windows fastened. [...] Everyone in the sparsely settled district was interrogated, including every Indian within miles, as well as railway employees and rail crews."<sup>91</sup> At the end of World War II, while Italian immigrants were members of Western colonialism and benefited from settlers' privileges, they were still in the process of becoming white.

### *The New Ethnohistory Between Intersectional Change and Continuity*

As a white, European, heterosexual, atheist man from the Southern-Italian working class who has been in Canada on a student visa since 2017, my approach to the New Ethnohistory is a product of my settler-colonial privileges. I am aware of the history (in Italy) of cultural and physical genocides, ethnocides, exploitations, and expropriations perpetrated by my ancestors' colonialist civilization worldwide.<sup>92</sup> I have chosen to work among and with the Stó:lō because of the introductions that my supervisor, Professor Keith Carlson, made for me in this community, where there is also broad and deep historiography available on the Stó:lō Coast Salish. Since 2019, I have lived for two years as a *xwelítəm* (starving-one) in Stó:lō Téméxw during the global COVID-19 pandemic. I started my ethnographical research for my Ph.D. dissertation on tobacco in Stó:lō historical consciousness, checking the progress of my work with Stó:lō Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and consultants. Indeed, both the Stó:lō Nation and Tribal Council reviewed the Field School students' respectful ethnohistorical proposals and investigations before and after they

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<sup>90</sup> Clark, "This Was What Police Call 'the Perfect Crime,'" 8.

<sup>91</sup> Clark, "This Was What Police Call 'the Perfect Crime,'" 9.

<sup>92</sup> Veracini, "Italian Colonialism through a Settler Colonial Studies Lens," 13, 16–17.

lived for one month between reserves and longhouses, directing their studies' planning, content, and scope.<sup>93</sup>

In February 2015, Basilisco Canadian Donato Santeramo, head of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Queen's University, introduced me to the Four Directions Indigenous Student Centre.<sup>94</sup> The director, Janice C. Hill, and Laura Maracle, Aboriginal student success strategist, invited us to their Longhouse of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, *Kenhsteke Kanyen'kehá:ka* (*Tyendinaga*). The community gathered around a delicious pizza and pasta buffet at the end of the speeches and dances to celebrate a women's sports team.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the potlatch offered three years later at the Coqualeetza Longhouse in Chilliwack, BC, for the Envisioning Reconciliation Project was sublimed by a salmon-based buffet. The Stó:lō people of the lower Fraser Valley offered an end-of-ceremony flavoursome pasta and salmon.<sup>96</sup> As a newcomer from Italy warped by colonialist biases, I was twice exposed to the "Pizza Test."<sup>97</sup> Indeed, according to a common misconception, the incorporation of elements from other cultures creates inauthenticity, making their identity and rights claims groundless.<sup>98</sup> Conversely, Carlson has pointed at the role of the New Ethnohistory in underscoring local Indigenous modes of history. As a result, settlers can "catch glimpses of the continuity in change, as well as the causes of change in continuity." Thus, in this epistemology, "Indigenous history need no longer be burdened with questions of cultural authenticity."<sup>99</sup>

The New Ethnohistory unveils small-scale societies' underlying connections and contributions to the provincial, regional, and national historical narratives.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, an intersectional approach unveils multi-axis understandings prompted by multiple standpoints of ethnicity, class, and gender. Therefore, analyzing the complexity of people's culture and history

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<sup>93</sup> McHalsie, "Prologue," x–xi.

<sup>94</sup> A "Basilisco" is a person from the Southern Italian region called Basilicata.

<sup>95</sup> Ganeri and Tarsia, "Mohawk People in Kingston."

<sup>96</sup> University of the Fraser Valley, "Envisioning Genuine Reconciliation in S'ólh Téméxw."

<sup>97</sup> Ridington, "Re-Creation in Canadian First Nation Literatures," 223–224; Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia*, 110–111.

<sup>98</sup> The idea of "Indigenous inauthenticity" is the hidden thesis behind Thomas Eugene Flanagan's arguments. Flanagan, *First Nations?* 21–23, 28–31.

<sup>99</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 80.

<sup>100</sup> Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History," 415.

counterbalances the dominant tendency towards self-indulgent and individualistic stances in academic theories and practices.<sup>101</sup> Since peoples' ideologies, mentalities, and cultures are complex nets of perspectives, they are both structures of power and, paradoxically, interconnected systems bound with signs and full signs of possibilities.<sup>102</sup> Although identities are fluid, complicated, and partial, they are not "like hats," as argued by Cook, and the New Ethnohistory is a well-rounded epistemological approach to cultural phenomena within social entities who are self-recognized as "people."<sup>103</sup> Although their legal, historical, and cultural statuses are diverse and often conflicting, Indigenous and Italian communities in Canada are "imagined communities" that try to balance internal and external nationalism and multiculturalism within a broader framing of their Canadian limited/intersectional identities.<sup>104</sup>

Along with their three-decades-long collaboration, Stó:lō and settler researchers Albert (Sonny) McHalsie (Naxaxalhts'i) and Carlson worked to inform "settler society of the significance of Indigenous peoples' historical presence" and the ongoing unique "relationships with the lands and waters of their ancestors" in Stó:lō Téméxw.<sup>105</sup> Together with other Indigenous people and allies, they have pursued ways to share and co-develop capacities with students and community members through the Xwelalámsthóxes Stó:lō Ethnohistory Field School.<sup>106</sup> In 2011, Stephanie Bellissimo of the University of Saskatchewan wrote a report on the history of the Scowlitz First Nation, after studying the settler-colonial Italian history in the prairies.<sup>107</sup> Kristina Celli from the University of Victoria was a colleague of mine at the Stó:lō Ethnohistory Field School in 2019. She interviewed Nicole (Nikki) La Rock, among others, for her report on a monography of Elder Qwet ó selwet, Mary Malloway.<sup>108</sup> In Naxaxalhts'i historical consciousness, the two second-generation Italian-Canadian students who enrolled in the CES are in continuity with the

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<sup>101</sup> I am not referring to the biographical genre, which is a legitimate and fruitful historiographical approach.

<sup>102</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5, 9, 11–14.

<sup>103</sup> Cook, "Identities Are Not Like Hats," 260–265.

<sup>104</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 141, 210, 217.

<sup>105</sup> Carlson and McHalsie, "Stó:lō Memoryscapes as Indigenous Ways of Knowing," 139, 146.

<sup>106</sup> "Welcome."

<sup>107</sup> Bellissimo, "Scowlitz," 10; Bellissimo, "They were Triomphanti," 24–35.

<sup>108</sup> Celli, "Life Story of Qwet ó selwet Mary Malloway," 7.

Stó:lō pre-contact habit of inviting outsiders to communicate the history of the hosting family during a potlatch.<sup>109</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Undoing settler colonialism in a CES perspective consists of “defending place-based indigeneity,” rejecting compartmentalizing intersectional groups, such as Italian settlers and Indigenous peoples, and intertwining their interests and histories.<sup>110</sup> It is difficult to criticize the past reserve and segregationist systemic policies by creating new academic compartments/reserves/ghettoes/silos/gangs informed by a problematic single-axis approach, such as those based on ethnicity, gender, religion, or class, which would complicate addressing the long history of white supremacist genocidal and racist policies.<sup>111</sup> Returning land to Indigenous peoples and acknowledging their rights and titles is the most effective way to fight settler colonialism as a specific mode of power that shaped the transnational economic and military hegemony in the last centuries, casting systems of government and order.<sup>112</sup>

Lummi Elder Scälla (of the Killer Whale) father’s vision explains the Coast Salish metaphor for multiculturalism and the conciliation/reconciliation process compared to the post-contact permaculture of native (archaeophyte) and introduced (neophyte) plant species.<sup>113</sup> Scälla and his father stood among local/wild and domesticated/imported flowers. Diversity was the strength of the multispecies garden. The parent’s lesson for Scälla was a metaphor for Indigenous peoples and newcomers to the North American continent living together and respectfully sharing elements of their cultures. “By the hand of a little child, I followed, leading that child down the best path I knew, with the considerations of love, faith, and charity. If only we could

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<sup>109</sup> McHalsie, “Prologue,” viii–ix, xii.

<sup>110</sup> Veracini, “Decolonizing Settler Colonialism,” 7–14.

<sup>111</sup> “Ghetto” is a word from the Venetian language. The genocidal Venetian drive for Jews’ relocation and marginalization policies, which was a sentiment diffused in the other states and fiefs of the peninsula, was instituted the “Ghetto” (*get, getto*) on 29 March 1516. The term *geto* or *getto* (cast/coulee) has been used at least since 1306 to indicate a precise Venetian toponym, so-called because it was the place of a government mint (for coins). The word officially spread within the other Italian states beginning in 1569, appearing on a papal document. Piattelli, “Una Nuova Testimonianza sull’Uso Della Parola Ghetto,” 12.

<sup>112</sup> Veracini, “Containment, Elimination, Endogeneity,” 118.

<sup>113</sup> “Archaeophyte” is a plant species introduced to a geographical region in an ancient past. On the contrary, “neophyte” is a recently introduced plant species.

look at each other in this sense: no matter the color of our skin, but according to the texture of our spirits.”<sup>114</sup>

Veracini and Carlson have remarked that settlers’ interest is to endow an Indigenous resurgence in a deferred conciliation/reconciliation within “indigenous-led settler indigenization.”<sup>115</sup> “Indigenous people are: they *are* indigenous,” while Italian Canadians “become: they *indigenize*,” a diverse concept from that of cultural appropriation.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, “becoming indigenized” is not synonymous with “becoming indigenous.” Italian Canadians can decolonize their cultures. An excellent place to start is acknowledging the existence of diverse modes, types, and degrees of colonialism. Italian Canadians have been active agents of settler colonialism, which is a structure and not an event, grounded on the genocidal removal of Indigenous peoples from their land.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, rather than pretending to impose Eurocentric ideological paradigms on Indigenous peoples and ethnicities from other continents, it is better to re-read European history with post-colonial lenses, empowering cultural relativism and the valorization of local knowledge that Indigenous Knowledge Keepers are willing to share. Indeed, the British Columbian New Ethnohistory could provide Italian Canadians with solid and respectful methodologies to avoid victimization, take responsibility for colonialism’s damages, and engage in meaningful reconciliation/conciliation with Indigenous people and their flourishing cultures.

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<sup>114</sup> Hillaire, *Rights Remembered*, 234–235.

<sup>115</sup> Veracini, “Decolonizing Settler Colonialism,” 7–14; Carlson, *The Power of Place*, xiv, 25, 114–115, 212.

<sup>116</sup> Veracini, “Decolonizing Settler Colonialism,” 12.

<sup>117</sup> Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism*, 163.



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