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**Rooted in Tradition: Sharing Italian Culture Across Generations
The Angela and Melissa Marotta Story
A Celebration of Italian Heritage Month in Canada**

Feature Story on page 18

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Letter from the Editor



As May approaches, the world seems to exhale into colour and light—petals unfolding, branches awakening, and warmth slowly returning to our days. There is a quiet poetry in this season of bloom, where even the smallest signs of growth feel like gentle promises of renewal. As sunlight stretches a little longer each evening, it calls us outdoors—to breathe it in, to wander, to enjoy the simple beauty around us.

May also brings with it the heartfelt celebration of Mother's Day—a time to honour the women who have shaped us with

their love, strength, and unwavering devotion. Through their guidance, sacrifices, and the countless moments they have given so freely, they have created the foundation of who we are. Their love lives in our memories, our values, and the experiences that continue to guide us each day.

For me, this Mother's Day carries a different meaning, as it is the first without my mother. After so many years of celebrating her, this one feels especially tender. Yet, as a mother myself, I carry her forward—honouring her by following in her footsteps and sharing that same love, strength, and care with my own children.

In this edition, as we celebrate Italian Heritage Month, I am pleased to feature the story of the Marotta family—a reflection of tradition, resilience, and the enduring strength of community, rooted in the journey of immigration and the meaning of heritage passed from one generation to the next.

I also recently had the privilege of hosting an International Women's Day event at **Two Sisters Vineyards**, led by the inspiring entrepreneurs Angela and Melissa. Their passion and vision are evident in every detail, and I was truly impressed by the experience they have created. For those who have yet to visit, it is well worth discovering—the ambiance, setting, and attention to detail make it a destination in itself. Their continued growth is equally inspiring, with the recent opening of their new Stone Eagle venue, thoughtfully designed to host larger gatherings and special celebrations while maintaining the same elegance and charm. It feels like a perfect place not only to celebrate Mother's Day, but also to gather in the spirit of Italian Heritage Month in June—honouring the accomplishments, traditions, and stories of families whose journeys of immigration continue to shape our communities today.

And as June arrives, we pause to honour fathers and father figures—the quiet strength beside us, the steady hands that guided us, the voices that shaped our path. And for those who are no longer with us, their presence lingers in the lessons they left behind, in the memories we carry, and in the love that continues to echo through our lives.

In these moments, it becomes clear that brighter days are no longer a promise, but a quiet presence all around us.

Wishing you a season filled with light, love, and beautiful new beginnings. Cheers,

Josie Alonzi

The Voice IN ACTION

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Ben Reeves (b. 1969), *Foragers* (detail), 2022, Purchased through the generous support of Karen and Christopher McCleave, McMichael Canadian Art Collection

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Stephen Lecce: Working for You

I often sit in Ontario’s Legislative Assembly reflecting on my family’s journey to Canada and how the son of two poor immigrants can get elected and appointed to Cabinet. The Canadian dream, fulfilled because my parents and grandparents never gave up. After landing in Pier 21 and Ellis Island, they went to work, they started families, and raised their children to work hard and be proud Canadians.

I will never waver from those values. *I am proud to represent a community that is defined by this immigrant story — sacrifice, determination, and love for their family.*

As we enter Italian Heritage Month in June and Canada Day in July, I hope you will join me in recommitting ourselves to the cause of Canada — standing up for the True North Strong and Free.

Reducing Taxes

With conflict and chaos abroad raising prices at home, our government is providing much-needed relief for families here in King and Vaughan and across the province. That is why we have cut taxes and user fees, and it’s exactly why we have never raised a single tax, and we never will.



MPP Lecce announces permanent Gas Tax cut

But the work does not end here: to support housing affordability and keep the dream of homeownership alive, our government is **removing the full 13% HST on new homes**, saving families in Vaughan up to \$130,000 from April 1st 2026 to March 31, 2027. We also **permanently cut the gas tax by 10 cents/litre**, and **launched Ontario’s largest energy savings program** in history, helping you invest in energy efficient upgrades in your home — check out: saveonenergy.ca

Keeping Families Safe

Ensuring violent criminals are off our streets and in jail is a top priority, given the unacceptable criminality facing too many neighbourhoods. I was proud to deliver funding to hire new police officers and invest in 13 York Regional Police CCTV cameras in King and Vaughan, funded by our government, that are now operational. Through a \$255,000 investment, we have delivered new and advanced license plate recognition technology to help York Regional Police **catch criminals in real time**. I led the charge in our community calling on the federal government to reinstate mandatory minimum sentences for serious violent offences and urgently reform our broken bail system. The message must be clear: if you commit a violent crime, you will face real jail time.



MPP Lecce takes action to improve safety with YRP

Better Healthcare, Closer to Home

After opening the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital and funding the York University School of Medicine — the first medical school in Canada for family physicians — our government announced a plan to connect every resident in King and Vaughan to a family physician. I unveiled a new dedicated Primary Care Team at the Vaughan Community Health Centre with funding and a mandate to **connect up to 5,000 local residents to a family physician**.

Recently, our government also approved a plan to **build a second Southlake Hospital** in York Region along with redevelopment of the existing hospital at the Newmarket site. This marks the second net-new hospital delivered for our community, alongside the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital,



MPP Lecce announces Southlake's second hospital

helping connect you to better healthcare, closer to home.

I will always put our community first, those who gave me a chance and their confidence to **stand up for Canadian values, for common sense, and for safety and affordability** for every family and senior in King and Vaughan. I am forever grateful and motivated to keep working, serving, and delivering for you.

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Recognizing the diverse influence of Italian immigrants as we celebrate Italian Heritage Month in June. We are a proud sponsor of the upcoming Festa d'Italia in the City of Vaughan where residents will come together to enjoy Italian culture.

HAPPY ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH!



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Canada Never Quits: What Sport Teaches Us About Economic Resilience

by *The Honourable Senator Tony Loffreda*



For two weeks, Canadians have been glued to their screens, watching in admiration as our athletes represented us at the Winter Olympic Games in Italy. From living rooms to local cafés, in boardrooms, classrooms and on factory floors, the conversation was the same: Team Canada. Their performances moved us to tears, made us leap to our feet and reminded us of what it feels like to cheer — together — for something bigger than ourselves.

Our collective heart rate skyrocketed as our women's and men's hockey team went into overtime in their gold-medal games. We may not have clinched the gold medal, but both teams clinched our hearts and souls. Their silver hardware feels golden to us.

In those moments, time seemed to stand still. Political differences faded. Regional divides dissolved. We were simply Canadians, united behind the Maple Leaf. Admittedly, it was a great feeling. From coast to coast to coast — and in all corners of the globe — Canadians were locked-in, connected and inspired.

With a final tally of 5 gold, 7 silver and 9 bronze medals, our athletes are returning home to cheers and applause, having given us something more valuable than podium finishes (although the athletes themselves might disagree). They have given us pride and inspiration and reminded us of the power of unity.

As I recently noted in the Senate, the achievements of our Olympians do not occur in isolation. They are rooted in networks of support. Athletes — just like our communities and our businesses — succeed because of the ecosystems that sustain and support them.

For our athletes, parents provide encouragement and sacrifice. Coaches offer mentorship and discipline. Teammates bring camaraderie and accountability. And fans create belonging. Together, they transform practices into life lessons, competitions into shared memories, and setbacks into opportunities for growth. Sport becomes a community classroom where resilience, teamwork and respect are not abstract ideals but lived experiences.

At a time when the country feels more divided than ever, our athletes have brought us all together under one flag. Indeed, each Olympic cycle rekindles our love for country. The patriotic momentum our athletes brought to the nation must be sustained in the days ahead as we continue to face economic challenges at home.

Our entrepreneurs and business owners operate in an environment that is every bit as demanding as Olympic competition. They face global shifts, inflationary pressures, intense investment competition, labour shortages and unpredictable supply chains. Geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainty create conditions that can change overnight. Like our athletes on the world stage, they, too, perform under pressure — Every. Single. Day. — knowing that success is never guaranteed.

Behind every Canadian business is its own support ecosystem. Families who accept the long hours and the risks. Employees who bring skill and dedication. Customers who place their trust in Canadian products and services. Communities that create stable

environments in which businesses can grow.

No athlete wins alone. And no business thrives alone.

The Olympic motto — “Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together” — resonates far beyond the arenas, the hills and the tracks of Milano and Cortina. It speaks to a fundamental Canadian truth: we achieve more when we move forward collectively.

At a time when public discourse often feels fragmented and divisive, the Games have shown us another way. For two weeks, we saw Canadians celebrate one another's success, even celebrating (often in disappointment) the success of other nations. We felt pride and a sense of belonging. That spirit should not be fleeting.

As our economy navigates uncertain waters, we would do well to carry forward the same sense of unity and purpose. Supporting local businesses. Investing in Canadian innovation. Encouraging entrepreneurship. Creating policies that foster growth while strengthening social cohesion. These are not partisan objectives; they are national ones.

When citizens from around the world gathered in Italy, they reminded us that there is more that unites us than divides us. Canada can draw from that example. Just as our athletes trained for years for a moment on the ice or the slopes, we must commit ourselves — patiently and persistently — to building a stronger, more resilient economy at home.

Our Olympians have shown us what resilience, discipline and determination look like. If we harness that same spirit beyond the Games — in our workplaces, our communities and our public life — there is no challenge we cannot face.

The medals have been counted, and the athletes have paraded through the closing ceremony. But the real legacy of these Games should be the renewed confidence we — Canadians — feel in one another — and in our country.

Now is the time to carry that momentum forward. Together.

The invitation card features a decorative border with a ribbon at the top and bottom. At the top center is a circular logo with a tree and the text "Learn Italian - Grow Your Roots" and "ItaliaLinguaCultura". Below the logo, the text reads "YOU'RE INVITED" followed by "ItaliaLinguaCultura Association" and "First Annual Fundraiser Gala" in a cursive font. The invitation details the event location at Venu Event Space, the date on Saturday, June 13, and the time from 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM. It lists amenities like open bar, dinner, and entertainment by DJ Pat Event. The ticket price is \$130. A dedication is made to the late Luca Buiani, a pioneer in promoting the growth of Italian language programs. Contact information for tickets is provided at the bottom, along with social media handles for Facebook and Instagram.

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Italian / Canadian Pride and a Touch of Peperoncino

by *Gianna Patriarca*

Another June, another honeymoon with our fierce, fiery and hot identity as Italian/Canadians which will sizzle in the countless celebratory events organized for this special month. This year, it is in many ways, a more joyous and surprising celebration as we cheer our Canadian brothers as they take part in the Fifa World Cup challenge of soccer. This sport has been for Italian / Canadians almost an exclusive passport to visibility in the past, but for twelve years now our beloved Italian team has eluded our dream in the competition. Some of us, old enough to remember, can proudly recall how the game of soccer opened the city of Toronto to our Italian / Canadian energy back in the early 80's when Italy won the World Cup. Our community exploded in celebration like fireworks at New Year. We had the pleasure to show the city our passion and pride and how to truly celebrate and party peacefully, with joyous fun, and the city happily joined in to celebrate with us.

That magical and unique time back forty years ago, may have been the initiation of other communities, nationalities in the city of Toronto to integrate into our Italian culture through a celebration of pride and passion. Perhaps Toronto accepted our Italian identity more easily than we may have accepted our Canadian identity. As immigrants it is never an easy adjustment in a new society, culture and lifestyle. Italians brought to this city thousands of years of history, culture and dreams, along with those heavy trunks across the Atlantic. Among the many traditions were the very practical needs of human existence, the love of food, music, entertainment, religion and many skills, gardening, cooking, diverse skilled trades which we used to build, to design, to create in our new environment. These contributions were paramount in the growth of our city, our towns and ultimately the country. We rooted ourselves and our traditions in this new Canadian sensibility which we were also slowly adopting into our changing behaviour. Our contributions were embraced because of their richness in making lives more comfortable, enjoyable and delicious. The experience allowed us to grow, expand our tastes and our sense of the world beyond the limits of those small towns and villages we came from. We shared our charm and joy of humanity and living in peace with others. The once cold, Canadian landscape took on a warmer hug of cultural fun and style with our contributions. Although there might have been slight resistance by some towards us, as there always is when something new enters, we began to change the tempo and rhythm of the city and sharing it with others.

It is apparent after more than the sixty years that our presence has been a positive and valuable contribution to the growth and development of this country. We can see also how we, as the children of immigrants, educated, are now part of the integrated fabric in business, in politics, in health care, in education, in entertainment and literature. We are now an integral part of the Canadian cultural landscape and work with and side by side with all Canadians.

As time and technology continue to re-organize the world it is more difficult to predict what our relationship to community, to humanity, to nationalism, to language and other cultural identities may become globally. As a young woman growing up in the 70's and 80's the struggle seemed clearer, we were more aware of the changes needed in society, in the world. Our dialogues, our revolutions appeared more raw and visible and not hidden behind the so called 'dark web of technology and rise of fascist ideology'. The modern world is caught in the eye of a great chaotic storm, but hope is always present. Canada and its'

citizens are still perceived by the world as accepting, respectful and compassionate. May we continue to be this way! Go team Canada.



Gianna Patriarca

Poet / author / educator of 13 books including the award winning Italian Women and Other Tragedies - This Way Home - All My Fallen Angelas - Nonna and the Girls Next Door





This June, we celebrate the rich history, delicious food, & cultural impact of the Italian Community in Vaughan



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The organization focuses on supporting transplant recipients and their families in the day-to-day realities that follow—whether that's emotional support, financial strain, or simply navigating a new normal. It also works to raise awareness around organ donation and build a stronger, more connected community for those going through similar experiences.

Throughout the evening, you could feel those values in action. In the conversations happening at each table, in the stories being shared, and in the quiet moments of connection between people who understood what this cause really means.

It was a reminder that impact doesn't always come from something big or dramatic. Sometimes, it starts with something small—a conversation, a shared experience, or simply showing up.

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vaughan.ca/festa



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Festa d'Italia

VAUGHAN



I'm so excited to announce that Festa d'Italia is coming back this year as a two-day festival on **Saturday, June 6 and Sunday, June 7** at Boyd Conservation Park!

Vaughan is proud to be home to one of the largest Italian Canadian communities in the country - a community that has helped shape the cultural richness, vibrancy and success of our city. That's why I am thrilled to invite everyone once again to the City of Vaughan's Festa d'Italia, a celebration that honours Italian-Canadian heritage, culture and community spirit.

Please join us to celebrate! Residents can look forward to a fun-filled weekend featuring delicious Italian cuisine, spectacular performances, music and traditions that reflect the beauty and vitality of Italian-Canadian heritage.

Admission is free but there is no on-site parking. To learn more about the **free shuttle service** to the park, please go to vaughan.ca/festa.

I look forward to seeing you there!

- Mayor Steven Del Duca, City of Vaughan

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Rooted in Tradition: Sharing Italian Culture Across Generations

The Angela and Melissa Marotta Story

A Celebration of Italian Heritage Month in Canada

by Antonio Rosa

In 2017, the House of Commons officially recognized June as Italian Heritage Month in Canada - an opportunity to celebrate the more than 1.5 million Canadians of Italian descent and their lasting contributions to our nation's social, economic, and cultural fabric. This is the story of Angela and Melissa Marotta who own and operate Two Sisters Vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake. They are a living reflection of the spirit and enduring legacy honoured during this meaningful time of year. Raised in a traditional Italian-Canadian household in Toronto, Angela and Melissa were immersed in a life shaped by strong family values and rich cultural traditions. Their parents, Benny and Louise Marotta, immigrated from Italy at a young age, carrying with them a deep-rooted appreciation for hard work, resilience, and the central role of family. These values became the foundation upon which Angela and Melissa built their lives, guiding their personal journeys and future endeavours.

Angela and Melissa's mother, Louise, originally from Calabria, arrived in Canada at just two years old. A few years after settling into their new life, her parents welcomed her younger brother, John, further growing their close-knit family. As a child, Louise was deeply committed to her studies, laying the foundation for a life



rooted in learning and community service. She went on to build a meaningful career as an elementary school teacher, dedicating herself to shaping young minds and nurturing future generations. For years, Angela and Melissa attended St. Jerome's Catholic School, where their mother taught - earning them the affectionate nickname, "the teacher's kids," a reflection of both pride and the close-knit community that surrounded and embraced them.

Beyond the classroom, Louise has always been celebrated for her exceptional cooking and baking skills. To this day, she enjoys joining the chef at Kitchen76 located in Two Sisters Vineyards, where she shares her seasonal recipes and culinary ideas. Her specialties include both sweet and savory tarts made with fruits and vegetables harvested directly from the property. Many of the pasta dishes at Kitchen76 are inspired by her creativity and passion for traditional Italian cuisine. Louise has two favourite wines: Eleventh Post, known for its balanced body and versatility with food pairings, and Unoaked Chardonnay, which she loves for its crisp, fresh character reminiscent of orchard fruits. Louise also played a key role in shaping the winery estate, insisting on planting seedless table grapes, cherry trees, and a variety of fruit trees, helping to bring the vision of a working farm to life.





Angela and Melissa's father, Benny, emigrated from Salerno, Italy at the age of 19. He was the youngest of eight siblings who was determined to make a life for himself in Canada. He was a self-trained bricklayer before transitioning into the construction industry, where he worked his way up from labourer to founding his own successful company, Solmar Development. For more than 35 years, the company has grown into a major force in home-building, condominium construction, and land development. In February 2026, Benny Marotta was honoured with the prestigious Golden Lion of the Venice International Grand Prix, awarded by the Italian Senate in

recognition of his outstanding entrepreneurial achievements. He was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Marketing and Communication, further acknowledging his leadership in the business world.



Coming from humble beginnings, Benny grew up in a family that

maintained a small vineyard, producing their own wine and living off the land. When Angela and Melissa were children, family visits to the Niagara Region, left a lasting impression on their father - the vineyards reminding him of his roots in Italy. Inspired by those memories and his lifelong passion for winemaking, he envisioned creating a winery of his own. When he came across a "For Sale" sign on what was then a peach orchard, he immediately recognized its potential. The soil, enriched by years of cultivation, was ideal for growing premium fruit. In that moment, he knew this land would become the foundation for producing exceptional wines and continuing a family tradition that began generations earlier.

While the vines were still maturing and before the Estate at Two Sisters Vineyards was built, the Marotta family spent countless afternoons enjoying picnics and barbecues by the pond on the property. These moments of togetherness and tranquility inspired the creation of the pergola by the water - designed so guests could experience the same peaceful serenity the family once cherished. Overlooking the vineyards and the calm water, it has since become a beautiful setting for annual Wine Club events and special ceremonies.



As children, Angela and Melissa spent their summers in Italy while their father travelled back and forth for work. Much of their time was spent in his hometown of Pertosa, a small village in the Campania Region in southwestern Italy, with a population of just under 1,000 people. They stayed with their paternal grandmother, Angelina, in her modest apartment - sharing in daily life, exploring the town, and playing with their cousins. Family gatherings were always lively, rich with tradition, and warmth. Angela and Melissa fondly recall visits to local markets where they selected fresh produce and even live chickens. They learned to make homemade pasta, visited the town baker for fresh bread, and savoured warm, freshly made buffalo mozzarella and bocconcini. While in Italy, weekends were often spent in the mountains, where the family gathered for picnics with hearty baked pasta, a beloved staple to share. Along the way, they would distribute food and wine to passing shepherds and their herds of goats, creating simple yet unforgettable moments rooted in community, tradition, and the joy of sharing a meal.

With both of their parents working during their early years, Angela and Melissa were largely raised by their maternal grandparents, Gaspare and Domenica, who had immigrated from a small town in Catanzaro, Calabria. They spoke very little English - yet through hard work and determination, they built a new life for themselves near College Street in Toronto's Little Italy. Their grandmother worked in a local factory, while their grandfather





was a skilled tailor. On weekends, the family came together to cater weddings and events within the Italian community, transforming their modest kitchen into a vibrant hub of cooking and celebration. They prepared meals for up to 300 guests, specializing in traditional dishes such as lasagna, meatballs - now the inspiration behind Kitchen76's signature dish - along with eggplant parmigiana, and veal cutlets. From a young age, Angela and Melissa played an active role, helping their grandparents by grating bread and cheese, washing vegetables, and assisting wherever needed. Their grandfather's 1974 metallic blue Oldsmobile would be filled with trays of freshly prepared food, and the sisters would accompany him to events, working as part of the waitstaff, serving guests and washing dishes. By the age of 12, this had become their regular weekend routine, instilling in them a strong work ethic and a deep appreciation for the hospitality and food service industry.



Their grandmother, Domenica, will celebrate her 100th birthday this upcoming July 6th and to this day, she continues to embrace life with remarkable energy. She remains active, still finding joy in the kitchen and carrying on the traditions that have shaped generations such as making homemade bread, preserving fruits from the orchard, and preparing fresh pasta.

A wine exclusive to Wine Club members at Two Sisters Vineyards - Domenica's Block Chardonnay - is named in her honour, a meaningful tribute to the time and

care she has devoted to cultivating the fruits and vegetables at the Two Sisters Vineyards farm. The estate Chardonnay vines are planted throughout the property, where she still spends time tending the land. For Angela and Melissa, it was only fitting to recognize their grandmother in this way. She has been a profound influence in their lives - teaching them traditional Calabrian recipes, sharing her wisdom, and continuing to offer her signature sharp and heartfelt advice.

Angela and Melissa set out to create Two Sisters Vineyards by envisioning the kind of experience they themselves would want as guests. Years of travel to unforgettable destinations and exposure to exceptional hospitality helped shape their vision. Their goal was to transport guests to another world - one where they could fully immerse themselves in the pleasures of wine, food, and atmosphere. The experience they gained as children assisting their grandparents with the fulfilment of catering contracts continues to influence them today.

Angela and Melissa's parents ensured they grew up closely connected, grounded in strong values and a deep commitment to family. Sharing daily dinners and gathering for Sunday lunches after Mass were cherished traditions that brought everyone together and reinforced the importance of staying united. Today, those same traditions live on. Angela and her husband Petar, along with Melissa and her husband Giuseppe, have carried forward this sense of togetherness within their own families. Now proud mothers, Angela is raising her three children - Simona, Chiara, and Giacomo - while Melissa is raising her four children - Luisa, Angela, Daniele, and Giuseppe Jr. - all proudly bearing traditional Italian names. Rooted in their Italian-Canadian traditions, the next generation is already embracing the family legacy. Each of the children have gained hands-on experience in the family businesses, contributing at the wineries and at Solmar Developments. They are continuing a tradition of hard work, unity, and pride that spans generations.



As a passionate and close-knit family, Angela and Melissa feel fortunate to work side by side each day and share such a strong bond. Both are avid home cooks and devoted food lovers, making the curation of seasonal menus and the introduction of cherished family recipes an especially exciting process. They remain committed to maintaining the highest quality ingredients, preserving the authenticity of recipes, and paying close attention to every detail of the guest experience. From the way wine is poured, to the education of their staff, to the thoughtful pairing of food and wine - every element is handled with care and intention. Their exemplary execution of quality service did not go unrecognized. In 2024, Angela and Melissa were awarded the Business Excellence Award by Heritage Calabria Canada.

Their ongoing travels to Italy reinforced the importance of togetherness, gracious hospitality, regional cuisine, fine wine, and meaningful conversation. These influences became the foundation for their first restaurant, Kitchen76. As their journey continued, so did their appreciation for the beauty and simplicity of Italian cuisine. Their portfolio has since expanded to include The Nest at Stone Eagle Winery, where the menu celebrates the harmony of food and wine, and 11th POST on Queen Restaurant, located in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake, offering a refined take on elevated comfort food.



Angela and Melissa's latest milestone, the opening of their new winery Stone Eagle, marks a bold and inspired new chapter in their family's story. Rooted in their deep connection to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Stone Eagle Winery was born not as an extension, but as an evolution—an opportunity to reimagine what a modern winery experience could be, while staying true to the philosophy first established at Two Sisters Vineyards. From the very beginning, Stone Eagle was envisioned as a destination in its own right. As a purpose-built



estate, it rises from the landscape with contemporary design, world-class winemaking, and elevated hospitality. Every corner, texture, and space has been thoughtfully curated to evoke a sense of belonging - where guests are not simply visiting and touring the venue but stepping into an exceptionally unique experience.

Guided by the belief that wine is meant to be felt as much as tasted, Angela and Melissa set out to create something immersive and unforgettable. At Stone Eagle, architecture, cuisine, and wine are not separate elements, but chapters of the same story - each enhancing the other. The interplay of light, space, aroma, and flavour invites guests to slow down, connect, and fully engage their senses. At Stone Eagle, food, atmosphere, and wine exist in perfect harmony. Whether sharing a quiet tasting, gathering for an elegant dinner, or celebrating life's special moments, every experience is designed with intention and care. It is a place where conversation flows as easily as the wine, and where every detail - no matter how small - contributes to something memorable. Stone Eagle stands as a natural progression of the Two Sisters vision, yet confidently forges its own identity—refined, contemporary, and globally inspired, while remaining deeply rooted in the spirit, sophistication, and beauty of the Niagara Region.

One of the core principles Angela and Melissa were raised with is simple, yet unwavering: “If you can’t do it well and give 100%, it’s not worth doing - because our name is on it.” That mindset has become the foundation of everything they create.

Two Sisters Vineyards, Stone Eagle Winery, and 11th POST on Queen Restaurant are not just businesses—they are reflections of years of dedication, discipline, and an unshakable commitment to



doing things the Marotta way. Rather than following trends or yielding to outside pressure, Angela and Melissa have remained true to their vision, building each experience with intention, authenticity, and pride. Deeply rooted in their Italian Canadian identity, their passion for hospitality, food services, and wine is not merely learned – it is something that is lived. This heritage is felt in the warmth of every welcome, the care in every dish, and the spirit of every bottle. It is a legacy that flows through their veins, ensuring everything they do is infused with generosity and unmistakable heart.

Continuously giving back to the community is central to who Angela, Melissa, and their parents are - a value deeply rooted in a strong sense of responsibility instilled in them from a young age. They believe that success carries an obligation to uplift others, especially in the areas that matter most to them. Their commitment is evident through their support of institutions like Niagara College, including the opening of the “Marotta Family Innovation Complex,” as well as a transformational donation to the newly named “Marotta Family Hospital” in St. Catharines. Their efforts extend further with a significant contribution toward the construction of the future South Niagara Hospital, along with their ongoing support of Gillian’s Place—a vital shelter for women and children—through funding the Marotta Family Centre for Violence Prevention and Outreach Support.

Through meaningful contributions, the Marotta family continues to champion education, healthcare, and essential community services, helping to strengthen the fabric of the Niagara Region for generations to come. These are not simply acts of charity, but enduring commitments that reflect their values and the legacy they are building beyond business. Angela and Melissa Marotta proudly honour generations of Italian heritage - defined by passion, resilience, and tradition. *Cheers - or, as we say in Italian - “SALUTE” to their remarkable legacy and unforgettable showcase of Italian culture.*



VIA MODA 2026: Fashion x Mercato

An immersive Italian experience where fashion, culture, and community come together in celebration of legacy and innovation.

At Venu Event Space, the ordinary disappeared the moment guests arrived.

In its place stood a vibrant Italian piazza—alive with movement, conversation, and artistry. VIA MODA 2026, presented by the Vaughan Italian Cultural Association, unfolded as a breathtaking celebration of culture, creativity, and community—elegantly aligned with the spirit of International Women’s Day, honouring the strength, vision, and contributions of women across generations.



“VIA MODA is not just an event—
it’s an experience you feel.”

More than an event, VIA MODA introduced a fully realized concept: Fashion x Mercato. Guests were invited to explore, not just observe. From curated vendor displays and culinary stations to striking visual installations, wine windows, and immersive street scenes, every detail was intentionally designed to evoke the richness of Italian heritage—both past and present. With over 35 vendors, the space pulsed with energy, offering a dynamic marketplace layered within a refined cultural experience.

At the heart of the evening was a runway presentation that moved beyond fashion into storytelling. The show opened with young designers and then moved seamlessly between menswear and womenswear, with collections from Per Lui and Romantica interwoven throughout.

“Where heritage inspires the future of fashion.”

The runway also came alive with the presence of beloved local personalities, including Gino Rosati, Lucy & Tony Pasqua, and Chef Flavio, who brought an added layer of excitement and connection to the show.

Yet, the most compelling chapter belonged to the next generation. Emerging designers took to the runway with original creations inspired by the Renaissance, presenting work that was both thoughtful and technically refined. In a defining moment of the evening, one designer was recognized with the VIA MODA Emerging Designer Award, receiving a \$1,000 contribution to support their education or future design work—an investment not only in talent, but in the future of fashion itself.

This commitment to youth extended beyond the runway. Victoria Franciosa, Chair of VICA, shared that the organization will continue working closely with schools to further engage and support students as VIA MODA evolves into 2027 and beyond.

“A celebration of culture, creativity,
and community in motion.”

The evening drew distinguished recognition, including remarks from Mayor Steven Del Duca, who through the Spirit of Generosity supported VICA with a \$5,000 contribution—acknowledging their cultural and community impact.

Following the runway presentation, guests were treated to a spectacular culinary finale as Chef Flavio of Flavio’s Kitchen brought the crowd together with his signature “Big Padella” demonstration—an authentic and celebratory close to an already unforgettable evening, in true Italian fashion.

VIA MODA 2026 was made possible through the support of an exceptional group of partners, including Presenting Sponsor Jackie’s Meats, venue partner Venu Event Space, furniture sponsor ADM Design Inc., Ferrari sponsor Scuderia Ferrari Club, wine sponsor Vitalita, and design sponsor Lavish Event Media.

Beyond its visual and experiential impact, VIA MODA carries a deeper purpose. A portion of the funds raised will support two students—one male and one female—through Centro Scuola programs, recognizing academic excellence while fostering cultural education. Additional contributions will support the Italia Lingua Cultura Association, reinforcing a commitment to preserving language, heritage, and identity within the community.

Guiding this vision is a dedicated Board of Directors, including Honorary Chair Gino Rosati; Chair Victoria Franciosa; Treasurer Connie Biancucci; Secretary Liana Tullo; and Board Members Enza Barbieri, Franca DeLuca, Rose DeSario, Joseph Ferrari, Ivana Fracasso, Dan Gargaro, and Alessia Lucia.

The success of the evening was made possible through the collective efforts of community, the committee and volunteers, whose dedication and commitment brought VIA MODA 2026 to life.



“VIA MODA was a celebration of identity, creativity,
and community—bringing culture to life in Vaughan”

What defined the evening most was its atmosphere—in the way guests lingered, in conversations that carried on well beyond the final walk, and in the sense that something meaningful had been created and shared.

Looking ahead, you can connect with VICA, the Vaughan Italian Cultural Association, at Festa d’Italia this June at Boyd Park, or visit them on the web at vicavaughan.com... They are also on instagram @vicavaughan.

All photos by Alessia Lucia



From Then to Now: The Evolution of Italian Identity in Canada

by Dr. Mary Marano | *Psychotherapist
Relationship & Wellness Strategist*

There is something unmistakable about being Italian in Canada. It's not just in the food we serve, the language we speak, or the traditions we carry—it's in the way we gather, the way we love, and the way we hold onto one another.

After the aftermath of World War II, waves of Italian immigrants arrived in Canada carrying more than suitcases. They carried stories. Survival. Pride. And a deep longing to rebuild a life that had been disrupted. Many came with very little, but what they brought was rich: a culture rooted in family, faith, resilience, and hard work.

The first generation of Italians in Canada were not concerned with preserving culture as a concept, it simply was who they were. Culture lived in the home. It was in the scent of tomato sauce simmering for hours, in the sound of dialects spoken across the dinner table, in the expectation that family came first—always.

They built communities from the ground up. Neighborhoods became extensions of the village they left behind. Churches, social clubs, and local bakeries became cultural anchors. There was pride in being Italian, even when assimilation pressures suggested otherwise. They worked tirelessly—often in construction, trades, and small businesses—not only to survive but to create something better for the next generation.

And then came the shift.

The second generation—the children of these immigrants—grew up between two worlds. At home, they were Italian. Outside, they were Canadian. They learned to navigate both identities, sometimes seamlessly, sometimes with tension. There were moments when being “too Italian” felt different, even isolating. Many adapted quickly, prioritizing integration, education, and opportunity.

In that process, some traditions softened. Language was spoken less. Old customs were questioned. The focus became building a future, often at the expense of fully understanding the past.

But something remarkable is happening now. We are witnessing not just a continuation, but a revival.

The younger generations—third, fourth, and beyond—are returning to their roots with curiosity and pride. There is a renewed desire to understand where they come from, not out of obligation, but out of identity. Being Italian is no longer something to downplay—it's something to celebrate.

You see it in the kitchen, where traditional recipes are being recreated, shared, and even reimaged. Food has always been central to Italian culture, but now it has become a bridge between generations. A way of reconnecting.

You see it in language, where younger Italians are making an effort to learn or relearn Italian—not perfectly, but meaningfully. Even a few words spoken with intention carry weight.

You see it in sport, in community, in travel back to ancestral towns, in the pride of saying, “This is where my family is from.”

But perhaps most importantly—you see it in connection.

Because if there is one thing that defines Italian culture, it is this: we do not do life alone.

Italian identity is not just about tradition—it's about relationship. It's about the loud dinner tables, the unannounced visits, the emotional expressiveness, the loyalty, and yes, even the complexity of family dynamics. It's about belonging.

And here is where the evolution becomes powerful.

Today's generation has the opportunity to not only preserve Italian culture—but to refine it. To keep what connects us, and gently release what no longer serves us. To honor our roots while also creating healthier, more conscious ways of relating—within families, within communities, and within ourselves.

We are no longer in survival mode like the generations before us. We are in a position of reflection.

We can ask: What do we want to carry forward? What does being Italian mean to us today? How do we keep the essence without losing ourselves in expectation?

Because being Italian in Canada today is not about choosing one identity over another. It's about being both.

We are Italian. We are Canadian. And in many ways, we are something uniquely our own. A blend of tradition and transformation. Of history and growth. Of roots and wings.

The Italians who came here after the war preserved culture through necessity, through instinct, through love. And now, we preserve it through choice that is the evolution. That is the legacy. And that is something worth celebrating.



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Celebration of Connection & Strength - International Women's Day Lunch at Two Sisters Vineyards
March 8, 2026 Our sincere thanks to Ms. Tara Moore, Event Manager, Meghan, and their team for their warm hospitality. Hosted by the Bolton Italian Cultural Centre (President Anna Meo) in partnership with The Voice in Action (Editor Josie Alonzi), this International Women's Day lunch was a meaningful celebration of connection, strength, and community. Set in the elegant Barrel Room, the atmosphere was welcoming and refined—an ideal setting for reflection and conversation. Every detail felt thoughtful and intentional. Sharing a beautifully prepared meal in this unique space fostered genuine connection through laughter, stories, and shared experiences, highlighting the importance of coming together as a community. More than a luncheon, it united women in a celebration of leadership—honouring the moment while carrying our journey forward together. If you have not yet visited this remarkable vineyard, it is truly worth the experience

Tra Radici, Sogni e Tradizioni, gli Abruzzesi ringraziano il Canada

by Ivana Fracasso

A nome della Federazione Abruzzese Greater Toronto, è con grande orgoglio che celebriamo il mese di giugno, dedicato al retaggio culturale Italiano. Siamo onorati di festeggiare l'italianità qui a Toronto e in tutto il Canada, un tributo che il governo canadese ci ha concesso ormai da molti anni. Siamo noi, a nostra volta, a esprimere profonda gratitudine al Canada, per averci accolto, per averci dato l'opportunità di crescere e mantenere viva la nostra identità. In questo contesto è fondamentale ricordare e celebrare le nostre radici. Per questo ho scelto di scrivere in italiano, perchè è proprio attraverso la nostra lingua che custodiamo la forza del nostro retaggio.

Fin dagli anni del grande esodo del dopoguerra, quando l'Abruzzo è stato teatro di una massiccia emigrazione verso il Canada, la comunità abruzzese ha trovato qui un nuovo approdo. Tuttavia, nonostante fosse un nuovo inizio, i tempi furono estremamente duri. La nostra gente ha incontrato grandi difficoltà, dall'adattamento a un nuovo mondo, confrontandosi con una lingua sconosciuta, usi e costumi diversi e molto spesso un senso di isolamento. Lavori precari e sforzi quotidiani hanno segnato il loro percorso. Queste difficoltà, pur così grandi, hanno reso ancora più evidente la necessità di unione e aggregazione. Solo grazie a questo bisogno profondo, la nostra gente ha iniziato a riunirsi, dando vita ai primi club abruzzesi, che nel tempo hanno costituito il cuore pulsante della nostra Federazione. Attraverso l'associazionismo e anche attraverso il programma radio Leco d'Abruzzo quei primi legami si sono trasformati in sogni più grandi, riuscendo a dare voce a queste aspirazioni che ci permettono di celebrare la realtà di oggi.

Questi sogni, che hanno radici profonde, hanno trovato una forma stabile proprio con la nascita della Federazione Abruzzese Greater Toronto avvenuta negli anni '80. Da allora in poi, la stessa ha dato vita a eventi e celebrazioni pensati per mantenere vive le tradizioni della nostra terra. Oggi, però, abbiamo voluto anche rinnovarci, introducendo nuovi eventi culturali, che rappresentano una visione più moderna dell'Abruzzo, al passo con i tempi e ci permettono di condividere, gioire e scoprire la consapevolezza della trasformazione avvenuta nella nostra terra.

Alle nuove generazioni spetta oggi il compito di portare avanti l'abruzzesità a Toronto, e più in generale l'italianità in Canada. Sono loro, con la loro energia, le loro idee e il loro sguardo al futuro, a garantire che il nostro patrimonio venga arricchito di nuovi significati e nuove prospettive.

Un ultimo pensiero va a questa favolosa terra di adozione, che ci offre questo spazio prezioso per celebrare il nostro retaggio culturale.

Grazie, Canada, per farci sentire parte di questa grande famiglia!

Between Roots, Dreams, and Traditions, the Abruzzesi thank Canada

by Ivana Fracasso

On behalf of the Greater Toronto Abruzzo Federation, it is with great pride that we celebrate the month of June dedicated to Italian cultural heritage. We are honored to celebrate Italianness here in Toronto and throughout Canada - a tribute that the Canadian government has granted us for many years. It is we, in turn, who express deep gratitude to Canada for welcoming us, for giving us the opportunity to grow and keep our identity alive. In this context, it is essential to remember and celebrate our roots. This is why I chose to write in Italian, because it is precisely through our language that we preserve the strength of our heritage.

Since the years of the great post-war exodus, when Abruzzo was the stage of a massive emigration to Canada, the abruzzese community found a new home here. However, despite being a new beginning, the times were extremely difficult. Our people faced great difficulties: from adapting to a new world, dealing with an unfamiliar language, different customs and traditions, and often a sense of isolation. Unstable jobs and daily struggles marked their path. These challenges, however great, made the need for unity and togetherness even more evident. Only thanks to this deep need, our people begin to gather, giving life to the first Abruzzese clubs, which over time became the beating heart of our Federation. Through associationism and the radio program "Leco d'Abruzzo", those initial bonds turned into bigger dreams, managing to give a voice to those aspirations that allow us to celebrate today's reality. These dreams, which have deep roots, found a stable form precisely with the birth of the Abruzzese Federation of Greater Toronto, which took place in the 1980s. Since then, it has given life to events and celebrations designed to keep the traditions of our land alive. Today, however, we also wanted to renew ourselves, introducing new cultural events that represent a more modern vision of Abruzzo, in step with the times, and that allow us to share, rejoice, and discover the awareness of the transformation that has taken place in our land. The new generations now have the task of carrying forward Abruzzesità in Toronto, and more generally, the Italianness in Canada. It is they, with their energy,

their ideas, and their outlook towards the future, who will ensure that our heritage is enriched with new meanings and new perspectives.

A final thought goes to this marvelous adopted land, which offers us this precious space to celebrate our cultural heritage.

Thank you, Canada, for making us feel part of this great family



Ivana Fracasso – President
Federazione Abruzzese Greater Toronto

Abruzzesi in Canada



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Laziali in Canada

una storia - una vita - un successo

by Tony Poretta

Nella nostra città settantamila laziali in una comunità di mezzo milione di italiani, sono riusciti, dopo un travagliato passato ad affermarsi ad avere concreta presenza con riconosciuti successi nel campo sociale, politico ed economico.

La storia risale al 1880 quando migliaia d'italiani arrivarono in Canada per costruire le necessarie linee ferroviarie; essi non si fermarono davanti al freddo, alla neve, al ghiaccio e a una lingua incomprensibile, ma erano armati di coraggio e di entusiasmo per raggiungere il successo. Nel 1940 i nostri italiani, erano ormai già pronti per considerarsi inseriti nella società canadese, i nostri figli erano più educati culturalmente, la nostra comunità cominciava finalmente a integrarsi con successo nella sua nuova realtà; purtroppo il grande cataclisma della Guerra, ci riportò a nuove fratture. Dopo un sofferto e doloroso passato che ci ha portato a una forte presenza e una gratificante realtà, sono stati raccolti successi un po' dovunque. La comunità italiana ha iniziato a occupare i vertici in ogni campo, sia politico che finanziario e sociale, ma la grossa difficoltà è stata quella di entrare a frequentare parte della classe media. Arrivarono così gli anni settanta e ottanta, anni del boom economico, partorendo il benessere sperato. Il commercio tra Canada e Italia che vent'anni fa era insignificante, oggi supera i due bilioni di dollari.

I grandi cambiamenti sociali, la rivoluzione sessuale, il divorzio, l'aborto, l'eutanasia, ecc., hanno trovato impreparati e lasciati perplessi gli italiani delle vecchie generazioni lasciandoli isolati e confuse.

Tutto questo ha favorito la formazione di associazioni, gente che voleva stare insieme per rivivere il folclore del passato, la storia, la cultura e le tradizioni della terra d'origine. Oggi contiamo di circa 350 associazioni nella sola città di Toronto. È stato importante



comprendere che non sarebbe stato compromesso il mantenimento della propria identità, delle proprie attività sociali, sportive o religiose. La necessità dell'unità per affrontare con più serenità, con più entusiasmo e certamente con migliori risultati le varie attività e iniziative, ha avuto il sopravvento. La nascita della Federazione delle Associazioni Laziali ha assunto il compito di amalgamare le necessità delle varie associazioni unificandone gli obiettivi più importanti. Essenziale in passato, è stato l'aiuto e la disponibilità della Regione Lazio con la quale si sono realizzate iniziative che si inquadrano in un programma di educazione culturale, che comprende soggiorni di giovani e anziani nel Lazio, manifestazioni artistiche all'estero, convegni sulle tematiche dell'emigrazione, ospitalità a giovani per motivi di studio, interventi d'informazione e divulgazione per la conoscenza del Lazio nel mondo sotto gli aspetti culturali, artistici, produttivi e socio-economici".

Dopo molti progressi, la Federazione ha sentito il bisogno di cominciare a guardare più lontano ed espandersi. Ecco i contatti con Sarnia, Windsor, e altre città dell'Ontario e, successivamente, ci siamo avvicinati ancor di più alla comunità di Montreal, di Edmonton, ancouver e Calgary. È arrivato il momento di fare un altro salto di qualità, dedicandoci a nuovi obiettivi come la cultura e la sua diffusione, la formazione scolastica, gli scambi culturali, la professionalizzazione universitaria, il riconoscimento dei diritti civili, i rientri con esigenze d'inserimenti seri e programmati e non più puri assistenzialismi. Queste manifestazioni e il loro successo, hanno aiutato a far crescere l'immagine nostra e della Regione, impegnatasi così profondamente con la comunità Laziale nel valorizzare e promuovere la nostra cultura.

La già fattiva collaborazione con Montreal, rappresentata dal dinamico Leon Vellone, i contatti con l'Ovest, ci autorizza a ben sperare che un domani non lontano, la Federazione possa unificarsi con tutti e diventare la sola voce dei Laziali del Canada.

In questo immenso Paese che si estende dall'Atlantico al Pacifico con una differenza di quattro ore e mezzo di fuso orario; in questo Paese, il cui scopritore Caboto era di origine laziale e dove il suo primo emigrante padre Bressani era di Trastevere: non ci si può aspettare di meno!



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A City in Transition — And on the World Stage

by Anthony Macchia

This spring has brought a notable shift across Toronto's sports landscape. As winter seasons reach their climax and warmer weather ushers in baseball and international soccer, fans across the GTA find themselves navigating a period defined by uncertainty, transition, and renewed optimism.

At the forefront of discussion remain the Toronto Maple Leafs. Following last season's narrow and disappointing playoff exit to the Florida Panthers, expectations were firmly set on progression. Instead, the organization has taken a significant step backward, finishing near the bottom of the league standings.

Much of this regression can be attributed to the club's ongoing difficulty in evolving beyond the long-standing "Shanaplan" era, coupled with the challenge of replacing the offensive production lost with the departure of Mitch Marner. Compounding these issues were injuries to key contributors, most notably captain Auston Matthews, as well as front-office instability following the dismissal of General Manager Brad Treliving.

With a pivotal offseason approaching, the Maple Leafs face a defining organizational decision: commit to a full rebuild or pursue a strategic retool. Central to that decision will be Matthews himself—his confidence in the franchise's direction may ultimately dictate its future. Until clarity emerges, attention across the city has begun to shift elsewhere.

The Toronto Raptors, meanwhile, have captured interest with a resilient and energetic playoff performance. While not without their own challenges, the Raptors' competitiveness has offered a welcome contrast and a source of optimism for Toronto sports fans.

On the diamond, the Toronto Blue Jays enter the season in a period of recalibration. The departure of franchise cornerstone Bo Bichette signaled a significant shift, while the additions of Dylan Cease and Kazuma Okamoto reflect an effort to remain competitive in a demanding division.

Early-season performances have been uneven, impacted by injuries and inconsistent pitching, along with bullpen adjustments such as the decision to move on from closer Jeff Hoffman. However, with ample time remaining in the schedule, it is premature to draw firm conclusions. There remains a credible foundation for cautious optimism as the season develops.


Looking beyond the traditional North American sports calendar, Toronto is poised to take on a global spotlight as a host city for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The tournament is expected to transform the city into a focal point for international football, drawing supporters from across the globe.

Notably absent, however, will be the Italy national football team, whose failure to qualify marks a continued period of underperformance on the world stage. The nation's prolonged absence from the tournament—its last World Cup goal scored by Mario Balotelli—has prompted increased scrutiny of its developmental structure and leadership, despite the involvement of prominent figures such as Gianluigi Buffon and Gennaro Gattuso.

For many Italian-Canadian supporters in Toronto, allegiance may temporarily shift toward the Canada men's national soccer team. Bolstered by a young and dynamic core, Canada enters the tournament with growing confidence and the potential to build upon recent international performances.

As the seasons change, so too does the identity of Toronto's sports narrative. Between organizational uncertainty, emerging contenders, and the anticipation of a global event, the months ahead promise to be both defining and compelling for the city and its fans.





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