

Proposal for a three-part joint session:

ICAP, gathering and sharing what migrants value and carry with them in the movements between the old and new worlds

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The Italian-Canadian Archives Project (ICAP) began in 2010 to develop a national strategy for gathering, preserving and sharing materials on the life experiences of Italian-Canadians. ICAP's approach is grounded in the work of R. Harney, G. Scardellato, R. Perin, B. Ramirez and F. Iacovetta and others on the social history of Italian-origin migrants and immigrants in Canada. An important part of ICAP's role is the identification and dissemination of research projects by means of an online resource www.icap.ca. The three presenters listed in this proposal will discuss research on Italians in Canada that emerges from their affiliation with ICAP.

Colussi Arthur investigates the departures and arrivals of a group of Zoppolani, Italians from the northeast of Italy who travelled through Ellis Island, America's northeastern gate, to British Columbia, Canada's western-most province in search of work between 1906 and 1923. Her sample study examines the historical scholarship in the field, considers methodological aspects of working with archival records and argues that an understanding of the local geography and history of this comune of Zoppola as place of origin is essential to the overall interpretation of the emigrant history from this region.

Grossutti describes the importance of occupational skills that migrants value and carry with them in their movements between old (Italy) and new (Canada) worlds. He focuses on the experiences of migrants from the Friuli and Veneto regions involved in the construction industry, particularly before WW I. The early 1900s was a period of extensive emigration from Italy when Italian migrants, especially those with decades of sojourning experience across the Alps, chose their destinations according to their occupational abilities, those gained from their work practices in European destinations. Scardellato traces the biography of an early Italian emigrant to Canada who arrived at the age of seventeen, on the eve of the country's confederation. Carlo Onorato Catelli went on to build the new country's first pasta manufacturing company and he assumed a leading position both in the flourishing middle class of his adopted city and, in particular, in its growing Italian-origin population. As mass emigration from Italy in the early 1900s unfolded Catelli was well placed to act as a distinguished intermediary, (not without his own agenda) in the sometimes tumultuous events of those years.