



L A R C H

Language and Race in Contemporary Canadian History Project  
Interview Transcript

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[Start of transcript]

## Can you start by saying a little bit about your life before the Heritage Languages Program of 1977?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 03:40

I came here in 1963. Went to University of Toronto, graduated, got my Master's there. And I worked as an organizer, political organizer and union organizer while I was at university, then as a sports reporter for the *Corriere Canadese* giornale in Toronto. But I was always active since I was—well, since I came—18, in the Dante Society, a cultural organization in the promotion of Italian, and in theatre. So, I was very active in the cultural community, within the Italian community, and I was one of the founding members of all the important organizations in the Italian-Canadian community in the 70's. There is a National Congress of Italian Canadians, the Federation of Italian Canadian Clubs, the Columbus Centre, all the major activities, I was involved. Then I was working with Humber College, when the program was introduced. And in a meeting became quite evident that, if you wanted to really face the task properly, we needed a full-time office.

Humber College had a project in York community, the outreach program of adult education, and I was the director of that. And then I became, I quit Humber College in order to become the director of the Canadian Centre for Italian Culture and Education. And as you can see, right away, there was the departure, because we call it the Canadian Centre for Italian Culture and Education, *Canadian Centre*. And that was always the first indication that we were somewhat different. And that wasn't the traditional way. We wanted to teach Italian with[out] the involvement of the Italian government, which at the time, wanted to run the show. They brought a director of education from Italy, who had been in Somalia, imagine! (laughing) And I went bananas. I said, "I don't need somebody who has colonial experience in Somalia. This is not Somalia, this is Canada." It's a different concept, the languages here is something else. And so, the confrontation was inevitable. And there was a confrontation. You will know if maybe I show you some of this, (opening a scrapbook of newspaper clippings) so that [it] will help you understand what happened at the beginning. The course was going quite well until—wait a second—here. A *big* confrontation started with the Italian government, (indicating newspaper clippings) on eight columns of the *Toronto Star*. Did you ever see this?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 07:44

[It was] the beginning, before the heritage [language] was announced. Because the Italian government was running programs already in our schools where the Canadian government had nothing to say about it, or the Board of Education. And there were a few reasons why we reacted against. One was the fact that the Canadian government had nothing to say about it. Second was that they were using the courses to take away kids from the public school into the Catholic school in the beginning, which I didn't approve of even though I was Catholic, and my wife would eventually become the Chair of the Separate School Board. I don't know if you remember that. So (pointing to a newspaper article) "Metro Italians, tell Italy to stay out." (laughing) This was a very, very major thing.

This is an editorial of the *Toronto Star*, which was very important, very crucial. And [on] the other hand, we were fighting [the] Italian government and local bigotry. See (pointing to a newspaper article) "bigotry in language." The *Star* actually was a good reporter, who used to come, very active. And this



again, a beautiful editorial of the *Toronto Star*. But we knew that if we wanted to get somewhere, we needed to get to the local media. We needed the support of the local media, and the local institution—made with an alliance with Jim Cummins and Grace Feuerverger.

Jim and I worked quite close together. Jim was also the one that made sure that we were well involved because I didn't want to go in front of a board of education, write a paper, and not knowing what I was talking about. I came from literature, I didn't come from linguistics. So, I started to get involved with linguistics. I read [Wilder] Penfield, I read Jim [Cummins], I read authors from the States, from Western Canada, from Quebec. And so that I knew what I was talking about when I made presentations and when I wrote briefs. But, and in the meantime, we were working within the community to make them aware, the Italian Canadian. Firstly—"proudly Italian, firstly Canadian" was our motto. You know, proud of our language and heritage, but firstly Canadian.

Was that [motto] a widely held idea among Italian Canadians? Or, was it controversial?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 11:05

It was an idea that catch on right away. The newspaper, the *Corriere Canadese*, was totally on our side, since the beginning. Then the CHIN (Italian-Canadian radio station) slowly moved to our side. At the beginning, they didn't want to detach from the [Italian] consulate, but then they did. Everybody did. Most of the people [who] do media. The National Congress, right away, came on our side. The federal government obviously came on our side because they knew of the interference, they had their own information—and so.

Do you think the shift you're talking about happened because of sort of the air of multiculturalism in the 70's?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 11:49

Yes, a lot, multiculturalism—multicultural—The way we define it, because I was one of the critics of multiculturalism as it was conceived, at the beginning. Dancing in the hall and folkloristic, set culture, etc. We began to talk seriously about cultural retention. As you know, as part of our identity. My name was not Albert, or Al, my name is Alberto, and I made it clear that whoever called me Albert, I will correct. But [it] wasn't just me, then I realized that the more we were doing it, and the more that people were embracing that mentality. And that we made quite a distinction. We wanted to be proud of the language, of the culture, of the heritage. But we didn't want to be too much associated with the political reality of Italy. While they were trying to expand the role in the immigrant life. There was quite a bit of interference, you know.

What do you think Italy's interest was in interfering? Were Italians able to vote living in Canada?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 13:20

They wanted to make that. That was in the process. That was part of it. This was coming, and eventually they did. Because they resisted until Trudeau was a madman. And then when Trudeau left, they give in. And the son is not, not even one tenth of the brain of the father. You know, [the son] doesn't understand anything about this issue. The father was—I met him a few times and talked about this issue. The first meeting with Trudeau was about this issue. The first time he met a member of the



Italian Canadian community officially with a group of us at (inaudible) restaurant, was on this issue. And I brought with me, a group of (inaudible) people from the Congress, Mr. Georgia, fantastic lawyer, who died. We came, the spokesmen. And so, Trudeau was very well, very—of the issue, and then one asked to, he wanted us to become Canadian. And they did all kinds of things, you know, to promote Canadian citizenship. And we helped. And voting, etc.

But in the meantime, I cannot just preach things, I wanna do it. So how would I keep the Italian heritage? I start to have trips to Italy, courses of Italian in Italy. The courses of Italian in Italy recognized by the Ministry of Education of Ontario. Even semesters: first semester in Italy, second semester in Canada. So, we will have the language courses and history, or Italian courses. We manage the courses in Italy, and then the science, math, science [courses] in Canada in the second term. It wasn't necessarily for teachers, this was for anybody. The teachers was not the content in the series. One of the first things that it was alarming was that the teacher, the first group of teachers, who organized itself under the leadership of this guy, who had been in Somalia, Head Director of Education. He was with the Italian Union. And I said, "Italian Union!?" (exclaims) You know, Italian Union are very, very politicized, especially at the time, at the most. So, he said, "No, no, they're gonna be part of the local view." And so, we had many fights. We had to fight, at the beginning, [with] the Consulate. We had to take care of the Italian Pastoral Commission. The commission was a group of priests, an association of Italian priests. Which yes, they were in favour of it, but as you know, just to move them to Catholic school, but they didn't care about anything else. And so, I work to invite them, and which we succeeded. Half of them took our position and started to cooperate with us. And one of them became an auxiliary bishop of Toronto, Monseigneur De Angelis, and he was totally on our side.

When you say "we" in this context, do you mean people working in the Canadian Centre or was there a coalition? Who were "we"?

**Alberto DiGiovanni 17:17**

No, we had two coalitions. One within the Italian community, because my idea was that bickering among ourselves wasn't going to help. And so, we just organize all the different groups to become one: Canadian Centre for Italian Culture and Education. Before there was this, this, and that, so we came one. Including the Pastoral Commission, which eventually they split. And the other was within the community at large. We didn't work as Italian. We didn't work just as Italian. I was the chairman of the Metro Communities for International Languages. So that was an alliance to make sure that it was understood that they weren't going to split us and say, "Okay, we're Italians against Portuguese; Italians against Chinese." "No, [we're] Italian, Portuguese, Chinese, [and] Ukrainian." First of all, the Italian and Ukrainians, we provided the leadership at the beginning. That's no question. Then, [the HLP] came out, the groups, eventually the Chinese was very strong, and the Portuguese became strong. But initially, the Ukrainians had many years of experience. And they had this bright person Kruhlak, I don't know if you ever heard of him, Orest Kruhlak. Now, he was working for the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism. He was the one who introduced the language program, because they call it the cultural program. There was a provincial Heritage Program, and then, there was a cultural program federally. We had access to those funds for a while. And while we were working on this in Ontario.

**Alberto DiGiovanni 19:16**

So, that was Kruhlak and the Ukrainians. They provide a lot of leadership because there's a lot of experience, especially in the West. Italians had the experience (pause) since the [19]30s, but the Italian experience was very different. Before [it] was fascist. That's exactly what we didn't want. We said, "No, we don't want them to use it, like they did during fascist years for propaganda." See, we had sadly quite



a bit about the community and the fascist influence. So, we said, “We weren't from the new generation.” I was. I came from a family of resistance movement. So obviously, I had nothing to do with fascism. But we didn't want, you know, Dante Society too, which we cared about a lot, during fascism was used by the fascists, and was dismissed by the RCMP. So, we didn't want to go through that again, we wanted the Dante Society but we didn't want—so we wanted total control, local, total control. And so, local control means money. [It] means organization. So, we needed to have a structure, an organized group. And that's why we founded the Canadian Centre. And in money, the first \$100,000 came from a group of businessmen in the Italian community, whom I approached and told them, privately, what it was all about. And they were convinced, they said, “Yes, this is a good reason why we should create our own centre and not the one with the consulate.” And they came up with the first (trails off).

We have a lot of archival data for this project that we've been going through for the over the years. These very important political divisions or distinctions you discussed don't come through in the archival data. So, my question to you is:

For Italian Canadians, like yourself, who are active around heritage languages, did you all share this idea that has to be locally controlled, or Canadian, that was a shared idea?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 22:21

Yeah. And if they didn't share it, we worked to convince them that that was the right position to take. At the beginning it was a little bit difficult, the views were divided. We had to convince them. The community was divided [so] we had to convince them. The parents were always on our side. I remember, that's where, the reason why we won the battle, if you call it that way, was because—I believe very strongly in the parents' involvement. So, whenever we had a meeting, I remember in those days, the major complaint with your principal was, “Italians, they don't come to meetings. Italians don't care about education.” And I would say, “Okay, let's give it a shot. Let's send a notice.” “I did! You know, I invited them to a tea!” I said, “Well, the tea Italians drink only when they have a stomach problem, you know, you cannot invite them to a tea. And we cannot invite them for a glass of wine either. So, what we do is this: write a letter saying, talk about the future of education.” And they would come—400, 500 people. And the principals will say [expressing surprise] “The Italians participate! Oh my God! What's happening?” You know, but they *were* participating. So, we went to, and whenever I spoke about the necessity of being local, big applause. The parents were totally in favour. Yes, they realized that we wanted to have ties with Italian culture, but the least the consulate was involved the better.

This is a bit of a shift [in topic], sorry. But, one of the explanations for where the provincial policy came from the Heritage Languages Program was the Tories fear of government interference. So, they'll create a local thing, but the parents didn't want the Italian government involved.

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 24:34

Italians supported after we did. In the beginning, your government didn't know, except that. I'm going to say that I've never been a conservative and I don't think I'll ever be. But was I ever an admirer of [Bill] Davis and Tom Wells. Davis understood. He was smart. I never voted for him and he knew it. And he would greet me and say, “Oh, how's my socialist friend doing?” You can, never mind (laugh). But anyway, he was a smart man and he understood.



## Why do you think [Minister Davis] supported this particular program?

### **Alberto DiGiovanni** 25:19

Okay (laughing) you see, the things is, I always wanted, one day I thought this would happen, that the people would like to, so, I tried to keep all the records at that time ... See, (showing a photo in a newspaper article) this was a meeting with Tom Wells with all representatives of the Italian community. I was the leader and spokesperson. I had a brief, about 20 pages, explaining the history, why, the danger and the good things. We came out of that meeting. Tom Wells was extremely impressed. He had listened very carefully, and said, "I'll get back to you." A few days after, he called back, and he was a man that knew how to communicate with community people. So was Davis. Davis wanted to be brought up to date, then he wanted to meet me, privately. Nobody knew, we met. He spoke to me at length and say, "Okay, why and this and that?" and I explained. And then, they said, "Okay." They were convinced.

They knew that was going to be difficult, but they knew there would be a backlash from the Anglo-Saxon community. The beginning, and there was, in fact, there was quite a bit. Except that, the thing is [that] they didn't have any coordination. The opponents of the program, they did not have any coordination whatsoever. So, they were a totally disorganized group. They would come—we would too. We would outnumber them all the time. Because anytime they're called for a meeting at the board, against the program, we would fill the place and outnumber them. Not only that, we also brought with us always expert linguists, not just Jim Cummins. We had the best of the best in the community and from our own community with an Italian linguist, Professor [Gianrenzo] Clivio from Harvard was extremely impressive. I remember when he spoke to the trustees and educators everybody was so. This helped a lot that you know, the fact that we knew what we were talking about it gave them some kind of reassurance that we weren't that bad. And you know, that maybe wasn't that bad if you tried. So, they still—there was still bigots. I still got phone calls, "Go back to Italy with the same boat you came from." And I would say, "I came by plane." (laughs)

I would make it into... ah, the best. I gotta tell you this because the best of the best. No, I was attacked many occasions about this, "Go back to Italy, the same way you came from!" But the best was in Scarborough. At that day Scarborough was very, very (emphasize gesture) the center of the Anglo-Saxon power, WASP power in Metro. So, when I went there, a parent addressed me and said, "Why don't you go back in the West End [of Toronto] where you came from?" (laugh). And what did you do?—I started to laugh. I started to laugh in public.

### **Alberto DiGiovanni** 29:49

So, you know, there were many things. I'm sure there were some from our community, some mistakes made, but I remember that they came very unprepared. I remember, one time was easy for us to tell them off because they came with "the Bible was written in English," and so therefore, you know... " And I said, well (gesture of crowd)—In front of a board of education, somebody who comes to say that "the Bible was written in English," and "They will get to the moon because of the United States." I said, "Well, in both cases you're wrong." One is ten thousand years ago, and it wasn't in English, and the second, they use the metre to go to the moon." But this was a little thing. The major thing was we had a vision. We had a vision of who we were, where we wanted to go, and what kind of future.

Did we succeed? No. The reason you see the little bit, but partially, we had a lot of success, but we didn't really succeed in making it a point that language education was a very, very important element in upbringing of the child, which is the major point, because it wasn't that I went to the community. That was one thing, the heritage, but the major point was language education. As Penfield says, it's a major



part in the cognitive development of the child, because we know, there are certain cells that we lose after the age of puberty. So, did we succeed from that point of view? No.

In fact, that one of the worst people I've ever met in education was Bette Stephenson. She was the opposite of Wells, the opposite of Davis, she tried to get away with the program. There was so much opposition, so she couldn't get out—she couldn't get away with it. She killed a language program in high school. She killed the humanistic program in high school. Do you know, by all this suggestion, you gotta graduate with one course in history [and] one course in French. But, what do you do? She just put emphasis on the math and science. So today, when we meet our students representing internationally, Canadians do quite well in science and math. They are the worst possible student you can meet everywhere else. And why? Because in history, you have one course, in high school one course. In French, one course, you know. (gesturing “Why?”).

### Why do you think that the message around language didn't succeed?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 33:31

Because there wasn't the political, first was the political one. Second, it was never embraced as important by educators. See, the only one who was serious about it, and I gotta give him credit all the way, was the Director of Education of Toronto at that time. He was *smart*, very, very knowledgeable. Ned McKeown, what a bright person! He was one of the very few who understood, but the others were. OISE tried its best, but they weren't really part of it. In the meantime, the reform of the provincial government [ministry] of education was terrible. I think that's what killed it.

### The educational reform of 1987, do you mean?

(Nodding) Stephenson was awful, and the people around (inaudible). Many of these people did it as public relation. Many of the boards, many of the superintendents said, “I don't want to give it to them. Who cares?” but they've never paid attention to it. They never did what we wanted seriously to teach. We wanted teachers who were qualified, and who knew how to teach the language, etc. They took it as a public relation: “We don't want to fight those Italians, so we don't want to fight those Spanish. So, let's give them.” But there wasn't really. In few places, today, if you go to some of the schools, there was the benefit of those people who understood the program. Still working well, but the majority (gesture no), and that's why the program is dying.

### Can you speak a little bit about the work you did with other linguistic communities or people you work a lot with in these years?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 36:27

Oh yes, we worked a lot with them. Specifically, I would say, the Ukrainians, the Chinese, the Portuguese, and the Spanish. These were the major groups. And then many other groups, I work with the Indians, Farsi, you know, the Iranians—everybody. We were about thirty groups. So, but the major was, as I said, the Italian, the Ukrainian, the Chinese, the Portuguese, and the Spanish.

We had some differences, but I think the majority did share the goals. And we certainly worked together for the first few years, especially the Italian, Portuguese, and Chinese. Because without the leadership, nothing would have happened those days, and Ukrainians. But then slowly, each one went on its own. Now the program is definitely, mostly it's in the afternoon, which in itself limits the effect, the afternoon



programs. We accepted when we couldn't go to during the day, but even during the day, it could have been done better, more combination with the local curriculum. I tried that but unfortunately, I didn't succeed, I have to admit. See, I tried to develop the Italian Canadian textbooks. (Showing two textbooks) Rather than having them to Italy, we would use Canadian content. And it wasn't bad. This were nice books. That was more advanced, this is a little more beginner. We wrote this and we developed this. But then the federal government decided with the Conservatives decided to withdraw from the program, and after that, the provincial government. There was an effort to (inaudible) but after that (stopped and moved to the next question).

You mentioned the integrated heritage language programs during the day. You were really active through the Heritage language Advisory Committee and the Workgroup on Third Language Instruction.

Can you say more about these task forces?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 40:07

There were two major reports. (Showing a copy of one report) One was this from the Toronto Board. And this was from the Toronto Catholic [School Board]. Also important is that, I happen to be on board. They both [the public and Catholic school boards] recommended very highly the integration of the program, etc. But it wasn't to be. There, you know, they recommended, for a period of time, we went from 5000 students to 34,000 students in the Italian community. I tried to say (pause) a lot of it, sadly, disappeared and when I retired, because my health didn't allow me to continue, and my age and everything, it was terrible. But this is part of life. I'm very sorry to see that the program is not going anywhere.

I think, in a way, it was part of a dream, which was good for Canada, because I didn't see it just as citizenship. I also saw it from the economic point of view. I thought that was okay for Canada to have people who are fluent in other languages, not only in diplomatic capacities, but also in trade missions. The case the most important case was the Argentina case, when they bought [a nuclear power program] from Germany, and not from Canada. The reason why they sold it to Germany, was because all the Germans sent a Spanish speaking team. And the Canadian didn't send anybody who spoke Spanish. There was an example, it was a big issue because we were talking about billions. I thought in the commerce, too, I thought knowing different languages would help us. I know that English is still an international language, etc. But still, you know, people who went to Argentina from Germany spoke Spanish were better received than Canadians who didn't speak a word of Spanish.

Can you talk about the resistance of the teachers' union back then?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 44:54

We were never able to convince the teacher's union to be on our side. They were always neutral or against it—in the beginning they were against it, then we knew no, they became neutral. But they never really supported us. I think it was, because language was never a top priority for Canadian society. And it's strange—it is very strange because we have the French element, we have the Native elements. We have so many people. So should have been, but yet it wasn't. The education, especially in Ontario, always took us towards other directions rather than languages. But it is happening now even at university level with the senior former conservative leader, he said that teaching humanities was a waste of time. [Mike] Harris. He said teaching humanities was a waste of time. And in fact, the Italian



department [had] 2600 students. Now, there are 250 [students]. So I don't think there is anybody graduating in Italian (inaudible) anymore.

Oh, not at all. There's nothing, although there was a little tiny program prepared International Language teachers. That's gone.

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 46:33

That's what I mean. Because they say the language is not important. And we worked with parents where they work with the big machines. To fight the big machines, you need people who have the same passion. You need many of them. You cannot do it with a small group of people. And we were a large group, but many of them (inaudible) the last generation passed away. The parents who came with me, I remember. When there was a storm, and we were discussing the problem at the separate school board to vote against it. And, they had the majority, they were counting and we had the majority we brought 3000 people with buses coming from all of the Italian neighborhoods, and they got scared. We brought 3000 people under a big (inaudible). Can you imagine? And so they voted to kind of to keep it. And they said "We should never try again. To be against parents because this is it." And that's still public relation. "No, let's not—let's keep them quiet." "Let's not upset the parents." "Let's just do it in a way that (pause)." It was never done seriously.

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 49:22

One that impressed me the most was [Ned] McKeown. There was nobody else who—that stature. McKeown was really super, intellectually speaking and morally speaking, everything. [Duncan] Green, too, was great. McKeown was different. He really believed in it.

Do you have a sense of where that excellence came from? Why that is?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 49:50

I don't know why that is. He really understood education. He knew the arguments from inside out, the against, the pro, he knew them all. He was bright which is my own observation. Some of the directors of education I met, I wouldn't even. I wouldn't even give them a classroom. Imagine, the director of education!

McKeown was good, because when he had to sell the program to the principals, when he had to sell the program to the trustees, when he had to sell the program to whoever it was, he always had a passion and knew what he was talking about. And, the admin, they liked their approach to it, and which nobody else did. Some of these people become good administrators and they might be very good in business but not intellectually, not any. But McKeown was intellectual. [Duncan] Green was also intellectual at a certain point, not as much as McKeown but he was. But the rest—we know the people, good business people, or a gym. You know, I met many principals who were gym teachers. They become, you know, they, the fact that you don't know who Shakespeare is, that is irrelevant.

You mentioned a couple of times this afternoon that Anglo Saxons were pushing back against heritage languages.

Do you think it is largely because of them the program didn't succeed?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 54:25



I think actually this because of—I believe this—is the education system itself didn't want our program and didn't respond to have a quality program. They said, You know, we're doing it under pressure. But we're not going to really and so they never really, really cared. You know, there was never a group of educators who say, "Okay, now we have this problem. Let's do it seriously, or let's not do it." Then, the community pressure also start to come down because, when they saw that the children weren't learning too much. They said, "Well, what's the use? They're not learning too much."

### What do you think it would have looked like to do this program seriously?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 55:26

I think we would have created a completely total atmosphere in Toronto. It would have been really multilingual and I think would have been such an enrichment for Canada. From every point of view. I'm still convinced that there was an enrichment from Canada because the influence that Canada has could have been much greater. You see, this way, we have that influence, economic influence, here and there. But really, there isn't that much in the world, we attach ourselves to the States and be carried by them.

### Did you think having, like full bilingual programs, would have been?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 56:28

I think so. But there was something that having the programs I think, being taught in Italian other subjects being taught. I think that wasn't ready, the society, it wasn't ready. No, Tony Grande tried. But he didn't create a good response. In fact, he put in an alert against us. The program of Tony Grande, I agreed with him, but Tony said "Don't do it." People are going to respond so negatively, that is going to hurt the program." And in fact, it was hurting with the program. Because even people were in favour of international languages or against that program because they say "Now you're too much. This is okay but, now..." So they didn't go for it [bilingual programs] and it created right away a backlash from the educators. Because they thought we were pushing it too much now. And so some of the hidden opposition came out again. Started to come out again. And in fact, I was afraid of that. I had warned Tony that this could have happened.

### Did you work closely together with Tony Grande?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 58:02

Yeah, Tony is a nice guy. So he was trying hard. He was trying hard, but he didn't have a direct involvement in anything He was trying direct involvement. He was trying to promote a theoretical point of view. Tony was a teacher and then became a member of Parliament. He didn't really get involved in the promotion, etc. In parliament he spoke in favour and had the right idea. But he didn't really become involved. You got to become involved. Today, they say, "Oh yeah, nice stuff, but." He was good. There's no question and he was sincere, but didn't get involved. I was sorry after because we lost him. Tony was a hell of a nice guy, among other things. We do my share with many of the fights in our youth, too. Because we were both active with students. I was in the student council was great, Steve Langdon and Bob Rae. Everyone understood the council: I just arrived from Italy and I didn't speak English, but they elected me as a student council. I was part of this group. I was the Executive actually and became very close friends and to date, we're still friends.



Another question I had with me has to do with the relationship between the heritage language programs, and the Black cultural heritage programs that were around the same time. Do you recall those interactions and the debates about?

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 1:00:29

Yes, we really thought that there was no contradiction, or no opposition. In fact, supporting each other was the main thing. We supported totally the Black Heritage Program. And even though they didn't have the language element. We see—remember our motto?—There is no language without a culture. There is no culture without a language.—A culture without a language is mute and a language without a culture is dead. So you know, we thought that always culture and language have to go together and we totally supported the Black Heritage program. And still do.

If there is something that we didn't do at all, not enough, is supporting Native languages. I remember, speaking, because I used to go all over the country, speak about it. I went to Nova Scotia, to Alberta, Manitoba, etc. and I met many of the Natives' groups. But I don't think we pushed enough. I think now, there is a little bit more readiness to recognize the Natives, but I don't know the language. The Natives, yes, but I am not sure about the language. And still we didn't really succeed in saying that there is no language without culture and there is no culture without language.

I think the only thing we well succeeded quite a bit is integration over time with Canadians. That we succeeded—there's no question about that. They understood the principles, and they actually translate into facts. The great majority, great, great majority of Italians became Canadian those days. We had Canadian citizenship called (inaudible). They voted. They participated and now they know that they are Canadians of Italian heritage.

**But the language is mostly lost though?**

Yeah, but I still love the language. If you went to an Italian family and ask them “Would you want your son to speak Italian?,” 99.9% will say yes. But to go and waste time, they'll have some reservations, they'll say. To go afternoon, don't make them play. They don't learn anything because they don't do it seriously. Then, it's a different story. People wanted the language.

Do you know the Europeans come knowing, having studied more than one language. They educated Europeans. So they can be ready for it and say, “Well, of course, knowing Italian and Spanish.” I grew up that way. You know, I was in grade six when I first started French. I also studied Latin and Greek. After I wanted to learn English, but I didn't have enough room to get English, too, because at the time, I took French and Greek and Latin. But I certainly was impressed by people who speak several languages. And we used to, we had an expressive child, he speaks so many languages, today he's a well educated person. So they will still be in favour of knowing the language and but they would want to the lost a little bit [of] faith in the system and in the community didn't have the drive anymore. The Columbus Centre, where used to be the Columbus Centre for, what is now? Where used to be the National Congress of Canadians, what is now?

**What you think it would take to make international languages now more effective? Do you think it is possible?**

**Alberto DiGiovanni** 1:05:50



L A R C H

No. I think we left it because we got complacent with the fact that people accepted the program even though they weren't going to take care of it. We see the program is there first, ok, but we didn't realize that the program was there but it wasn't well delivered. That doesn't mean that the teachers were not good teachers. Because the teachers, most of them were very good. They tried, but what happened? [In] 20 minutes, they cut here, cut there. It's half of an hour but it's 20 minutes. Well, is it half an hour or 20 minutes? Well, you know, it's really 20 minutes. What can you do? We begin to class with 20 minutes. There were many other ways I could have done but they never cared about really delivering good programs.

[End of transcript]