



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (Simon Fraser University, 2008)
BA Hons (University of Winnipeg, 2005)

**“Sporting Multiculturalism:
Toronto’s Postwar European Immigrants, Gender, Diaspora,
and the Grassroots Making of Canadian Diversity”**

Department of History

Monday, February 5, 2018
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross, Department of History, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Eric Sager, Department of History, UVic (Member)
Dr. Lynne Marks, Department of History, Uvic (Member)
Dr. Avigail Eisenberg, Department of Political Science, UVic (Outside Member)

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Dr. Roberto Perin, Department of History, York University

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Dr. Edwin Nissen, School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, UVic

Abstract

This dissertation offers an alternative lens to understand Canada's gradual embrace of multiculturalism. Scholars have typically "worked back" from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's famous 1971 declaration to unearth the origins of multicultural legislation, focusing on departmental policies, intense lobbying by ethnic organizations, and changing attitudes during the sixties' container of "third force" (of neither English nor French origin) activism. This story of Canadian multiculturalism is told from the grassroots level of immigrant leisure, where a pluralistic envisioning of English Canada was foreshadowed, renegotiated, and acted out "from below." It argues that the thousands of European immigrant men who played and watched sports on Toronto's sport periphery were agents of change. They created a competitive model of popular multiculturalism that emphasized cultural distinctiveness during a period of rapid social and political transformation and national self-reflection. By the 1980s, the first generation immigrants and community leaders moved this model of competitive pluralism into the transnational sphere and interacted with other diasporic projects when they sent their Canadian-born children on "homeland trips" to Europe to discover their roots in the context of sport tournaments. At the same time, popular multiculturalism moved into the mainstream when the City of Toronto appropriated soccer fandom as the example for its own rebranding as a metropolis of urban harmony and conviviality. This dissertation studies how and why one immigrant community played an outsized role in the grassroots organization of diversity. Italians were the first to establish a profitable model out of ethnic sport and the estimated 250,000 people who celebrated unscripted on the streets of Toronto after Italy's 1982 World Cup victory, it is argued, produced a watershed moment in the history of Canadian multiculturalism. The World Cup party inaugurated new modes of citizen participation in the public sphere, produced the narrative with which Italians formed a collective memory of their post-migration experience, and prompted mainstream political and commercial interests to represent themselves to the public in the symbols and language of multiculturalism as sport. This dissertation also shows how the movement of a male-driven, competitive pluralism to the centre, sometimes accompanied by outbursts of rough masculinities, revealed the paradoxical problem that in the new vision of inclusivity, cultural distinctiveness had to be identified, maintained, and sometimes defended to survive.