

Famèe Furlane of Vancouver History 1958 - 2008

Early in 1958, four young Furlan friends who were aware of other Italian societies in Vancouver, BC, decided that there should also be a local distinct Friulano society. **Their desire was to have a society where Furlans could get together socially in order to maintain, enjoy and promote their family values, culture and traditions. It was also important that as immigrants in a new country, a network for information and help be available to anyone needing such services. Unsure of how to proceed in order to make this a reality, Ermes Chivilo, Louis Moretti, Primo Tesan and Angelo Santarossa approached Giovanni D'Appolonia for guidance and assistance. Giovanni supported the idea and agreed to help if they could sign up 32 members. Ermes and Primo were the only two men with cars, so the group paired up and within three weeks triumphantly presented Giovanni with 63 names. With the help of many people, the Famèe Furlane of Vancouver was born. This same type of enthusiasm, commitment, support and achievements of the members of the Famèe Furlane of Vancouver which began 50 years ago has continued to this day.**

The First Banquet was held in 1958 at the Clinton Hall, which years later became the Famèe Furlane Hall. A sold out crowd cheered as the polenta was ceremoniously carried into the hall. Throughout the years, banquets were also held at the Hastings Auditorium, Russian Hall, and on occasion, at the Italian Cultural Center, as well as other locations. Our society has gained an enviable reputation for the excellent food it continues to provide at banquets and other special events.

The first of many annual picnics was held at Belcarra Park, which at that time, involved a short boat ride across the inlet to the park. Swedish Park, New Brighton, Cariboo and Confederation Park were also some locations for the lively summer picnics.

The love of music and a desire to enjoy and promote the regional dances were the basis of the creation of the Balletto. The dancers, having performed at many events locally, nationally and in the United States, continue to entertain audiences.

Passionate about soccer, the Furlans organized their own team, which began in the Mainland League Second Division. After winning the Second Division League Cup, the team was promoted to the Mainland League First Division, where they twice won the League Cup. They also won the Imperial Cup twice. 1966 was a special year for the team when they won both the First Division League Cup and Imperial Cup.

In 1962 the Famèe Furlane sponsored the first of many charter trips to Italy. For most of the travellers, several with young children born here, this was their first trip back to Friuli since immigrating to Canada. **The charters successfully continued for several years, reuniting the members and their families with friends and families in Friuli.**

'Il Bolletino' newsletter, **which was published every three months for a period of time, began in the mid 1960s.** Years later, 'Par Sintisi Dongje' became the Furlan newspaper, publishing news, entertainment and general information.

In 1966 Babbo Natale made his first appearance, much to the delight of most of the children and slight trepidation for some of the younger children. Albino Benvenuto was the first Babbo Natale, a role he happily portrayed for many years. This event continues to be a highlight of the Christmas season for our members and their families.

What would a society be without the ladies?! The Lega Femminile (Ladies Auxiliary) was founded in 1966 and instantly became an integral part of the society, helping with social occasions, banquets, picnics and many other events. The Ladies proudly hosted the first Festa dell'Emigrante. As part of their community work, the Lega Femminile hosted and assisted at Red Cross Blood Donor Clinics, raised funds for the Variety Club Telethon and donated to B.C. Children's Hospital.

With the purchase of the old Clinton Hall in 1976, **a new era began for our society.** Now that the Famèe Furlane had a 'home' of its own, all functions could be held at one site, except for special events that exceed the capacity of the hall. Initially, only a facelift was done on the hall, but as time progressed, major renovations were completed. The hall truly is the focal point of the society. **As well, both the small and upper halls have become a source of revenue through rentals to the general public for special occasions and other activities.**

Young people are the future of any society or organization. In the late 1970's, the young dancers from the Balletto joined together to loosely form the first Youth Group. After having experienced some cultural exchanges, as well as other social events, the formal Youth Group was established.

The Famèe Furlane of Vancouver had the pleasure of hosting two very successful Congressi, one in 1979 and the other in 2004. Attendees were able to renew old acquaintances and make new friends while participating in workshops, enjoying excellent meals, sight seeing and cultural entertainment.

Over the years, many cultural events have continued to define and enhance our Society. Such events include student exchanges, performances, cooking classes, participation in community events and parades, exhibitions, including 'Mostra di Cescia' and 'Le Radici del Futuro', summer Friulan classes for **the children and youth, Miss Friuli pageants,** guest speakers providing civic and miscellaneous information, entertainers from Friuli and locally, grape sales, wine and cheese parties, briscola tournaments, bocce tournaments, to name a few. As in the past, most notably for the devastating 1976 earthquake in Friuli, the Society continues to donate to local charities and international emergencies.

The Famèe Furlane of Vancouver proudly celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2008, with a weekend of special activities on November 14th, 15th and 16th. The festivities began with a Gala Dinner **held at the Italian Cultural Center on Friday evening,** which was attended by approximately 430 people, including invited guests.

A buffet dinner of traditional Furlan food accompanied by wines from Friuli was thoroughly enjoyed by the attendees at a "Taste of Friuli" on Saturday, which was held at our hall.

Father Adelchi Bertoli officiated at a special Mass in Furlan, held on Sunday afternoon **at St. Helen's Church. This was followed by a pasta dinner in St. Helen's Hall.** An

enthusiastic audience was later entertained at the Cultural Evening, **held at the Famèe Furlane Hall**, which concluded the **very successful** weekend of events.

As one enters the Famèe Furlane Hall, **a beautiful mosaic created by Gino Lenarduzzi**, commemorating our 25th Anniversary graces the west wall on the main floor, complimented by the exquisite mosaic on the floor nearby. These depictions of a time long past are gentle reminders to members and guests alike, of an intrinsic part of the Furlan culture and heritage.