

Special Events

The following stories are only some of the highlights which have occurred over the past 50 years but are by no means all.

Parades and Floats

In 1966 our society participated in a parade which was held on Commercial Drive in Vancouver. Members on the float were dressed in traditional Furlan costumes and were accompanied by representatives of the Italfriuli International Soccer Club who proudly displayed their trophy and the Famèe Furlane crest.

The Famèe Furlane won first prize for the best float in the parade at Italian Days, on Commercial Drive in 1969. The float was so original that the club was asked to participate in the PNE parade the following year.

For the 1970 PNE parade, the float, depicting a Friulano water well among other things, was quite large and required a driver in the actual float as well as a car pulling it. Fortunately the judging for the PNE parade floats is done prior to the start of the parade and the Famèe Furlane float proudly won the second prize. The beginning of the parade went wonderfully well until reaching Hastings and Seymour when the car pulling the float began to smoke and had to be towed to Hastings and Commercial, which was the end of the parade route. The episode was covered by the evening news and the newspapers. To this day, those involved with that parade enjoy a good laugh!

Grapes

As a result of trying to get some form of revenue, in 1968 a decision was made by the directors and members to sell grapes. Giuseppe Toso and Pietro Infanti were designated for the job. Without a clue how to begin, the pair travelled to California to visit Franco Celotti, a former member, who provided information about vineyards and locations. They decided on the Sacramento Valley and contacted the local Chamber of Commerce for help. The Riolo Brothers were approached and although they were not initially enthusiastic about participating, advised Giuseppe and Pietro of the procedures involved in importing grapes.

Upon returning home, they applied to the Canadian Agricultural Department for a permit as an Association to import grapes directly from California, found a Broker, trucks with a cooling system and then advised the Riolo Brothers to send 2 truckloads of grapes. Signs advertising the sale were made and the trucks were unloaded in the parking area of Pete Tolusso's business. Two crushers were also purchased. Grapes were delivered and crushed before moving on to the next customer. Fortunately the grapes were good that year! The second year, the amount of truckloads was doubled. In the third year, the trucks were unloaded at the gas station on Hastings and Slocan. A new supplier was used in the 4th year and the quality of the grapes diminished. By now 8 truckloads were arriving but sales slumped to the point that there was half a truckload left, which was sold to another importer.

Because of the amount of effort involved, time lost from work, as well as also working on evenings and weekends when the grapes arrived, it became difficult to keep volunteers. Help from these dedicated people was necessary and greatly appreciated. The amount of revenue generated was not sufficient to justify continuing, plus competition was fierce, so the decision was made stop importing grapes.

Earthquake in Friuli

In 1976 a catastrophic earthquake struck Friuli, claiming a large number of lives, causing a massive number of injuries and devastating amount of damage. The enormous task of reconstruction not only included new homes and businesses but also the painstaking work of rebuilding and restoring the many monuments destroyed during the earthquake. Where ever possible, original materials were used in the restorations.

A Special General Meeting was held during which there was unanimous approval to raise funds for the 'Friuli Relief Emergency Trust Fund'. With heartfelt empathy, our Society donated \$3000, raised through fund raising events including a very successful dinner. A representative from the Famèe Furlane of Vancouver was part of a delegation which traveled to Friuli to present the funds raised in Canada for the earthquake relief.

An unexpected benefit for Friuli of the reconstruction was the emergence of new industries, including a steel foundry, which is now one of the largest in Europe.

The Region of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, in 1986, showed gratitude to the City of Vancouver for their contribution, by presenting a triptych (three panels) of mosaic reproductions from the Basilica of Aquilea. These are permanently displayed in the right wing of the Vancouver City Hall.

Presentation in Udine

In commemoration of the 1000th anniversary of the City of Udine in 1981, the Famèe Furlane and Friuli Nel Mondo each had a totem pole carved. MacMillan and Bloedel also generously donated a cross-section of a tree that was 1000 years old. Some of the members volunteered to preserve the cross-section before wrapping the perimeter in stainless steel binding prior to attaching the brass commemorative plaque stating from the 'Famèe Furlane di Vancouver'. The totem poles and cross-section were presented during the Congresso in Udine and subsequently placed in a park in that city.

Mostra Della Civiltà Friulana

The Mostra Della Civiltà Friulana was an exhibit of panels of photographs of Friulano art, with emphasis on the history of the Furlan culture. Open to the public, it was displayed in 1984 at the Robson Square Media Center for almost two weeks.

Le Radici del Futuro

Friuli Nel Mondo sponsored an exhibition to various cities around the world, of a series of panels depicting commerce, industry and tourism. After arriving in Vancouver from Australia in 2000, work was done under the guidance of two people sent by Friuli Nel Mondo, to build supports and panels in order to be able to display the exhibits. The exhibition was ceremoniously opened by the Italian Consul along with a representative from Friuli Nel Mondo and attended by invited dignitaries from various levels of government as well as our members. It was held in the upper hall of the Famèe Furlane and open to the general public from November 7 – 11, 2000. On the last evening of the mostra, a "Taste of Friuli" was held in the small hall, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

Congresses

The 1979 Congress was very successfully hosted by the Famèe Furlane of Vancouver. Approximately 400 Canadian participants attended, many of whom were first time visitors to the West Coast.

With this in mind, the Pre- Tour was a four day Rocky Mountain journey beginning in Calgary Alberta. The travellers not only thoroughly enjoyed visiting Banff, Lake Louise and other locations but also the amazing scenery in Western Canada.

The weekend events which were held at the Italian Cultural Center began with registrations on Friday evening.

Exhibitions featuring painters, artists and products from Friuli were displayed throughout the weekend. “Tessitura Carnica”, a textile company, featured a large display of their products and by-products. The latest in chairs was on display by a chair manufacturer. Mr. Monassi, one of the leading designers and casters of coins in Friuli, displayed some of his work and featured a coin designed especially for the 1979 Congress.

Saturday began with the Opening Ceremonies followed by workshops and lunch. The Gala Dinner was attended by more than 500 people who enjoyed a sumptuous meal followed by dancing.

Sunday began with a City Tour which provided participants the opportunity to discover some of the beautiful and interesting sites of Vancouver. In the afternoon, Father Bulfon beautifully celebrated Mass in Furlan. The final event of the day was the Cultural Evening, featuring the Famèe Furlane Balletto, Trio Pacai Band from Friuli (who also entertained at the Gala Dinner) as well as several other entertainers.

The Closing Ceremonies were held on Monday morning after which attendees bid farewell to old friends and new acquaintances. By all accounts, it was a wonderfully successful weekend! Special thanks to all the volunteers who worked so diligently to make this weekend so memorable.

The Famèe Furlane of Vancouver proudly hosted the 2004 Congress on September 3 – 6, which was well attended by approximately 450 people including visitors from across Canada, the US and Italy.

The four day Pre-Tour included Victoria and the southern part of Vancouver Island to Nanaimo then up to Whistler. According to reports from the people on the tour, everything was very enjoyable but Whistler was the highlight.

The Congress began on Friday, September 3rd at the Coast Plaza Hotel, Stanley Park, with registration, a wine and cheese reception and Jazz presentation.

Opening Ceremonies were held on Saturday morning, followed by 3 workshops and lunch. **On exhibit at the Hotel were among other things, works of art, beautifully made handicrafts and some antique items.** The Gala Dinner was held that evening at the Italian Cultural Center, where more than 500 people enjoyed the food, company and dancing.

A City Tour on Sunday included the Capilano Suspension Bridge and the UBC Museum of Anthropology as well as other city sights. Afternoon Mass in Furlan was celebrated at St. Helen’s Church with Fr. Adelchi Bertoli officiating. The collection money was donated to a charity called Vanspec and gratefully received. Following the Mass, a “light dinner” was held at the Famèe Furlane Hall, which turned out to be one of the highlights of the Congress. Both the upper and

small halls were filled to capacity as attendees enjoyed the traditional Furlan food. The last stop of the day was the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, for a very enjoyable Cultural Evening featuring our Balletto, Alessandra Bordon, Susan Bertoia, Tammy Comuzzi, Italian Folk Choir, First Nations Dancers, Austrian dancers and others.

The Closing Ceremonies were held on Monday morning followed by a buffet lunch. Many thanks to everyone who volunteered their time to make this Congress such a great success!