

Preface

Canada and Finland share an enduring and unique relationship. Between 1860 and 2008, 1.4 million people emigrated from Finland to communities around the world. Thousands chose Canada as their new home.

Generally, historians accept that there have been three waves of immigration. As might be expected, these waves of Finnish immigrants reflected the political, economic, and social evolution of Finland from the late nineteenth century on. The result was both the renewal and the rejuvenation of the Finnish community in Canada with each successive generation of immigrants and continuous and ongoing contact between Finnish Canadians and their extended families in Finland.

Finnish immigrants to Canada were mostly working-class and, like most other immigrants to Canada at the time, their daily lives were consumed with providing for the needs of their families. Both women and men worked hard to establish lives in Canada, and the centre of activity was the home. For some, religion and the church played a central role in their lives, but for others it was politics and community organization.

What is central, though, is that an enduring attachment and love of Finland remained. The sense of identity, egalitarianism, and self-sufficiency that Finnish immigrants brought to Canada was influenced by Finland's history, geographical location, and culture. These men and women established themselves across the country – from Sointula, British Columbia to Halifax, Nova Scotia – and contributed substantially to the development of a multicultural Canadian society during the twentieth century. They also laid the foundation for a diplomatic and economic relationship – both official and unofficial – that continues to develop today.

The various articles found in *Canada–Finland, Celebrating 2017* reflect not only the broad interest in all things Canadian–Finnish, but also the historical and contemporary linkages between the two nations which have developed over the past 150 years.

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