

Hard Work Conquers All
Building the Finnish Community in Canada

*Edited by Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz,
and Ronald N. Harpelle*



UBC Press · Vancouver · Toronto

Sample Material © UBC Press 2018

© UBC Press 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Hard work conquers all : building the Finnish community in Canada /
edited by Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz, and Ronald N. Harpelle.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-0-7748-3468-1 (hardcover). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3470-4 (PDF). –

ISBN 978-0-7748-3471-1 (EPUB). – ISBN 978-0-7748-3472-8 (Kindle)

1. Finnish Canadians. 2. Finns – Canada. 3. Finnish Canadians – Social conditions – 20th century. 4. Finns – Canada – Social conditions – 20th century. 5. Finnish Canadians – Economic conditions – 20th century. 6. Finns – Canada – Economic conditions – 20th century. 7. Finnish Canadians – Social life and customs – 20th century. 8. Finns – Canada – Social life and customs – 20th century. I. Beaulieu, Michel S., editor II. Ratz, David K. (David Karl), editor III. Harpelle, Ronald N., editor

FC106.F5H37 2018

971.00494541

C2017-903769-2

C2017-903770-6

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

Set in Helvetica Condensed and Minion by Artegraphica Design Co. Ltd.

Copy editor: Robyn So

Proofreader: Carmen Tiampo

Indexer: Sergey Lobachev

Cover designer: Martyn Schmoll

Cover photos: *front*, Finnish lumber workers at Intola, ON, ca. early 1900s; *back*, Socialist Women's Group, Port Arthur, ON, ca. 1910s. Both photos courtesy of Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, Lakehead University Archives.

UBC Press

The University of British Columbia

2029 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

www.ubcpress.ca

Sample Material © UBC Press 2018

Contents

List of Figures and Tables / vii

Acknowledgments / ix

Introduction: Writing about Finnish Canadian Experiences / 1

Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz, and Ronald N. Harpelle

1 The Finnish Contribution to Early Canadian Socialist Organizations / 29

Michel S. Beaulieu

2 Matti Kurikka and the Utopian Socialist Settlement of Sointula,
British Columbia / 51

J. Donald Wilson

3 Finnish Canadian Soldiers in the First World War / 68

David K. Ratz

4 Wrestling, Immigration, and Working-Class Culture: The Finns
of the Thunder Bay District before 1939 / 102

C. Nathan Hatton

5 “I Won’t Be a Slave!”: Finnish Domestic Workers in Canada, 1911–30 / 121

Varpu Lindström

6 “Dear Jussi-setä”: Generation, Language, and Community in
the Youth Page of *Vapaus*, 1945–60 / 143

Tanya Tuohimaa

7 Terveisiä: A Century of Finnish Immigrant Letters from Canada / 165

Samira Saramo

8 Cookbooks for Upstairs: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Perspective / 185

Hanna Snellman

9 From Bush to Bay Street: The Finnish Community of Thunder Bay as
Memories, Narratives, and Experiences / 206

Antti Häkkinen

Afterword / 226

Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz, and Ronald N. Harpelle

Contributors / 230

Index / 232

Figures and Tables

Figures

- 2 / Anniversary event at Finnish Labour Temple, Port Arthur, ON, 1952
- 5 / Finnish Labour Temple, Port Arthur, ON, 1920
- 10 / Finnish lumber workers at Intola, ON, ca. early 1900s
- 32 / Directors of Finnish Temperance Society, Port Arthur, ON, 1902
- 33 / Työkansa Finnish Printing Co., ca. 1907–15
- 35 / Stairs of Finnish Labour Temple, Port Arthur, ON, ca. 1910
- 42 / Lumber strikers, lumber and sawmill workers' union meeting at Finnish Labour Temple (Big Finn Hall), Port Arthur, ON, July 1935
- 52 / Sointula, BC, 1903
- 53 / Matti Kurikka (1863–1915), date unknown
- 56 / Executive of Kalevan Kansa, 1904
- 77 / Antti Myllymäki, date unknown
- 79 / Emil Mustama, in army uniform, date unknown
- 103 / Advertisement for Victoria Day wrestling match, 1918
- 108 / Advertisement for wrestling match at Finnish Labour Temple, Port Arthur, ON, 1923
- 110 / David Takala, 1910s
- 114 / Advertisement for wrestling match in Port Arthur, ON, 1923
- 124 / Socialist Women's Group, Port Arthur, ON, ca. 1910s
- 131 / Sanna Kannasto and her family, ca. 1910s
- 135 / Labour Day gathering of Finns, Port Arthur, ON, 1907
- 136 / Parade of people, with banner "Women should vote," Port Arthur, ON, 1911 or 1912
- 153 / Timo Tuohimaa standing with his sister Kaija, Sudbury, ON, ca. 1964
- 170 / Lumber camp crew and cooks, ca. early 1900s
- 174 / Mrs. Kauppi, cook at bush camp, with her niece Alice Beck, ca. 1920s

- 174 / Finnish family standing in front of farmhouse, ca. 1920
- 191 / Page from a Mina Valli cookbook, 1914
- 199 / Page from a Mina Valli cookbook, 1914
- 212 / Finnish Labour Temple, Thunder Bay, ON, 2010
- 217 / Labour Temple and its restaurant, the Hoito
- 220 / Elli Nieminen with daughter Anita Fisher and granddaughters
Natasha and Hanna, 2013
- 227 / Hoito staff photo, 1940
- 228 / Finnish Independence Day crowd at Labour Temple, Port Arthur,
ON, ca. late 1940s

Table

- 150 / Percentage of letters by language and gender

Acknowledgments

WE THANK ALL OF the contributors to the volume for their patience, persistence, and passion. Each has provided wonderful essays that make valuable contributions to both Finnish Canadian studies and to the history of Canadian immigration.

The contributors are indebted to the various archives, libraries, and personal collections utilized in their individual works. In particular, the Lakehead University Library and Archives' staff has been indispensable. The editors would like to recognize the former Renvall Institute, the journal *Faravid: Historian ja arkeologian tutkimuksen aikakauskirja*, and the estate of Varpu Lindström for permission to include previously published material.

This collection would also not have been possible without the financial and institutional support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Friends of the Finnish Labour Temple, and the Department of History at Lakehead University.

Special mention should also be made to Kelly Saxberg, Chris Southcott, Raija Warkentin, and Börje Vähämäki for their assistance and advice. Thanks also to Jenna Kirker and Amanda Lino, who compiled information, fact checked, and read through the manuscript.

Finally, a special thanks to Darcy Cullen at UBC Press, who shepherded this project along through both the expected and unexpected hurdles. Thanks also must go to Melissa Pitts and the editing and production team led by Ann Macklem.

Hard Work Conquers All

Introduction: Writing about Finnish Canadian Experiences

*Michel S. Beaulieu, David K. Ratz,
and Ronald N. Harpelle*

LABOR OMNIA VINCIT. Since 1910, these words – oft translated as “hard work conquers all” – have stood engraved above the entrance to the Finnish Labour Temple located in the former city of Port Arthur, today part of the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario. The decision for this phrase to adorn Canada’s largest, and only remaining, Finnish labour temple was made at a public meeting held in the community. Considering the phrase’s widespread use as a rallying cry in the labour movement at the time, the decision should not be surprising given the history of Finnish immigration and settlement in Canada.¹

The story of the success of the Finnish community in Canada, and its contribution to Canadian society during the early twentieth century, is perhaps more accurately described by the original phrase, from Virgil’s *Georgics*: *Labor omnia vincit improbus* [Relentless work conquers all difficulties]. While the story of Finns in Canada dovetails with the larger literature on Canadian immigration and ethnic history, the Finnish presence in Canada – about 130,000 individuals today – remains little known to Canadians outside those remaining concentrations in Northern Ontario. However, the history of Finnish immigration and settlement stands out as one of the more engaging chapters in modern Canadian history because Finland’s independence in 1917 was granted by decree in the wake of the October Revolution.² As a consequence, Finland, and the Finnish immigrants who arrived in Canada, lived in the shadow of a past and present intertwined with the most significant political upheaval in the twentieth century.

Finnish Migration to Canada

Generally, historians accept that there are three waves of immigration that must be factored into the Finnish experience in Canada. Like the waves that wash up on any shore, they always run up against the ebb of waves that preceded them. No matter the differences in their political and religious beliefs, Finnish immigrants who arrived in communities that had already seen Finnish immigrants



Audience at Nahjus and Isku Club's fiftieth anniversary celebration at the Finnish Labour Temple, 1952. (Photo courtesy of the Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, Lakehead University Archives.)

had to contend with tide pools that were formed by previous waves of newcomers. Each of these waves resulted from the political, economic, and social ripples that defined Europe during the twentieth century and the rise and spread of capitalism. Like other ethnic groups that migrated to North America out of the Soviet context, the contours of Finnish experience in Canada were shaped by forces on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, and Finnish immigrant communities were subject to the continuous ebb and flow of their members.

The first wave of Finnish immigration began in the decade after Confederation and lasted until the beginning of the First World War. Over 350,000 Finns migrated to North America, albeit most of them intending to go to the United States and the vast majority remaining there.³ These were people who left the Grand Duchy of Finland, a part of Imperial Russia, in search of the same opportunities that attracted other European immigrants to North America. Canada was one option for migration, and those who ventured to this corner of the world came in search of economic security. As a group, these Finnish immigrants ranged from conservative churchgoers to radical socialists, a reflection of the ideologies that divided their homeland. They cleared forests to make homesteads for their families, and they also worked in the mining and forest

industries. United in their Finnishness, this group laid the early foundations for the communities that soon filled with refugees from the turmoil in Europe. Between 1901 and 1920, Finnish migration to Canada totalled 22,302, or 1.4 percent of total Canadian immigration.⁴

They were followed after the First World War by left-wing Finns who fled persecution by right-wing Finns, leaving the newly independent nation of Finland in the wake of a civil war. It erupted a month after Finland was granted its independence from the Soviet Union, and a conservative group, known as the White Guard, aided by German troops, overthrew the Social Democratic government defended by leftists, known as the Red Guard. During the interwar years, 36,834 Finns migrated to Canada, with 36,076 (the single largest number in Canadian history) arriving during the aftermath of the civil war, between 1921 and 1930.⁵ The majority of these immigrants were different from the first group because they were fleeing persecution, not merely looking for better opportunities. They brought with them the radical politics of the Russian Revolution that had inspired them and the wounds of a civil war that saw about forty thousand people lose their lives. It is, therefore, not a surprise that about 60 percent of the members of the Communist Party of Canada in the late 1920s were Finnish immigrants or their children, and their contributions to Canada's political landscape were significant.⁶

The third wave arrived after the Second World War, and they reflected the turmoil of a war that destroyed Europe and provided an opportunity for the Soviet Union to invade neighbouring Finland in late 1939. The Winter War saw the loss of twenty-five thousand Finnish lives, another forty-five thousand wounded, and the triumph of the Soviets. Despite that, a year after the Winter War ended, the Finns began a new offensive, which they referred to as the Continuation War, that coincided with Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941. This made Finland cobelligerents with Germany, and it is a little known fact that Canada declared war on Finland in December 1941 as a result. The war raged on for three years, claiming sixty-three thousand Finnish lives, and, in the end, Finland lost territory and paid reparations.⁷

The war was followed by the defeat of Germany, the end of the Second World War in Europe, and the beginning of reconstruction. Finland was a relatively poor country, and for many, the future was bleak, and the prospects for economic security appeared to be better in Canada. Bitterness and hostility towards the Soviet Union remained strong after the war, and the third wave of Finnish immigrants carried these feelings with them to Canada, where they settled among second wave immigrants who had different politics.

As might be expected, each new wave established new organizations and different relationships with the host country and its existing population. Each

successive wave of immigrants enjoyed a period in which their views and ideology had a heavy influence on the local community, and each was followed by another wave of people who shared their culture and language and had a similar history but often a very different political orientation.

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. Nevertheless, these immigrants and their descendants living in Canada represent the largest Finnish community outside of Finland. This is because they established themselves across the country but were concentrated in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, Ontario, where their communities remain strong. Exceptional experiments like the commune of Sointula, British Columbia, and small Finnish farming settlements in Manitoba and Saskatchewan also make up the broader Finnish experience in Canada, but these have faded away.

Historians have yet to identify a fourth wave of Finnish immigration, but this does not mean that Finns have quit immigrating to Canada. Finns continue to make their way to Canada, where they now prefer to settle in large cities, where contact with other Finns is less likely than in small towns with a significant Finnish population. These new Finns are a break with the past because they are not the peasants, radicals, or economic refugees who came before. They are young, educated, and cosmopolitan. The dispersed nature of their settlement means that it is unlikely they will have the same social or political impact of the groups that came before them; but they are Finns, and they can take pride in the sacrifices Finns have made in the past to contribute to the building of modern Canada. Today, once vibrant Finnish communities are a shadow of their past, and many smaller communities have all but disappeared from memory, but there remains a Finnish fact in Canada that continues to shape society. From 1951 to 1980, 26,706 Finnish immigrants arrived in Canada, 61 percent of which arrived between 1951 and 1960.⁸

Like all the other groups of immigrants who arrived on Canadian shores during the last century or so, many of the Finns held on to their identity by clustering together in communities. This isolation worked as far as keeping the Finnish language and identity intact, but it also made Finns a target, especially because of the radical politics that some, but not all, kept alive in their communities. As a result, the Finnish experience in Canada includes beatings, arrests, deportations, and plenty of discrimination. This only served to further entrench a Finnish identity and strengthen the bonds that held communities together. In places like Sudbury and Thunder Bay, where geography allowed people to retreat into the rugged landscapes that were familiar to Finns because they were so similar to the boreal forest of Finland, Finnishness lived on. This is also true of



Finnish Labour Temple, Port Arthur, Ontario. 1920. Hoito Restaurant in basement. *Työkansa* Newspaper building on the left built in period 1912–14. (Photo courtesy of Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, Lakehead University Archives.)

other immigrant groups who were isolated from mainstream society by a combination of culture, language, and geography, but among Finns there was also an element of radical politics that distanced them even further.

Development of Finnish Studies in Canada

Context is important, and the literature on Finnish immigration and settlement in Canada reflects the internal dynamics of the communities that have been influenced for over a century by events in Finland. As with any immigrant group, the vitality of their language, politics, and culture depended on two aspects. The first was the near constant arrival of new immigrants from the old country, which served to provide a buffer against the forces of assimilation because each new immigrant reminded those who came before them of their roots by reinforcing the Finnish identity. The second aspect was the concentration of Finns in smaller communities, where life could take place almost exclusively in Finnish.

Historians are fortunate that literacy was high among Finnish immigrants and that large volumes of documentation exist in Canadian archives and libraries. The visual record left by Finnish newcomers to Canada is also remarkable. It seems that in addition to arriving with pen and paper, Finns also liked

to take pictures of themselves and the events that marked their lives. Those interested in studying the role of Finns in Canada are fortunate to be able to turn to a variety of sources that offer a very clear idea of what life was like for Finnish immigrants and how their presence impacted Canadian society. As the authors in this volume have shown, the Finnish experience in Canada can be explored from a variety of angles, exposing the richness of material that has yet to be incorporated into a definitive history of Finns in Canada. However, the Finnish Canadian experiences, while in some sense no different from those of other immigrant and ethnic communities within Canada during the twentieth century, provide valuable insight into the development of the country. Franca Iacovetta has argued that the “historical literature on Canada’s immigrants is a fragmented body of work derived since the 1970s from various sub-categories of social history, especially the new labour history, women’s history, and ethnic history” – so, too, is that on Finns in Canada.⁹

The earliest efforts at studying the Finnish Canadian experience were done by those such as geographer Eugene van Cleef, who was, in fact, more interested in the American experience. When mentioned at all, Canada was treated as an interesting, but less important, adjunct to the American case.¹⁰ The reason, as Auvo Kostiainen has stated, is the belief that “Finnish history in Canada resembles that of the United States since the same striking kind of development is seen in organizational and labour history.”¹¹ Much of the later scholarship on Finnish Canadians reflects this duality.¹²

However, it is an interesting irony that despite the extant materials available, scholarship on Finns within Canada remained relatively neglected until the 1970s. As Edward Laine observed while compiling his bibliographic listing of archival sources in 1978, it remained “the private concern of a handful of scholars,” and “the Finnish contribution to Canada’s multicultural heritage awaits further fruitful investigation.”¹³ In the decades since Laine’s assessment of the field, significant progress has been made, and his view is no longer an accurate description of scholarship about Finnish Canadians. However, one of the difficulties is that while a substantial amount of material is in English, the majority remains beyond the reach of those who do not understand the Finnish language – a linguistically unique language spoken each year by increasingly fewer people within Canada. The contributions to this volume shed light on many of the different avenues that are now available to students of the Finnish fact in Canada. These works, though, have not “discovered” Finnish history but contribute to a robust tradition of scholarship known by few. One sign of this vitality is the emergence of Finnish studies as a field of inquiry. As a research area in the humanities and social sciences, Finnish studies attracts scholars from a variety of disciplines where Finland and things Finnish are the object of inquiry.

The origins of Finnish studies could perhaps be traced to the rise in ethnic consciousness that occurred in the 1960s,¹⁴ combined with other intellectual developments like feminist theory and the “new left,” among others. Scholars in various disciplines began to examine with increasing frequency neglected topics or those previously considered marginal, such as women, immigrants and ethnic groups, the working class and unions, radical politics, and regions of Canada.¹⁵ In particular, the announcement of the official multiculturalism policy in 1971 gave momentum to the study of ethnicity in Canada.¹⁶

Interest in Finnish Studies in Canada was further enhanced in the years that followed by the formation of numerous local, regional, and provincial multicultural societies, the founding of Finnish Canadian historical societies and gathering of archival material, and the creation of Finnish Studies programs at Lakehead University in 1986 and University of Toronto in 1989. Research and publication about Finns abroad was aided in 1974 by the founding of the *Siirtolaisuusinstituutti* [Institute of Migration] in Turku, Finland, and the Finno-Ugric Studies Association of Canada in 1983. The resulting scholarship led to Finnish Canadian topics frequently published in general journals and the founding, in 1997, of the *Journal of Finnish Studies*. These initiatives were, in large part, a result of the efforts of a number of pioneers in the study of Finnish Canadians, such as Edward Laine, Varpu Lindström, Reino Kero, Auvo Kostiainen, and J. Donald Wilson, to mention a few.

Numerous others have expanded upon the historiographical groundwork laid by these pioneers. However, while there are a number of general surveys of the Finnish Canadian experience, there is no comprehensive history of Finnish immigrants in Canada.¹⁷ Most of the research has been about specific aspects of that experience. The purpose of one early survey, by Arvi I. Heinonen, seems to have been to convince other Canadians that the Finns were good citizens and to highlight the work of the United Church among Finns.¹⁸ Yrjö Raivio's two volumes, sponsored by the Finnish Canadian Historical Society, and William K. Eklund's work are examples of attempts to survey the Finnish Canadian experience when the archival records of the organizations involved were in private hands. As Edward Laine observed, they were “secretively and reluctantly opened only to those researchers who qualified on the basis of their political reliability and friendliness toward the possessor of the archives rather than scholarly abilities or expertise.”¹⁹ However, *Finns in Ontario*, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario's special edition of *Polyphony*, still remains the only volume dedicated to this close-knit community's shared provincial past.²⁰

The one topic where there has been considerable research has been migration.²¹ In Reino Kero's classic studies on the period before 1914, he outlines the

push-pull motives for individuals and groups choosing to immigrate to the United States and Canada. While many Finns came to Canada with the intent of creating a new life, others were sojourners seeking to earn their fortune and eventually return to Finland. Keijo Virtanen has studied this aspect of Finnish migration.²² Others such as Eija Kettunen-Hujanen have looked at migration to Canada from particular provinces of Finland, and still others have examined the case of individual Finns in Canada and the role of their letters home as a source of information about immigration.²³ One little examined topic is the immigration of Finnish Swedes. A minority in their Finnish homeland, as Mika Roinila, one of the few to study this group, has noted, they often faced prejudice in Canada from their Finnish countrymen and disregard from Swedes.²⁴ The various Finn Forum conferences have typically been also heavily focused on migration, resulting in several published volumes.²⁵ Significantly, Finn Forum II, held in Toronto in 1979, produced the much lauded two-volume collection, edited by Michael G. Karni, the first volume covering the Finnish diaspora in Canada, South America, Africa, Australia, and Sweden, and the second concentrating on the United States.²⁶

Another aspect of return migration was the “Karelian Exodus,” when large numbers of Finns went to the Soviet Union to participate in the dream of building the socialist state. As Kero has noted in his initial examination of the topic, the migration began in the 1920s but reached its peak in the early 1930s.²⁷ At the time he was writing in the 1970s, nothing had been written on the topic, but since then it has generated a considerable amount of research.²⁸ A variety of aspects of Karelian fever, from recruitment of migrants and the ideological basis for their movement to their experiences in Karelia, the Stalinist purges, and the fate of those who made the journey, have been studied by scholars from Canada, Finland, the Russian Federation, the United States, and elsewhere.²⁹

Over the years there have been numerous conferences, research projects, and seminars looking at North American Finns in Soviet Karelia. Attesting to the volume of research on this aspect of the Finnish North American experience, the *Journal of Finnish Studies* has dedicated two special issues on Karelia, one in 2004 called “Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era” and a double issue, in 2011, “Victims and Survivors of Karelia.” In addition to the well-written articles by international scholars, these issues also provide English readers with access to research originally published in Russian and Finnish that might otherwise be inaccessible.³⁰

Karelian fever is one illustration of another aspect of the Finnish Canadian experience: the involvement in radical activities. One such early activity that has received a good deal of scholarly attention is the utopian community created

at Sointula, British Columbia, and led by Matti Kurikka and A.B. Mäkelä.³¹ Much of the literature on the Finnish experience in Canada revolves around their involvement in the Canadian working class movement.³² In many regions of the country, the Finnish populations of Canada were the rank and file of some of history's most significant labour and union organizations.³³ Often socially radicalized before they left their homeland, the Finnish people injected new ideas into the local socialist organizations previously based on policies derived from British and American trade unionist and labour politics.³⁴ Although the Finnish community was involved in organizing socialist organizations, until recently their involvement has traditionally not entered the general history of the left in Canada.

One reason contended by historians for excluding the contributions of the Finnish community is that its members, while predominately working class, were little involved in early labour organizations. There is much evidence to contradict this notion. A more accurate reason for the exclusion of the Finnish population was the inability of many scholars to read Finnish; thus, they were unable to consult the records of Finnish labour and socialist organizations.³⁵ Most recently, Michel S. Beaulieu has shed new light on the relationship between the Finnish community in Canada (primarily in the Canadian Lakehead, the collective term for the former cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario and the site of the present-day city of Thunder Bay located at the head of Lake Superior) and international movements.³⁶

The Spanish civil war of 1936–39 is another area where Finnish Canadians exhibited support for radical causes.³⁷ Canadians, including Finnish Canadians who volunteered to fight on behalf of the Republicans against the rebel forces of the Nationalists, for the most part fought with the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion of the International Brigade. Many of the participants considered themselves to be the first or “premature anti-Fascists” fighting fascism, even before the Western democracies participated in the Second World War. On their return to Canada, these Finnish Canadian volunteers received no recognition but instead faced a degree of persecution by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, largely because the Republican side had been supported by the Soviet Union. A number of books on the Canadian volunteers have been published.³⁸ Works specifically on Finnish Canadians have tended to focus on the participation of individuals such as Jules Päivö and their first-hand accounts.³⁹ At least two documentary films featuring the late Jules Päivö and aspects of Finnish Canadians in the Spanish civil war have been produced.⁴⁰

Another approach has been to look at Finnish Canadians in particular regions, provinces, or communities. The Sudbury, Ontario, region, for example, attracted



Finnish lumber workers at Intola, Ontario, circa early 1900s. (Photo courtesy of the Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, Lakehead University Archives.)

a large number of Finns to work on railway construction crews, in lumber camps, and in mines. Sudbury has been the subject of several theses, dissertations, and articles on the political activities, labour activism, and geographic distribution of the Finnish environs in Sudbury.⁴¹ Oiva Saarinen provides the most comprehensive overview of all aspects of Finnish life in the area, from demographics, settlement patterns, business activities, work, and labour activism to cultural, sporting, and religious organizations for roughly a one hundred-year-period from the 1890s.⁴² The Port Arthur and Fort William area was another in Ontario that attracted a large number of Finns. They came to the region for similar reasons as those who went to the Sudbury area, but here, they also created numerous small farming communities in the region.⁴³ Over and above some theses produced by Lakehead University students, the Thunder Bay Finnish Historical Society has produced two studies, one chronicling the rural settlements and the other focusing more on the city of Thunder Bay.⁴⁴

Other communities in Ontario, such as Sault Ste. Marie, have produced histories; perhaps the best known was published by the Multicultural History Society of Ontario.⁴⁵ Outside Ontario, there are only small pockets of Finnish Canadians. The settlement of New Finland, in Saskatchewan, is one example. Founded in 1888 under the premise that Finns would be more likely attracted to Canada if there were communities where they could be with others like themselves, New Finland grew gradually as a cluster settlement, unlike other

communities, which grew rapidly because Finns were drawn to wage labour.⁴⁶ Others have looked at Finns in Manitoba, British Columbia, and the Maritimes. Relatively few Finns chose to settle in Quebec, despite efforts to attract them to the province in the early twentieth century. Here they encountered, like elsewhere in Canada, a degree of xenophobia and concern over whether they could integrate and assimilate into the dominant French Canadian culture.⁴⁷

The role of women in Finnish Canadian communities and organizations has produced a number of studies.⁴⁸ The work of Varpu Lindström set a high standard for scholarship on the subject.⁴⁹ Subsequently she and others have produced articles on Finnish immigrant women employed as domestic servants and on Finnish women's participation in left-wing politics.⁵⁰ Although an excellent foundation, much of this earlier scholarship on Finnish women, in the view of Samira Saramo, tended to cover a very broad geographic, temporal, and thematic scope. Given the widely understood important role Finnish Canadians played in socialist organizations, an in-depth analysis of the role of Finnish women in these groups was missing. Her work has been focused on filling that knowledge gap.⁵¹

The subject of Finnish Canadian organizations and cultural activities has produced diverse studies.⁵² What is central, if not always explicitly stated, to these aspects of the Finnish experience is their role in adapting and integrating to the host society, while at the same time harbouring an attachment to and love of Finland.⁵³ These institutions were a necessary requirement to preserve, at least for a time, something of their Finnish identity. The issue of retaining Finnish Canadian identity through culture and language was seen as important.⁵⁴ Finnish immigrants brought with them their unique architectural styles for building log homes, other farm buildings, and that very Finnish practice, the sauna bath. In the time periods when large numbers of Finns migrated to Canada, most working class homes had no running water or bathing facilities. Given the often misunderstood practice of getting clean by sweating, the sauna was often the first permanent structure built and a key element in retaining a sense of Finnishness.⁵⁵

Finns value education; in particular, Finnish language instruction was seen as important in passing on Finnish culture.⁵⁶ A well-known feature of most Finnish Canadian communities was the hall, whether run by a temperance society or socialists, which served as a place to gather. Here, Finns, who as a group often had difficulty mastering the phonetics of the English language, could talk with people they understood, share ideas, organize, watch theatrical productions, listen to choral performances and speakers, and access reading material.⁵⁷

As a population with a very high rate of literacy, there was demand for material written in the Finnish language. Where the financial resources and technical expertise was available, newspapers such as *Vapaa Sana*, or *Vapaus*, with its left orientation, or the more conservative *Canadian Uutiset*, among many, appeared, and where there was the will but not the facilities, the handwritten “fist” press came into existence. Subscriptions ran into the thousands, and each issue was shared with family and neighbours, eager to read the news from Finland and elsewhere, debate the political commentary, and find useful advice.⁵⁸ The Finns also had national organizations such as the socialist oriented Finnish Organization of Canada and the conservative or nationalist Loyal Finns in Canada.⁵⁹ Nominally all Finns when they left Europe were Lutherans, but many abandoned religion altogether for humanistic socialism or other philosophies. Nonetheless, the Finnish Lutheran Church established itself in Canada, but numbers of Finns joined other congregations such as the Presbyterian and United Churches.⁶⁰

Whether through cooperatives, sports that went beyond physical prowess to take on ideological dimensions, the Knights of Kaleva, or Finnish rest homes, they represent as a whole the Finnish associative spirit.⁶¹ They also show the fractures within the community. As Varpu Lindström has noted, there is a Finnish proverb, or perhaps it is a witticism, that “where there are at least five Finns they will form a society, and when their number grows to ten they will form two.”⁶² These rivalries, though often bitter, did not result in cultural paralysis but represented efforts to present a particular vision of Finnishness.⁶³

The contributors to this book reflect the growing interest in Finnish Canadian experiences, and their work is defined by the history of immigration in Canada. Like their counterparts in other immigrant communities, Finnish Canadians began as pioneers clearing land and learning about the new culture and society they found themselves in. As with every immigrant experience, the new arrivals also shaped their surroundings to accommodate those aspects of their identity that they could not or would not change. Something as simple as the sauna, a very private part of daily life, became a symbol of their unique identity as Finnish Canadians. Meanwhile, less practical aspects of their cultural identity, like the language, gave way to pressures that were far beyond the control of individuals and their communities. As their collective memories of Finland faded, each wave of immigrants adapted to life in Canada. Fortunately, the first two waves of immigrants had their identities revitalized by the subsequent arrival of newcomers from the old country. However, the revitalization of the last wave through the arrival of new immigrants has not happened. Instead, a growing interest in Finland among Canadian scholars has newly attracted the attention of Finnish Canadians, and the result is a broader popular interest.

Studying Finnish Canadian Communities

As with any collection, the chapters in this book are linked in general ways to one another. They reflect the varied perspectives that scholars from different generations, countries, and academic traditions bring to bear on the subject of Finnish immigration and settlement. The difference evident in the styles and interests of the authors also extends to the communities themselves. The Finnish communities studied in this volume were as varied in their composition and as complex in their internal and external relations as any other community in Canada. The contributors to this volume focus primarily on the first decade of the twentieth century, a period when Canada's Finnish communities were largely established. While the majority of chapters focus on topics and time periods during which the Finnish Canadian community was vibrant and growing, two of them cover later periods when the communities were in apparent decline, and cultural preservation became a greater concern. All the authors situate their research within the wider Canadian context, drawing on research for other immigrant groups, and several successfully bridge Canadian and non-Canadian research. For example, in their various topic areas, Ratz, Snellman, Sarimo, Hatton, and Beaulieu all draw on research from American sources for wider comparison; Häkkinen, Snellman, and Sarimo tap into Finnish research while Snellman also uses Swedish comparisons, and Beaulieu accesses Soviet source material available at Library and Archives Canada.

As such, the first chapter is a survey of the Finnish contributions to the early development of the Canadian left during the period covered by the majority of the chapters. Michel S. Beaulieu demonstrates that many Finns who migrated to Canada came with a distinctly European radical perspective. Beaulieu provides a fresh insight into socialist organizations in Canada by challenging the traditional view that ethnicity was a minor or irrelevant variable in the history of the left. Not only did socialism face the opposition of the ruling Anglo-Canadian elite, but it also encountered hurdles caused by deep ethnic divisions, which were evident in his examination of socialist organizations at the Lakehead. He traces the ongoing ideological and organizational conflicts affecting leftist organizations at the Lakehead and their reverberation nationally.

Moving to the West Coast, J. Donald Wilson examines another manifestation of Finnish socialism in Canada in his analysis of the utopian socialist settlement of Sointula, British Columbia.⁶⁴ Established in 1901, partly through the activities of organizer Matti Kurikka, its history stands as a testament to the hardships and accomplishments of early Finnish migration to Canada and how its memory still lives on in the minds of their descendants. Sointula was what today would be termed an "intentional community." It was designed to develop a high degree of social cohesion and cooperation. Sointula's utopian settlement attracted

people, many of whom happened to be Finnish, who shared a common social, political, and spiritual outlook with the intent of following an alternative lifestyle.⁶⁵ Under the leadership of Kurikka, the residents of Sointula desired a community ruled by reason to build a scientific, socialist vision. Wilson goes on to examine the ideological underpinnings of the settlement and the internal debates these caused, especially over the doctrine of free love and marriage. Ultimately, he concludes it was not just the disagreements over socialist doctrine which brought an end to the experiment, but also the economic problems the colony faced. Sointula was not autarkic and still depended on connections with the capitalist system to sell their lumber and fish in order to survive. As the other leader of the community, A.B. Makela, commented, “We are still living in a capitalist society,” and until the world revolution came, it had to be accommodated.⁶⁶ The settlement was reduced in size in 1903 with the departure of Kurikka and some of his closest supporters, and by 1905 the venture was a failure. However, Wilson notes that despite this failure, Kurikka played a part in the wider spread of socialism in Canada, which challenged industrial capitalism and left a lasting legacy of Finnish Canadian socialist ideas.

As many scholars have pointed out, Canada and the United States have similar historic trends in the Finnish immigrant experience involving socialist ideas, the labour movement, church development, cooperatives, and Finnish language newspapers. One area where the two experiences are thought to diverge has been participation in the host countries’ armed forces during the First World War. Finnish American support for the war effort, according to Jaakko Paavolainen, was remarkably high.⁶⁷ Thinking on the Finnish Canadian response during the war has tended to follow Yrjö Raivio’s characterization: “Generally speaking Finnish men living in Canada were not interested in joining the army”⁶⁸ (Ratz’s translation). David K. Ratz’s contribution challenges this interpretation. He contends that proportionately the participation of Finnish Canadians in the Canadian military from 1914 to 1918 was comparable to that of Finnish Americans. By sampling such military records as attestation papers and nominal rolls, over three hundred Finnish Canadian soldiers were identified, with more potentially to be uncovered by a thorough search of the archival record. It is the vagaries of the Canadian recruiting system and the nature of the military records that survive which obscure the contributions of Finnish Canadians to the Canadian war effort. A closer examination of Finnish Canadian participation during the First World War helps illuminate the wider Finnish Canadian experience from migration history, the construction of identity, and efforts at accommodation with mainstream Anglo-Canadian society to the schisms within the developing Finnish Canadian community.

As Beaulieu, Wilson, and Ratz discuss, the centre point of Finnish communities in Canada was their halls. However, they were not just socialist dens and places of agitation and unrest. First and foremost, they were community centres, hosting a wide range of cultural and sport activities. Charles Nathan Hatton identifies sport as an area where cleavages in the Finnish socialist community of the Lakehead were evident. In his study, wrestling is placed within the context of immigration and the working class culture of Finnish Canadians. For many, wrestling was a form of casual entertainment, but for the Finnish Canadian community it represented far more. It was frequently part of the larger working class ideology, linking physical prowess and class consciousness. As well, it represented a link between the Old World and the New, a point of contact between the Finnish Canadians and the broader society as they worked to establish a community in their new homeland. Socialists at the Lakehead generally accepted the concept of a healthy mind in a healthy body, espoused by Lenin and derived from the older Latin aphorism, which many Canadians would have been familiar with. Sport was therefore one avenue for socialist indoctrination and education. With ideology forming a rationale for much of this sporting activity, it is not surprising then that Hatton notes that various competing leftist groups formed athletic clubs and associations whose internal politics reflected the divisions in the Finnish community. A subject more frequently covered by popular historians, the history of wrestling in Canada is given an academic treatment by Hatton that shows the broader significance of the sport culturally and politically.⁶⁹

All too often, though, the literature on Finnish Canadians centres on the activities in the halls and labour temples and, additionally, focuses on the labourers and activities of male working-class Finns. The contribution by the late Varpu Lindström is a slightly revised version of her award-winning article that explores the experience of Finnish women who worked as domestic servants, both for employers and in the community at large. This chapter also provides an important foundation that, when combined with the previously discussed chapters, sets up the contributions by Tanya Tuohimaa and Samira Saramo. Cultural preservation and transmission is the theme of Tuohimaa's article "Dear Jussi-Seta ... ' Generation, Language, and Community in the Youth Page of *Vapaus*, 1945–1960." The intent of the editors of the youth page of this left wing Finnish Canadian newspaper was to encourage the preservation of Finnish culture in Canada. Second- and third-generation Finnish Canadian youth were encouraged to write letters to the paper in the Finnish language about their activities, especially those within the Finnish Canadian community. This goal was not entirely successful. Finnish Canadian youth were more integrated into the

wider Canadian society than were their parents or grandparents, and many had little or no fluency in the Finnish language and preferred to write in English. In addition, appeals to these young people to take advantage of Finnish language instruction offered by various community groups met with marginal success.

The one area that could be said to have made progress was the preservation of at least some aspects of Finnish culture, by participation in clubs, sports, festivals, holiday events, and fundraising activities to send aid to Finland conducted within the Finnish community. The youth page also helped create a sort of virtual community linking Finnish Canadian children from various parts of Canada, as well as through pen pals in Finland, where the paper was also read. She also notes that the descendants of Finnish immigrants were increasingly integrated into Canadian society as many correspondents told of their involvement in non-Finnish clubs and organizations. The campaign by the *Vapaus* youth page editors to preserve Finnish culture through language could be considered a failure, whereas the community-building activities were more effective. Those elements of Finnish culture that were preserved were those the youth chose for themselves while at the same time actively participating in Canadian culture, ultimately illustrating the creation of a culturally pluralistic life and unique Finnish Canadian identity.

Samira Saramo has found that the custom of sending greetings and well wishes was a culturally important activity for Finnish Canadians. Based on the criteria that the letters had to be written by a Finn working or living in Canada, a sample of fifty-five letters were drawn from the Satakunta Letter Archive at the University of Turku, in Finland, supplemented by others published in secondary sources. Letters from Finns in the United States complemented this selection by showing that similar aspects of the immigrant experience were common on both sides of the border. She found the writing of letters to friends and family back in Finland served to retain the connection with the old homeland while, at the same time, negotiating a transnational identity. Through their missives, common themes appear, such as work, charitable activities, death, longing for Finnish items, food, language issues, religion, Canadian customs, the achievement of economic prosperity, and, eventually, integration into Canadian society. These letters give us insight into how these Finnish Canadian newcomers adjusted and eventually integrated into their new home while retaining a connection to Finland.

An aspect of cultural retention is the subject of Finnish scholar Hanna Snellman's contribution, "Cookbooks for Upstairs: Ethnicity, Class, and Gender in Perspective." In an unusual twist on the old English proverb, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach," Snellman argues that one way to get to the other-

wise undocumented stories and experiences of Finnish immigrant women is through the stomachs of those they fed. It is for this reason she examines the significance of cookbooks published for the use of Finnish women in North America. Traditional foodways, both everyday and festive, are a way of remembering the homeland, transmitting cultural meanings to later generations, and linking to cultural identity. Cookbooks, in addition to information on food preparation, often proffered practical advice on behaviour.

The production of dishes from cookbooks, both traditional and nontraditional, requires language skills and cultural understanding to access the ingredients at local markets in the immigrant's new home. All this makes the case of cookbooks published for Finnish women in North America interesting, because the early editions were not so much about transmitting Finnishness, but rather were aimed at those employed as domestics. The books contain many non-Finnish recipes and were, in many cases, written in both Finnish and English. The aim then was not to instruct women about Finnishness or even how to behave in the North American style, but rather to bridge the communication gap between employee and employer. As such, the cookbooks examined illustrate the larger class, economic, and social structure within which these immigrant Finnish women lived.

Finally, this collection ends with Finnish scholar Antti Häkkinen's examination of how an outsider coming to Thunder Bay first experienced the biophysical, cultural, and social landscape. He argues that for Finnish immigrants and visitors, these landscapes as social constructions can be understood as sites of memories, which link meaningful life experiences to the larger history at the local, regional, national, and international levels. Häkkinen views the history of the Finnish community at the Lakehead as seen through multigenerational family histories. These are not grand narratives, but rather the private and collective family stories and vignettes which individuals have used to give meaning to life experiences and to construct identities. Based on the shared experiences of mostly post-1960s Finnish immigrants, a cohort that has received little attention by scholars in lieu of the often more dramatic pre-Second World War histories, Häkkinen shows how they have been used in identity formation and the way they relate to the larger continuum of history of the Lakehead, Canada, and Finland.

Notes

- 1 Minutes of the Port Arthur Finnish Socialist Local 6 [*Suomalainen Sosialisti Osasto*], n.d., 1909, Lakehead University Archives, MG 3, Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, Finlandia Club Collection; handwritten notes relating to an interview with Nick Viita,