

Why we created Italian Week Online:
Because we all could use a moment to slow down and be together

Many people in our wonderful community have worked on the Italian Week Committee at one point or another. They know firsthand how much love, time, and dedication goes into organizing the event. When the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically impacted Italy, as Italians and Canadians, we watched with a much heightened level of heartbreak. Experiencing something that continues to put Italians, and in particular, our elderly population, at risk is so difficult, because our nonni and parenti are so treasured in our culture. Italians are all about traditions. Our heritage, our families, and the connections we maintain with Italy through our traditions make us even stronger in these difficult times.

Just as we were preparing to announce our Italian Week 2020 program of events, it became apparent that the festival would not be able to proceed as planned. It simply was not possible. We held out until the City of Ottawa prohibited public gatherings, and we regretfully confirmed the cancellation of Italian Week, knowing that we were acting in the best interest of keeping everyone safe.

Now, Italians are all about traditions. Cancelling Italian Week 2020, didn't just mean that we were cancelling an annual event — it meant that we were being forced to cancel a much-loved community tradition. As Italian Week, our mandate is to bring people together, through a celebration of Italian culture. In following this mandate, it seemed to us more important than ever before to facilitate that connection. This is why we knew we needed to make Italian Week happen, online.

The programming team on our Board of Directors, Noor Sunba and Lydia Di Francesco, cleverly put together an online calendar of events by transforming much of what we originally planned into virtual events. For instance, instead of a tomato sauce making workshop in-person, we chatted through a live Q+A with a master gardener. The tradition of the Opening Ceremony was also maintained through a video message featuring greetings from politicians and community leaders. Hosting the festival online allowed us to program some new events, as well! We held an event with Alfa Romeo Ottawa, a #sonoitaliano contest with Kiss FM, an Italian trivia night with Joe Cacchione, and a very popular moka coffee tutorial with our the Chair of our Board, Alessio Monterosso. Many children tuned in for live bedtime stories with readers from the Dante Alighieri Society. With support from the Italian Embassy, four young artists won prizes for their submissions in our #andràtuttobene art contest. And we were especially proud of our virtual tour of Little Italy with Luciano Pradal, which happened during the Grand Finale Weekend.

As wonderful as our events were, and as exciting as it was to see them so well attended and hosted so successfully, I would most like to highlight a special group of people, who made this online festival happen. This is a little love letter to my Italian Week family, to the past presidents, Board members, community leaders, sponsors and donors, festival volunteers, participants, and to all of you reading this newsletter. Thank you for supporting us in all your shapes and forms. Thank you for connecting with us, and for trusting us with keeping this much loved community tradition alive.

Ci vediamo,

Laura Scaffidi

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Italian Week Ottawa

Thank you to the wonderful local businesses who supported Italian Week Online. Please show them some love: [Santini Gallery](#), [Tag Along Toys](#), [La Strada](#), [Zola's](#), [Home of Fresh Pasta](#), [Kuidaore](#), [Gray Jay](#), [Carmelito's](#), [La Favorita](#), [Rome Flooring](#), [Giovanni's Snack Bar](#), [Biagio's Italian Kitchen](#), [Ferrero Rocher](#), [Suite Dreams Home Emporium](#), [Fratelli's](#), [Roberto's Pizza](#), [Vittoria Trattoria](#), [Champagne's Custom Cakes](#), [Simply Biscotti](#), [La Bottega](#), [Tosca Ristorante](#), [Two Six Ate](#), [RAW Pulp & Grind](#). Italian Week would also like to thank the [Italian Embassy in Canada](#), the [Province of Ontario](#) and the [City of Ottawa](#) for their support.