



# La Storia

## Giusti Group of Companies

### 40-year Legacy

By Nerissa McNaughton

British Columbia, 1975. The weather is warm and the scenery is beautiful, but it's a far cry from the stunning coastline and classic beauty of Italy. Yet, here he is. At 20, he's only been in Canada for two short years. Arriving as a teen in 1973 to work on the Alaskan pipeline, the young immigrant was quickly disappointed to learn the job he left his homeland for did not recognize his European trade tickets. He took up framing to keep his bills paid but the restless spirit that drove him across the ocean to Canada urged him to reach for his full potential. So he did. Dr. Ermenegildo (Joe) Giusti, who had just \$20 in his pocket and a heart full of dreams when he arrived in his new country, is the patriarch of the Giusti Group, a family company that reaches into five major industries. Their work has touched lives, time and time again; yet few know the journey of the family behind the name and how, 40 years after Joe launched his company, the Giusti Group became central to Western Canada's industry. This is their story.



Joe Giusti, founder, Giusti Group of Companies  
Photo by Jager & Kokemor Photography



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*In Italy, Joe and his brother learned that the most important thing in life was to be dedicated to one's craft while ensuring clients received outstanding value for their hard earned money.*



The Giusti Group of Companies main yard in Calgary.  
Photo by Jager & Kokemor Photography

The Giusti Group of Companies is comprised of five distinct divisions and even though the companies in the Group differ in scope, they have an underlying theme. In Italy, Joe and his brother learned that the most important thing in life was to be dedicated to one's craft while ensuring clients received outstanding value for their hard-earned money. It was a lesson from which the boys never wavered and as his family joined him, one by one, in his adopted country, this guiding principle remained the foundation of the corporation's success.

The first to join Joe was his younger brother Fanio. Together the men launched Giusti Brothers Construction (GBC). It was a modest start. They framed and cribbed houses, but as business picked up and word of honest, quality work for fair prices spread, the Giusti brothers branched into building custom homes.

There's something to be said for sticking to your values. While many emerging companies helmed by ambitious, driven young men are faced with the temptation to compromise or cut corners to quickly fill their pockets with cash, the two men remained focused, never deviating from their path, never taking shortcuts and always keeping the customers' needs first and foremost. For example, during those early days most of Joe's peers were buying the coveted Lincoln Continental — a vehicle that showed everyone in town your status and success. Instead of the flashy car, Joe kept his tastes modest and poured profits back into the company to fuel its development. He was rewarded with the rapid growth of GBC.

By 1986 the company had branched into multi-family housing and even when British Columbia's economy slumped in the mid-90s, the enterprising team simply looked to other markets and, with their staff of 60, built their first 600 multi-housing units in Calgary. To date, the company has now

built over 55,000 multi-family units. By 1997, GBC was such a regular fixture in Calgary's multi-family market that Joe decided to relocate the company's headquarters to Calgary.

Early in the new millennium, Joe's sons, Jiuliano and Gildo joined the family business. It was also around this time that Giusti Group proved, once again, that the most important thing in life to value is family. In the midst of success after success, driving the company forward, Fanio returned to Italy to care for aging family members. One would be remiss, however, to think that a pillar had been pulled from the foundation of the corporation. The contribution, time, lessons and dedication Fanio contributed continues to echo through the company today.

Joe reminisces about those early days. "We were so young and without experience, but in our hearts we strove toward doing the best job possible."

Doing the best job possible meant controlling the quality of what was going into their custom houses. "Joe wanted tile instead of linoleum so he started Julian Ceramic Tile," laughs Robert Fischer, the vice president of Giusti Wall Tech (GWT), Giusti's prefabricated wall frame panel division. Robert has been with Giusti Group for 37 of its 40 years and has been witness to the evolution of all the companies in the brand. "GWT grew from its in-house needs to the point where we could sell product to framing crews across the city!"

"We always wanted to be the leader," Joe explains. "We wanted people, when they were coming through our show home, to say 'Wow! That tile is different from everyone else's. From day one, Julian Tile had the best quality on the market and it was a higher quality product than what people were used to."



Standing L-R: Gildo Giusti, Robert Fischer, Giuliano Giusti, Mike Maksymic  
Seated L-R: Joe Giusti, Rolando Giusti  
Photo by Jager & Kokemor Photography



Viper Concrete mass raft pour at Centennial Place.  
Photo provided by Viper Concrete

They never compromised on giving the customers what they wanted. “In the early days when we were going out to tile shows, it was important to us to have input from all of our managers across the several regions we branched into. We were the only company bringing multiple people to the trade show, but we knew each city and market was different and we wanted to invest in what the customers needed and wanted.”

The Group’s desire for efficiencies spawned yet another company. “Viper Concrete was started because we needed a pumping and placing company for our own projects,” Robert informs.

Mike Maksymic, vice president of Viper Concrete, is proud of the company’s fleet that boasts 20 pumps, among them, the largest pump in Canada. “We were the first company in the West to offer vertical placing systems. This enables Viper to build tower constructions quickly without compromising quality standards. From a 60-storey office tower to mass raft pours, there is nothing we can’t do.” Viper Concrete is active in residential and commercial construction projects, from backyard patios to some of Calgary’s most prominent towers.

Maksymic, who has been with the Group for a decade, enjoys his role in the company. “One of the biggest things that drew me to work for the Giusti Group was Joe and my

shared value of treating everyone fairly no matter who they are or what they are buying. Everyone works hard for that money; everyone deserves the same quality.”

Similar to the same way Viper Concrete and Julian Tile were created, Giusti Wall Tech resulted from the Giusti Group’s relentless drive for quality and having suppliers that adhered to the Group’s mandate of quality, great working conditions for staff and outstanding customer service.

Giusti has been prefabricating wood frame wall panels for over 30 years. Giusti Wall Tech now operates from a state-of-the-art, semi-automated, innovative manufacturing plant that can produce an entire suite every 30 minutes. The manufacturing

plant has built walls for more than 55,000 units and was the first, and largest, of its kind in Canada for many years.

Another division has also seen outstanding growth. Transitioning from a wood framing bias, GGLP — Giusti’s concrete formwork division — has evolved to become one of the industry’s leaders in all types of concrete works.

Originally specializing in the cribbing of multi-family parkade structures, the division has broadened its spectrum of services and now spans the residential, commercial and industrial sectors. Most recently, GGLP has developed a strong industrial division, which offers a wide array of services catering to the oil and gas sector.

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Three generations of the Giusti family.  
Photo by Jager & Kokemor Photography

While the theme of expansion and growth seems to run throughout the Giusti story, so too does the commitment to excellence in each of their respective trades.

There is a definite Giusti difference and it's evident the moment you set foot on their project sites. The cleanliness, the organization and the safety standards — they really stand out.

“We set the standard,” says Jiuliano with pride. “Each division of the Group does whatever it takes to safely complete our work in a timely fashion without compromising quality.” Gildo adds “One of the most rewarding aspects of our business is seeing those founding principles of honesty, integrity, and leadership embraced by those who represent our company on a daily basis.”

“We continually strive to raise the bar and set ourselves apart from the competition,” Gildo continues. “After 40 years of commitment, few can deliver on schedule quality and safety as Giusti can. Not only have we learned and grown from past challenges, we actively mitigate ones that could affect us in the future. To ensure continued success, we’ve invested heavily in our people

through training, apprenticeship programs and purchasing the vast array of forming materials we use every day. Our greatest desire goes back to the values Joe instilled in the very foundation of the company from day one: a commitment to quality and to maximize each and every day on each and every project. Be dedicated to the industry and committed to the craft.”

As the years went by and the Group entered the new millennium, another brother, Roland, joined the growing corporation. Roland brought more than his business acumen from Italy. As a former international soccer player, he inspires the Group with values of competitiveness and teamwork.

With the new century, Joe was not alone in Canada anymore. He was surrounded by friends, his sons and staff who are considered an extension of the family. Technically speaking, that means a “family” of nearly 500 employees, and the Giusti Group couldn't be happier about it. Jiuliano and Gildo have three children each and they look forward to seeing them continue the legacy. With these six grandchildren and more on the way, this ensures that the legacy will flow through many more generations without ever deviating from the core family values that underscore everything the Giusti Group does.



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*~ Joe Giusti*



The Giusti vineyard, in the Nervesa della Battaglia region.  
Photo provided by Giusti Wine

After 40 years Joe looks back with pride at what he, his family and the Group have built. In addition to high-profile projects such as Husky Energy's Sunrise plant, Calgary's notable Eighth Avenue Place, Brookfield Place, the ENMAX Shepard Energy Centre, Calgary's southeast Ring Road and the city's west LRT system, along with hundreds of multi-family projects throughout the region, the Giusti Group is also instrumental in building the community in charitable ways.

"Our family comes from humble beginnings," explains Jiuliano. "We recognize that sometimes a little help goes a long way." This is why the Group enthusiastically supports local, regional and international charitable organizations, such as the Alberta Cancer Foundation, British Columbia Children's Hospital, Calgary Women's Emergency Centre and many more.

With 40 years behind them, the legacy is firmly in place. The core values of the company ensure future success and the deep family roots are primed for future generations of Giusti members. The divisions of the company are diverse, but they each support each other. Success in one division allows for an investment of resources into every facet of the company, providing a self-sustaining model. The patriarch can rest easy, looking back with pride at the culmination of his life's dream.

Except...he's not doing that. Not at all. His eternally young spirit and restless drive that he brought from Italy still motivate him today. The flame of his entrepreneurial spirit

burns as strongly as ever. With the company running smoothly, Joe spends more time visiting family in Italy, and that has awakened a sleeping passion.

"The passion of the land and the wine — I guess it never left me," he muses about his increasingly frequent trips back to Italy. It was on one of these trips that he rambled through the Dal Col vineyard, which was owned by his wife Maria's family. He decided to purchase the vineyard and promptly spent the next few years purchasing nine more estates. Now, the largest landowner in the Nervesa della Battaglia region, the Giusti family adds producing and selling wine among their successful pursuits.



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The cellar of the Giusti winery.  
Photo provided by Giusti Wine

"I want to give the best glass of wine possible, made with as few chemicals as possible; natural, just what the plants give you," Joe says. As always, his intuition and quality assurance are spot on. Giusti Wine's Umberto Primo, Amarone and Ripasso have won international awards and the brand has sold more than 170,000 bottles in Western Canada.

"I'm very proud of what we have done with the wine," Joe smiles, pointing out that it's not just the ability to share Giusti wine with oenophiles around the world, but to be able

to invest in the Nervesa della Battaglia region, its resources and workforce, proving once again his commitment to grow the community wherever he is.

As the Giusti Group gets ready for another 40 successful years, and as Giusti Wine increases in market share globally, the active entrepreneur takes a rare moment to pause. He thinks back to the day he first set his sights on the Canadian shoreline and all the hopes and dreams he brought with him from Europe.



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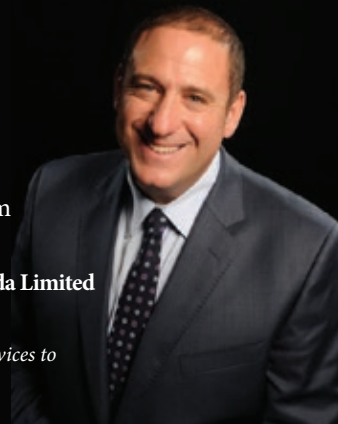


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L-R: Rolando, Gildo, Joe, and Giuliano Giusti.  
*Photo by Jager & Kokemor Photography*

“I am very blessed,” he says with quiet humility. “I often think of and thank the people who gave me that visa to come to Canada. I love my home country, but I love Canada too. I embraced the rules to become Canadian right away. I wanted to fit in immediately. I wanted to live here and be Canadian. That was my goal. In return, Canada embraced me right back. I was blessed.”

He thinks about the legacy, 40 years in the making. “Anyone can succeed,” Joe insists, pointing to the family’s humble beginnings. “It doesn’t matter if you have a doctorate or a GED. If you believe in what you are doing, stick with it, have passion for it, love it, strive to be the best and treat people with honesty, you will succeed.”

Joe thinks about his growing family — his motivations for his drive and success, and he sums up his career by speaking about what matters most to the Giusti Group.

“I wanted to do something for the family. Something that lasted.”

Forty years of success and an enduring legacy going forward ensure that he has done just that. •

## The Companies at a Glance

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