

CANADIAN-CUBAN SOLIDARITY IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Elianis Páez Concepción, elianis-paez@uho.edu.cu

Universidad de Holguín. CUBA

Vilma Páez Pérez, vpaez@uho.edu.cu

Universidad de Holguín. CUBA

Linda McDowell, lmcdowell@amtelecom.net

Red Canadiense de solidaridad con Cuba (CNC)

ABSTRACT

Cuba and Canada have built up a productive and cordial relations based on a long history of mutually beneficial collaboration, growing economic and commercial relations as well as close interpersonal bonds in a wide range of sectors and interests. More than one hundred years of commercial relations and more than seventy years of uninterrupted diplomatic ties have marked the history of both nations. Since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the US government has perpetrated multiple attempts to undermine the Cuban people's sovereignty and independence. This US policy has made the living conditions for Cubans very difficult and has affected all efforts of the Cuban Government to improve the economic situation of the country. Many Canadians have been striving for more than 60 years so that the right of the Cuban people to their free determination and development is respected and have joined together in several solidarity organizations. In the last five years great changes have taken place in the international political scenario which tests the stability of the relations of Cuba with some of the countries of the region. The relations between Cuba and Canada is a top priority for the committees of solidarity with Cuba since the new aggressions of the US government towards the Island are also affecting the long-standing Cuba-Canada relations. This paper attempts to provide a critical look to the last five years of Cuban-Canadian solidarity activism and therefore encourages reflection and commitment to reaffirm the disposition of both peoples to keep on promoting good relations and friendship.

Key words: solidarity / friendship / cooperation

RESUMEN

Cuba y Canadá han desarrollado una interrelación productiva y cordial basada en una larga historia de colaboración mutuamente beneficiosa, relaciones económicas y comerciales crecientes, así como lazos interpersonales cercanos en una amplia gama de sectores e intereses. Más de cien años de relaciones comerciales y más de setenta años de relaciones diplomáticas ininterrumpidas han marcado la historia de ambas naciones. Desde el triunfo de la Revolución Cubana en 1959, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha perpetrado múltiples intentos de socavar la soberanía y la independencia del pueblo cubano. Esta política de los Estados Unidos ha dificultado mucho las condiciones de vida de los cubanos y ha

afectado todos los esfuerzos del gobierno cubano para mejorar la situación económica del país. Muchos canadienses han luchado durante más de 60 años para que se respete el derecho del pueblo cubano a su libre determinación y desarrollo y se han unido en varias organizaciones de solidaridad. En los últimos cinco años, se han producido grandes cambios en el escenario político internacional que pone a prueba la estabilidad de las relaciones de Cuba con algunos de los países de la región. Las relaciones entre Cuba y Canadá son una de las principales prioridades de los comités de solidaridad con Cuba, ya que las nuevas agresiones del gobierno de los Estados Unidos hacia la isla también afectan las relaciones de larga data entre Cuba y Canadá. Esta presentación intenta ofrecer una mirada crítica a los últimos cinco años del activismo solidario cubano-canadiense y, por lo tanto, alienta la reflexión y el compromiso de reafirmar la disposición de ambos pueblos para seguir promoviendo las buenas relaciones y la amistad.

Palabras clave: solidaridad / amistad / cooperación

INTRODUCTION

“Through good times and bad, our two countries have always chosen dialogue over confrontation, engagement over isolation, exchange over estrangement. And we have always done this in an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other’s independence and sovereignty.”

Canadian Prime Minister J. Chétien, April 1998 official visit to Cuba

Cuba-Canada relations have a long history. Even in our wars of independence, we had the presence and help of many Canadians. Later, at the beginning of the XX century, in 1903, Cuba opened its first commercial office in Canada making the first important commercial link between the two countries. By 1945, due to the expansion of those relations to other areas, the two countries were ready to consolidate their connections and establish formal diplomatic relations. Cuba was the first country in the Caribbean chosen by Canada for a diplomatic mission, however after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, Canada made the strategic decision not to break relations with Cuba by not following the policy of the USA government of isolating Cuba from the rest of the countries in the region, the two countries became more politically distant. In spite of this fact, Canada increased its economic bonds with Cuba, something that could be clearly seen at the World’s Fair of Montreal in 1967. The Fair provided a significant window to the world for isolated Cuba which was due to the blockade imposed by the USA Government on the Island.

However, since deep friendly and solidarity relations were built gradually between the two peoples ever since the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, which captivated many Canadian friends who felt the influence of a new social project at the doorway to the Caribbean Sea.

The story of the solidarity movement with Cuba is a heartwarming one, starting by highlighting that the first friendship association in a capitalist country was founded there, where Close friends got involved since 1960 in sponsoring inspiring actions to support the Islands education and health

programs.

Today, there are 58 Canadian solidarity organizations and several brigades integrated by thousands of Canadians who fight bravely for eliminating the inhuman blockade imposed by the US government against Cuba; returning of the illegally occupied Cuban territory by the US base in Guantanamo to its true owner; and offsetting reduce the interference of the US government in the progress of the Cuban Revolution.

In the last five years major political changes have occurred in the continent setting new guidelines for the aforementioned groups promoters of friendship among the peoples. The freedom of the Cuban Five; the attempted of Raul Castro and Barak Obama governments to normalize its diplomatic relations, a light in the horizon, and the aggressive performance of the current US administration against Cuba and Venezuela, an unexpected return; and the attitude assumed by the Canadian government in the middle of this complex situation.

CONTENT

Historical Overview

Cuba and Canada enjoy a broad and diverse relationship built on a long history of mutually beneficial engagement, important and growing economic and commercial relations, and strong people-to-people ties across a wide range of sectors and interests. It is important to point out that despite the rupture of diplomatic relations of the US government with Cuba in 1961 and the imposition of the economic blockade to the Island in 1962, Cuba and Canada's relations remained intact. From that time up to the present, groups of Canadians have provided a collective response to both the aggression stemming from Washington and the indifference from Ottawa, at all times supporting Cuba's right to self-determination. Groups supporting the Cuban Revolution sprouted up across Latin America, the United States and Canada almost immediately and they have grown to form a social movement based on a spirit of friendship and solidarity with Cuba, and its political and social aims.

By the 1970s, the relationship began to mature and diversify. Charter flights started to bring Canadian tourists to the island. Canada initiated a development cooperation program with Cuba, bringing Canadian academics and technical experts together with their Cuban counterparts for the first time. Cultural links were established as Canadians found their own distinctive cultural voice in the world. Sports became an important theme in the relationship as Cuba's achievements were highlighted for Canadians, first at the Pan American Games held in Winnipeg in 1967, and at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, as well as in many bilateral sports matches.

In January 1976, Pierre Elliot Trudeau became the first Canadian Prime Minister to make an official visit to Cuba. The friendship that joined Trudeau and Fidel, till the death of the former is widely known. It was a good time to expand the relations between the two countries. In spite of the geopolitical differences, during the 80's, both countries kept their good relations mainly in the economic sphere in very important areas like livestock and fisheries. Every Cuban, who is over 40, remembers the famous Ubre Blanca, a Cuban Siboney cross-breed with 5/8 Canadian Holstein heritage capable of

producing more than 100 liters of milk a day. Her record: 109.9 liters of milk in a single day.

In the early 1990s, with the end of the socialist bloc, there was a rapid expansion in bilateral relations on all fronts. New Canadian investments in Cuba were made in mining, energy, food and tourism sectors. Cultural exchanges grew rapidly, the high artistic quality of Cuban artists made it possible for many of them to be invited to perform in Canada, and many Canadian artists to visit the island. A bilateral co-operation program was renewed, expanding significantly the range of Canadian academic and non-governmental organizations engaged with the island. Canada became the first country to send tourist to Cuba. More than 14 million Canadians have visited Cuba over the years.

Solidarity

I have always been fascinated by the concept of solidarity as a real binding fabric between people and an essential tool for democracy. It is common among activists and within the labor movement to speak of solidarity or to act in solidarity with someone or a cause. When I say or sign, "In solidarity", I mean to say, I am at your side. Not that I blindly accept everything you claim or represent, but that I place myself close to you so that I can better hear your plea, and support you with my respect, my dialogue, my voice and my actions. (Pagliccia, 2014)

One may think that because the policy of the United States towards Cuba is an aggressive one and that all measures taken against our country are violations of all legal and political policies of the civilized world, no person or organization in the United States would be in favor of Cuba. Nothing farther from the truth than this. There are 112 solidarity organizations in the United States grouped in 42 networks of solidarity. Among the cities with more activism are Chicago, San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Boston, and Florida. New York is like the capital of the solidarity with the Island because of the large number of groups and associations that work with Cuba.

From that country, challenging projects are promoted to the ordinary US citizen. They are encouraged to visit the island without applying for a visa to the Treasury Department and be first-hand witnesses of what is really happening in Cuba. They come as members of different solidarity brigades. Among them, the **Venceremos** Brigade that came to Cuba for the first time in 1969 to work in the agricultural fields, cutting cane side by side with the Cuban people. The **Antonio Maceo** Brigade came to Cuba around 40 years ago to bring young Cubans who were forced to leave their homeland when they were just kids in what is known as Operation Peter Pan. Those former kids have kept their attachment to their homeland and come often to work in tasks in favor of the Cuban Revolution.

A Brigade that has become a symbol of solidarity with Cuba is the Pastors for Peace Caravan. Over the years the Caravan has worked not only within the borders of the United States but has included and joined forces with neighboring countries, Mexico and Canada. The members of the Caravan have taken lots of risks and have been prosecuted because of their commitment to bring medicines,

computers, school buses, etc. Once, they even went into a hunger strike because they were stopped and prevented from taking their cargo through the Mexican border. Fidel, himself followed the efforts of the *caravanistas* (caravanners) and met with them several times, especially with his main leader Reverend Lucius Walker. In their yearly trip to Cuba in 2018 the members of the Caravan went to Santiago de Cuba y de Guantánamo to pay homage to Commander in Chief Fidel Castro. For many years the Caravan has also helped young poor Americans to come to Cuba to study Medicine.

Many Canadians have joined these solidarity brigades coming to Cuba every year. They have also joined forces with other solidarity groups in the USA but mainly, they have created their own solidarity networks of groups and associations. The **Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC)**, the **Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)**, the **Communist Party of Canada (CPC)**, and the **Worker-to-Worker** labor organization have shown their solidarity with Cuba in many ways, always at the side of the Cuban people no matter the difficulties that they have had to overcome.

Two of the most recent campaigns organized by the CNC to help the Island overcome the catastrophic effects of natural disasters were the **CNC Hurricane Irma Fundraising** and the **CNC Cross-Canada Campaign for Cuba Tornado Relief**.

The first one ended in November, 2018 after sending \$89,542.00 to Cuba, to a fund set up by the Cuban Ministry of State, specifically to receive contributions destined to help Cuba recover from the damage caused by Irma. This campaign was supported by a deeply felt spirit of solidarity of Canadians from all parts of the country. In its final report, its Coordinator Keith Ellis wrote:

Sometimes the name of a hurricane can be deceptive with respect to its brutal strength and its malicious endurance. So, it was with Irma that hit northeastern Cuba in the very early morning of Sept. 9, 2017 as a Category 5 hurricane and maintaining winds of up to 270 km/h. Travelling slowly, with lingering cruelty, it began to select targets that it seemed to know would be devastating for the Cuban economy and its defenses, destroying or damaging severely everything from wind gauges to homes, hotels, hospitals, warehouses and factories. But it didn't succeed in breaking the will of the Cuban people or in making them panic and forget the defensive and early recuperative measures against this strongest hurricane to ever hit Cuba. It didn't seem stronger than the notorious 1932 Camagüey Hurricane only because of the formidable defensive and protective measures that are now in force in Cuba. (...) We hope that Cuba, which suffers much more than enough from plotted malice, will be spared in the future such brutal natural blows as were unleashed by Irma.

The second one was called soon after the unexpected tornado hit the Cuban Capital on February 4th, 2019. After 80 years, a tornado with winds of more than 300 kph, tore through fragile parts of Havana beginning at about 8 p.m. The toll on housing, intensely in Regla and Guanabacoa, was severe. As the tornado made its way from the Casino Deportivo to the east of Alamar, it passed through the center of the city, with terrifying howling winds.

Demolished or damaged homes were the major grief it brought. This, together with crippling the

electricity supplies, multiplied the ways in which people could die or suffer serious injuries in places that suddenly became unfamiliar. Havana suffered the high numbers of 6 fatalities and some two hundred injured people. 5,000 people had to be evacuated from their badly damaged houses in four Havana municipalities.

In the call, the organizers of the campaign stated that the damage to Havana was on the minds of all solidary Canadians and invited them to help Cubans to recover, honoring José Martí's aphorism: *It is noble to defend friendship, not forgetting, in doing so, history and the idea of justice.*

Examples of other organizations that have been promoting solidarity with Cuba in Canada are:

Examples of other organizations that have been promoting solidarity with Cuba in Canada are: The **Che Guevara Brigade**: Since 1993, hundreds of people living across Canada, of various ages, skills and backgrounds have joined the Che Guevara Brigade to come to Cuba in an exciting and informative two-week stay in Cuba to do volunteer work. One of the main goals of the brigade is to show support for the struggle of the Cuban people to maintain their independence, at the same time it provides an important opportunity for people from Canada to know and understand the dynamism of all aspects of life in Cuba.

The members of the brigade have had the opportunity to witness the improvements and victories of the Cuban revolution, as well as see Cuba's challenges first hand, particularly the effects of the illegal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on the country more than 50 years ago. The blockade is called euphemistically embargo by the US government, but its real purpose is, as was textually quoted on April 6, 1960 by the then Under-secretary of State Lester Mallory as follows: "creating disillusionment and discouragement through economic dissatisfaction and hardship (...) weakening the economic life by denying money and supplies to Cuba in order to reduce nominal and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow the government." The Che Guevara Brigade have joined Cubans to show to the world that in Cuba there is no place for disillusionment, discouragement or desperation. The Cuban people, who are committed to maintaining their revolution and its great achievements, welcome the Brigade participants, known as "Brigadistas", with warmth and friendship. The fact that Brigadistas come from Canada to share friendship, reaffirms to many Cuban people that the social change they are carrying out is important, not only for their country, but for the entire world.

The **Calixto García Brigade** was created quite recently, in November 2018. It is named in honour of Major General Calixto Garcia, one of the most distinguished *holguineros* and the only Cuban general to have fought in all three wars of independence between 1868 and 1898. The people joining the brigade learn about the resolve of the Cubans from "Oriente Province" in fighting for the country's independence from Spanish colonial rule and their contribution to the overthrow of the violent dictatorship of Batista in the 1950's. Participants will also do some light volunteer work. In the words of Ben Lefevbre, a member of the brigade *"Many other pressures to try to extinguish that resplendent light that Cuba radiates to the world, but we are sure that they will never be able to resist*

the Cuban people, because this is a people that lives proud of its history and its leaders”.

Worker to worker

Early in the 90's, after the collapse of the so-called socialist block, Cuba was left almost isolated from the rest of the world. Economically, the island depended mostly of the exchange and commerce with the former Soviet Union and its allied members of the CAME. The living conditions in the country deteriorated and the US Government decided to strangle the country even more by strengthening the blockade on the country.

“With the slogan “Hands off Cuba,” the goal was to present resolutions, demanding an end to the U.S. blockade against Cuba, for debate and vote at the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and at national, provincial, and local union convention floors. Getting support from members and the union leadership was a challenge partly due to lack of awareness, partly due to an already busy agenda with immediate labour issues. With the continuing efforts by union activists informing and educating the members, and repeatedly presenting resolutions for Labour to take actions opposing and demanding an end to the blockade, resolutions were finally accepted, brought to the convention floors, debated and voted on. In a short time, resolutions against the U.S. blockade, the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts, including resolutions asking for the return of the Cuban child Elián González back to Cuba to be with his father, passed unanimously. It was during this time that Worker to Worker forged a strong link with the Cuban National Workers’ Central Union (Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC).” Heide Trampus, (2014)

Solidary Activism in the last Five Years (2014-2019)

On December 17, 2014 the last Cuban fighters against terrorism Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino and Antonio Guerrero returned to Cuba. This was the end of the Campaign to Free the Cuban Five that had geared the efforts of thousands of people from Canada and the rest of the world for more than a decade. The end of a fight meaning a deserved victory for the Cuban and Canadian peoples, a reward for many years of fighting. *“Solidarity made possible our return”*, said the current vice chancellor of the International Relations Institute Raúl Roa García, Gerardo Hernández.

On July 1, 2015, President Obama announced that the United States and Cuba agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations, effective July 20, and to reopen embassies in their respective capitals on the same day. The President maintained that "this is a historic step forward in our efforts to normalize relations with the Cuban government and people."

The President's action fulfills the last of three major changes in U.S. policy toward Cuba that he unveiled on December 17, 2014, to move the United States toward normal relations with Cuba. The other two components of the policy shift were a review of Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of international terrorism and an increase in travel, commerce, and the flow of information to and

from Cuba. The President has described the overall policy shift as moving away from sanctions aimed at isolating Cuba toward a policy of engagement.

“In the most significant changes in our policy in more than fifty years, we will end an outdated approach that, for decades, has failed to advance our interests, and instead we will begin to normalize relations between our two countries. Through these changes, we intend to create more opportunities for the American and Cuban people, and begin a new chapter among the nations of the Americas.”(Obama, 2014)

On January 20, 2017 Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 45th president of the United States, succeeding Barack Obama. A Republican, Trump was a businessman and reality television personality from New York City at the time of his 2016 presidential election victory over Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. Trump’s administration has been very controversial since he decided to undo all the accomplishments of the former government. He is stepped back from the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance, starting in the year 2020; he has developed an intense campaign against immigrants in the US violating more human rights than ever; and he has unveiled numerous sanctions against Cuba and Venezuela, among other countries, interfering in its revolutionary processes and slowing down the economic development of its economies.

Also, there has been important political changes in Cuba, of which it is necessary to mention the election of Miguel Diaz Canel as its new president, and more recently, the celebration of a constitutional referendum on February 24, 2019 where a new Constitution was approved by a vote of 91%. In addition, the Cuban economy has been seriously harmed by two natural disasters during this time frame: hurricane Irma and the tornado of Havana at the beginning of the current year.

Solidarity in the Words of Canadian Activists

Nino Pagliccia, Canadian activist:

“My book came out at a time when the Cuban Five were all released and back in Cuba. Where did all that “solidarity energy” go? Also, in the last five years there have been major political changes in The US after Obama and in Cuba with President Diaz Canel. Has Canadian solidarity geared up again with the US Trump administration?”

Cited from the preface of the book “Cuba Solidarity in Canada – Five Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations”, 2014

“In the last twenty years I have visited Cuba more than twenty times organizing work brigades or doing collaborative academic work as a university researcher in global health. I have also had the pleasure of meeting many peers within the Cuba solidarity movement in Canada and elsewhere. During that time I have strived to understand the true meaning of solidarity. I have read, studied

and written about it all the while I was looking at Cuba as a case study of a nation steeped in solidarity. I do not claim I have the ultimate word on solidarity, however, I do feel that we have not given it too much credit outside the world of activism. I believe we should”.

Linda McDowell, Canadian activist:

“Canadians support Cuba in different ways. There are those who go to Cuba for an affordable vacation. Many of these people have no idea of the political, economic or any other system in Cuba, and do not really want to learn more. They love the Cuban people that they meet and usually bring some small gifts to give to their Cuban friends and the people who work in the resorts. They know that the United States dislikes Cuba, and are opposed to this, although, they do not know why or what the US is doing to Cuba. This group supports Cuba by spending money there, as tourists. For many it is the only other country that they visit, as, they love Cuba and the people.

Then there are those of us that recognize all the struggles that the Cuban people have endured to achieve a life style, and social programs that many of us aspire to get for our countries. There are many solidarity groups in Canada. The Canadian Cuban Friendship Network has chapters across Canada, in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Niagara, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver. Perhaps other cities as well. There is also a group called Worker to Worker, that promotes solidarity between Canadian and Cuban Unions. Members of these groups have demonstrate at American embassies against the illegal incarceration of the Cuban Five, against the US blockades of Cuba. Many participate in Solidarity Brigades, post pro Cuba articles on Social media, visit Cuba as often as possible, interact with Cuban groups such as the CTC, ICAP, and participate in May Day celebrations. They also have Cuban parties where they invite the public to experience a small part of Cuban culture and music. They sometimes bring Cuban musicians to their city. They try to educate Canadians about Cuba.

My first visit to Cuba was in 2000. I attended a Women’s Conference in Havana, with my union. It was the year of the World Women’s March. I attended marches in Ottawa, and on to New York where we delivered petitions about women’s rights to the United Nations and then on to the beautiful country of Cuba. Vilma Espín was the chair of the meeting, although I did not know much about her then, I have since learned what a fantastic woman she was. I FELL INLOVE WITH CUBA. Later I joined Worker to Worker and did many tours of Cuba and attended a few May Day celebrations in Havana with this group. Through my friend Heide Trampus I learned about the International Colloquiums for the Cuban Five. I attended five of them. Every year in January a group of Union activists get together and tour a part of Cuba. On these tours we meet with members of the CTC, and ICAP, we visit hospitals, schools, museums, historical sites, and try to learn more about Cuba, and the Cuban political system. I now organize these tours. I also went on the Calixto García Brigade last year. We try to get new people to join our tours and brigades,

because the more that people know what Cuba is really about, the more people there are that support the country and who can tell others the truth about Cuba. The US tells everyone that Cuba is a Dictatorship. Those in the solidarity groups and people who tour Cuba know better and spread the word. ”

Steve Rutchinski, Member of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC):

“Cuba's struggle for independence, sovereignty and to exercise the right of the people to determine their own affairs and direction of their society is exemplary in the struggle of the peoples against colonialism and imperialism. We live in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. One humanity, one struggle for progress of all human kind. The International says "let each stand in their place". Cuba's achievements, in the face of the most brutal reaction, aggression, sanctions and blockade are testimony to what the working class and people can achieve. The leadership of your Communist Party in unifying the people and nation is vitally important. It is an inspiration to all of us. Let each stand in their place. That is what the song of the international working class says - The International - and for me that means it is an honor and a duty to stand with the Cuban working class and people, and the Communist Party of Cuba, in solidarity with your struggle, by waging the struggle to for revolution and social progress right here within the conditions of Canada.

You know the opulence of western imperialist societies is seldom portrayed for what it actually is - social wealth that belongs to the working people who produced it at home and abroad. With respect to the developing world, our opulence has come at their expense. It is blood money. Yes it looks great, dazzling but it is the reason the indigenous people here are denied their sovereignty, their territories, and their right to be. It is the reason people were enslaved in Africa and brought to produce fortunes for the colonizers and why to this day the decedents of the slaves are discriminated against, face double exploitation (as workers and because of their race), are shot and killed daily by police in US, turned into drug addicts to keep them down. It is the reason Africa remains economically backward. It is the reason the US, Canada and their "partners" in crime are interfering in the affairs of Venezuela, to control the oil and gold and to block the development of the Alba group of countries to find their own independent path to development and social progress. All this wealth and opulence lands here in the imperialist countries like Canada - where even at 40 below zero, you will find human beings sleeping on the street. I see it every day! There is no glitter to the "prosperity" that comes from a social system which exists for the enrichment of the few at the expense of the existence of the overwhelming majority.”

CONCLUSIONS

Ties, relations between and among governments can be broken, disappeared, erased, but the links and connections between people can never be the result of a mandate of any government. Canadians and

Cubans began their contacts even before any diplomatic relation became official. Luckily the two countries have kept together even in the harsh periods of the cold war and the confrontations among countries in this contemporary crazy world. Who is benefitting from these good relations? We are: Canadians and Cubans, and we will keep it that way for years to come. Many Canadians say that coming to Cuba has changed their lives forever. For many Cubans, it might also be the same. Certainly, the relations with Canadian Universities have brought about new opportunities for exchange and collaboration. One of the Canadians who have come many times, who has become not only a collaborator in the academic sphere, but also a true friend and a member of our families, Dr. Jeff Tennant. He states:

“All of us know that the academic work we do in the fields of language, communication and culture has never been more relevant than it is today, in a world where international contacts have become so widespread that the term “globalization” has become something of a cliché, but a cliché that we know can mean different things to different people. Researchers and educators in our fields have a lot to contribute to a kind of globalization that emphasizes world peace and social justice, bringing people together to make this world a better place. I know I don’t have to reiterate here the usual arguments to convince you of that. So much of what we do in our field is about breaking down barriers between people, and we certainly live in interesting times when it comes to possibilities of opening up new avenues of exchange among the peoples of our hemisphere”.

No better conclusion for this paper than Dr. Tennant’s words.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Haggard, S. (2003). *Cuba-Canada_One Hundred Years in View*. Ediciones Pontón Caribe. S.A.

Obama, B. (December 17, 2014). *Statement by the President on Cuba Policy Changes*. Taken from www.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office

Pagliccia, N. (2014). *Cuba Solidarity in Canada: Five Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations*. ISBN 978-1-4602-4380-0

Rodriguez, R. (2010). Canada and the Cuban Revolution: Defining the Rules of Engagement 1959-1962. *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, Special Edition.

Wylie, L. (2010). Reassessing Canada’s Relationship with Cuba in an Era of Change. *Canadian International Council*. ISSN 1919-8213 (Online).