

SUMMER ADVENTURE : ICASSI 2012*

By Rebecca Walker and Zuwaina Murad

As the two of us set out from Toronto on what would be a nearly twenty-four-hour journey to Druskininkai, Lithuania for the ICASSI conference, we were faced with feelings of apprehension. We wondered whether two weeks would be too long to spend in a foreign land and at a conference we had only recently learned about. We worried that we had made a mistake. These fears were immediately put to rest from the moment we set foot in the airport in Vilnius. We were greeted by Karen John, a British member of ICASSI faculty whose warm welcome was a precursor to the immense warmth and hospitality that we experienced throughout our participation at ICASSI. Soon, we were surrounded by other faculty members and returning participants who all enthusiastically relayed their previous experiences and assured us that this trip would change our lives.

ICASSI is an annual international Adlerian conference that is hosted by a different country each year. This year's conference was held in Druskininkai, Lithuania: a little resort town in the south of the country. Along with an extensive selection of workshops, ICASSI boasts a variety of additional colloquiums and social events/activities. There was a different social event each evening, each of which was based on Adlerian concepts of collaboration, social interest, lifestyle, and creativity. The overall feel of this conference was very collegial. Faculty and students conversed and socialized with no formalities or presumptions of hierarchy. This relational environment enabled participants to forge strong connections with each other, and promoted the type of positive atmosphere that Adler himself would have been happy to see.

The workshops were enriching, challenging, and engaging. The small group sizes enabled deep discussion that allowed participants to both explore their own personal experiences and to integrate the learning into their own professional experiences. ICASSI draws a diverse crowd each year, and this year's conference featured over two hundred participants from twenty-three different countries. This classroom diversity enabled participants to gain a holistic view of treatment approaches and course concepts. This was a rare opportunity to gain insight about how Adlerian psychology – and other approaches – differ from country to country. Faculty worked hard to integrate this learning into course learning in meaningful ways. The learning that we both experienced at ICASSI was practical, clear, and extremely useful to our personal and professional growth. In addition, the morning colloquium series were delivered by a different faculty member each day and gave participants snippets of what could be expected from the workshop course delivered by that person. It was a great way of diversifying learning and exploring new areas of interest.

This was our first experience of a conference of this magnitude, and we are so pleased to have been a part of it. The ICASSI staff and organizers did an excellent job of creating an experience that people from so many different backgrounds and orientations could all enjoy equally. The environment created was warm and encouraging, and allowed participants the opportunity to open up and explore old and new ideas. We at no point expected to attend a conference at which the majority of participants grieved its end

because they had enjoyed the experience so tremendously. Such is the ICASSI experience, and it is now so easy to understand why so many participants become lifelong attendees. We will never forget our ICASSI experience, and both of us hope to continue attending in the years to come.

**This article first appeared in the ONSAP Newsletter – ONSAP is the relatively newly formed Ontario Society of Adlerian Psychology. The Ontario Society of Adlerian Psychology (ONSAP) is an organization made up of educators, counselors, social workers, professionals, psychologists, parents and individuals seeking to enrich their understanding of Adlerian principals as it applies to the individual as well as Adlerian concepts such as lifestyle and social interests. This organization is also dedicated to encouraging participants to promote Adlerian psychology through relationships, publications, presentations and workshops. Rebecca reports: “From attending my first ONSAP conference, I had the opportunity to witness these concepts being utilized as well as participate in professional and personal development; this experience reminded me deeply of ICASSI.”*