

## **The Canadian Foundation for Polish Studies Kinia Adamczyk 2006 --2007**

In September 2006, I took up the presidency of the Canadian Foundation for Polish Studies (CFPS). Kasia Wiśniewska, who recently finished a BA in English literature at McGill and is currently working for CD-Pharma, became its vice-president.

We met the founding president, Irene Tomaszewski, at a summer conference called *Poland in the Rockies*, which CFPS co-organizes every two years together with the Polish Canadian Association of Calgary. The Foundation sent three students from Montreal to the conference, in which 33 students and young professionals from North America and Europe participated. They all benefited from full scholarships for the occasion.

During 12 days, we attended Polish Studies conferences given by prominent journalists, history, literature, politics and art scholars in formal and informal settings. This allowed us to delve deeper into issues that interested us the most while chatting over coffee or a hike in the mountains.

Further information is available on [www.polandintherockies.com](http://www.polandintherockies.com), and in my article *Rock & Pole* (page 90). The article was also published in Edmonton Panorama, on the Canadian Journalism Project's website, in Concordia's *The Link* and York University's *Excalibur* for a detailed account of *Poland in the Rockies*. A Polish version of the article, *Szkoła ambasadorów polskości*, was also featured in *Gazeta* and *Biuletyn Polonijny*.

Kasia Wiśniewska and I were interviewed about *Poland in the Rockies* during an episode of TV Polonia. We mentioned we were inspired by the lectures we attended there and were eager to satiate our hunger to find out more about Poland and to situate it within our Canadian lives. Furthermore, we were, by this time, infected by the contagious passion for Polish history and we enthusiastically accepted the invitation to join the Canadian Foundation for Polish Studies and continue its work.

We quickly set out to organize a dramatization of Mrs. Tomaszewski's book, *Inside a Gestapo Prison: The Letters of Krystyna Wituska*, which took place on November 10, 2006 at Concordia's DeSève theatre. Alexi Marchel, a University of Toronto student who also attended *Poland in the Rockies*, performed Wituska's role in a performance that attracted an audience of over 100 people, Polish and Canadian, young and old.

We promoted the event in various newspapers in Montreal, and on CBC Radio and on Polish radio. Our big reward was that the CBC profiled Krystyna Wituska, a member of the Polish wartime resistance, as part of its commemoration of Remembrance Day. Concordia library acquired copies of the book for its collection, which subsequently received a very positive review in Concordia's newspaper *The Link*. *Świecie Nasz* featured an interview with Ms. Marchel and *The Concordian* covered the dramatization itself.

Fuelled by the success of our first event, we planned another one: a screening of *Exiles: a Polish Journey*, based on Halina Ogonowska-Coates's book *Krystyna's Story*. The movie, which touched upon the stories of Poles living in New Zealand but who had been deported to Siberia during World War II, was followed by a lively discussion with Mrs. Halina Babińska, a woman who shared the fate of the movie's subjects. *The Concordian* featured an interview with Mrs. Babińska a week before the screening, which we also promoted in various Montreal papers and on the Polish radio.

Over 150 people, including veterans, students and scholars attended the event, which took place at Concordia's DeSève Theatre on March 4, 2007. A Concordia history professor requested a copy of the movie to show to her students.

### **Katarzyna Romer Wiśniewska 2007 - 2008,**

With Kinia gone to study in Europe, I am very grateful to Anna Kisielewska, who was member of the Polish Students' Association of Montreal a few years ago, for her enthusiastic support. The main objective for CFPS was to continue presenting Polish history at one of the English universities in Montreal.

This year, we organized two lectures at McGill. In October, Professor Tadeusz Piotrowski of the University of New Hampshire came to talk about the wartime deportations of Poles to the Gulag, and their subsequent resettlement all over the world. Once again we had a large audience, among them many students. It was interesting to see that among those attending were some survivors of the deportations accompanied by their children and grandchildren. A good discussion followed Professor Piotrowski's lecture.

The second event was a lecture by Professor Eva Plach of Wilfrid Laurier University who discussed her book, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Piłsudski's Poland, 1926-1935*.

CFPS is continuing its collaboration with the Polish Canadian Association of Calgary organizing the third edition of *Poland in the Rockies*, which will take place in Canmore, Alberta, July 18-28, 2008. Created by Tony Muszynski and his dynamic colleagues in the Calgary association, and largely funded by the Polish communities of Alberta, PitR brings together university students and outstanding speakers from Canada, the United States and Europe. CFPS founding president, Irene Tomaszewski, is the program director. For complete details, please see [www.polandintherockies.com](http://www.polandintherockies.com)

As a participant of *Poland in the Rockies 2006*, I join Kinia in saying that this program awakened a great interest in our Polish heritage and inspired us to contribute whatever we can towards promoting a greater awareness of Polish history and culture among our fellow Canadians. Our plans for the next academic year include a screening of the excellent BBC documentary, *The Battle for Warsaw*, and we hope to have the director, Wanda Koscia, with us.

We are grateful to the Polish Institute for supporting our events, Dr. Ryszard Grygorczyk for his generous hospitality, and to Stefan Władysiuk in particular for his help.

We sincerely thank the Polish Socio-cultural Foundation in Quebec as well a Mr. Zbigniew Małecki and Mr. Janusz Mazur for their special encouragement and support.