

# My 2-Week International Visit

To: Toronto, CANADA and Detroit, USA  
September 23 – October 7, 2018

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**“Great experience, thanks to IASSIDD Academy’s *International Visits Program*”**

My goal on arranging this 2-week visit was to learn more about how the concept of quality of life is conceptualized and applied in the field of intellectual disabilities. Marco Bertelli (CREA – Florence, Italy) originally helped me connect to Academy Director Ivan Brown and a team of experts was identified in Canada and the United States to host my visit.



I spent the first week in Toronto, and the second week in Detroit. In Toronto, I had an opportunity to meet and discuss with Ivan Brown and Roy Brown about Quality of life (QoL) as a theoretical framework. In addition, I visited Surrey Place Centre where I met with Barry Isaacs (Director of Research and Coordinator, International Family Quality of Life Project). A full day was dedicated to a visit to Community Living Toronto, Canada’s largest community agency serving people with intellectual disabilities, where we particularly focused on a group home project and an independent living project for young people with Intellectual disabilities.

During my second week in Detroit, I was hosted by Barbara Leroy and Sharon Milberger (Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute - MI-DDI), thanks to whom an intensive meeting schedule was built in order to meet and discuss issues with many professionals working at MI-DDI and Wayne Community Living Services. Finally, I met Preethy Samuel, Assistant Professor at Wayne State University and quality of life researcher.

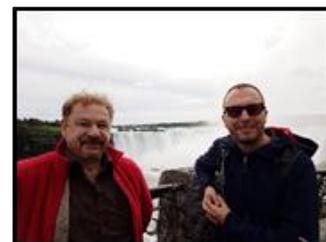
This was a gratifying visit, where we combined different levels of analysis: debates on quality of life as a theoretical framework; how we can collaborate in quality of life research projects (with 2 specific focuses: Individual QoL and Family QoL); and how universities and social-health-care services can collaborate in fostering rigorous assessment of care processes. So, my visit was an opportunity to deepen my understanding of the QoL approach, and how it is operationalized in supporting people with intellectual disabilities.

## Funding my visit

My university has a specific funding program promoting new international partnership among researchers. It helped me to build this visit. At the same time, I looked for creative solutions: Ivan Brown in Toronto, and Barbara LeRoy and Sharon Milberger in Detroit hosted me in their homes helping with accommodation costs. This has been very kind of them.

## It was not all work!

Thanks to all people I met, I had the opportunity to share amazing time with them. With Ivan I visited the Niagara Falls: very impressive! And I can’t forget the hockey match in Detroit, rather than the visit to Henry Ford Museum with Sharon and her husband and, again, delicious dinner with Barbara and her husband.



Ivan Brown and Simone Visentin  
At Niagara Falls

### **My next steps**

This international visit experience has increased my international network and provided opportunities for this network to develop collaborative research goals. We are particularly interested in comparative work among our countries.

In the meantime, I became member of the IASSIDD Quality of Life SIRG where I will be able to meet other people who share my interest on QoL research.

### **My special thanks to...**

So, I have finally to thank all the people I met during this trip. A special thanks goes to Ivan Brown Roy Brown and Barry Isaac in Toronto, and Barbara Leroy, Preethy Samuel and Sharon Milberger in Detroit. A perfect balance between professional competences and pleasant welcome.

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Simone Vertin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot above the 'i' in "Vertin".