

**PROFILE:**  
NEJOLLA KORRIS

By Marg. Pullishy

# Truth, lies & diplomacy



Writer Marg. Pullishy with Nejolla Korris at the 2010 Sizzling Reception

**P**erhaps it's not coincidental that Nejolla Korris's favourite piece of music is Dmitri Shostakovich's *Fifth Violin Concerto*. The masterpiece is a stunning romp through a wide range of instrumental emotions that could well be a reflection of Korris's life... sometimes lively to the point of frenzy... sometimes quiet and reflective... but generally a balanced combination of both for a woman who juggles seemingly contradictory roles.

She is a master of diplomacy as the Honorary Consul of Lithuania to the province of Alberta, and has been dubbed the human lie detector by some of her clients that include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Canadian Association of Special Investigation Units, as well as the Institute of Internal Auditors, to name but a few.

The human lie detector? Yep. Korris was born in Edmonton to parents who abandoned their birth country of Lithuania in 1948 to escape the oppression of communism in search of the

freedom. She earned a Bachelors of Law at Carleton University in 2006. But that was only years after she'd paid her dues, working for a variety of arts organizations, positions that took her to Toronto, Lithuania, England, with summer internships in Sweden and Finland, though not necessarily in that order.

**RETURNING HOME**

Heaven help the biographer that every tries to put Korris's story in chronological sequence as she skipped around the world, in a series of moves that would leave a cartographer scratching his head. In 1991, she returned to Edmonton, to settle with her toddler son Taddes, now 21. An accomplished classical bassist studying at the Manhattan School of Music in New York, he played a large role in her decision to return to River City.

"I grew up in Edmonton and I thought it would be a great place to raise my son; I came back with intention of getting my degree at the university." But as life is wont to do, circum-

stances demanded she re-think her decision to return to academia; instead, she sought, and found work in the arts community once again, including a stint as executive director of the Edmonton Symphony.

"In 1997, a change in my employment status marked a pivotal point in my life," Korris says. She made the decision then to change direction and, after identifying her marketable skills, forged ahead. "When I worked for different arts organizations, I enjoyed assessing financial controls, was a student of human nature and loved getting to the bottom of a story. I did some training, became a licensed private investigator and decided to hang out my own shingle."

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Though most of Korris's work is performed on the international stage these days, she still maintains her private investigator's license on the home front. "My first case was a high profile, historical sexual assault case, which resulted in a criminal conviction," Korris remembers.

This was really the beginning of a major transition for the single mom, who developed a keen interest in fraud cases. "The first issue is the human relationships that manipulate the numbers. Fraud is always a long story, dominated by human behaviour and interaction rather than just perpetuating a crime."

It was around this time that Korris, who had already had a solid foundation in investigations, decided to enhance her knowledge about lie detection. "The fellow who taught the lie detection methodology told me I would love working in the field and he was right." While fraud investigation and lie detection are completely different disciplines, she is fluent in both areas, and in great demand to share her knowledge and skills in both fields.

Korris is a walking, talking repository on all things related to linguistic lie detection. Unlike kinesics, the art of reading body language, her linguistic lie detection does not rely on external, physical factors at all, but rather in patterns of speech used by the subject being interviewed. She looks for verbal deviations to those patterns, as well as linguistic signals of commitment.

"One common example I use is the O.J. Simpson case," Korris suggests. For those who may have been living under a rock in May 1998, or have simply chosen to erase this story from their memory banks, a reminder: Simpson, an American football icon, was charged with the murder of his former wife, Nicole, and her friend, Ron Goldman. Simpson's historic, not-so-mad-dash getaway attempt culminated in his arrest and subsequent murder charges. "When he was interviewed by the police, O.J. was asked, 'Did you kill Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman?'" His response was, 'I never killed two people.'" This, according to Korris, does not mean that he didn't kill anyone.

"That response, 'I never killed two people', should have been a signal to the interviewer that a different question needed to be asked, such as, 'Which one did you kill?'"

She is perfectly aware that linguistic lie detection is not a panacea in crime investigation, but should only be viewed as another investigative tool that can help those making the queries formulate and create interview questions to get the forthright answers as they forage for the truth.

When training police officers, FBI agents, auditors and others involved in the investigative process, Korris says she "...uses various examples of high profile media cases along with examples from the participants' experiences to illustrate the effectiveness of the method. The methodology not only exposes what is deceptive in a person's statement but also shows us indicators of sensitivity."



Honorary Consul  
Nejjolla Korris with  
Sarunas Adomavicius,  
Vice Minister of  
Foreign Affairs  
for Lithuania

### FLYING HIGH

Korris now spends much of her time presenting keynote addresses at conferences, as well as training sessions for a variety of professional associations and law enforcement groups. To say she travels a lot is a bit of an understatement: At the onset of the interview for this article, Korris was in Sao Paulo, Brazil on Friday, Rio de Janeiro on Saturday, back to Edmonton on Sunday and off to Minneapolis on Tuesday.

Between September 2008 and January 2010, she only spent 26 days at home. "Technology has really allowed me to have a global classroom. Although the training still requires personal interaction, the follow-up and coaching can be done as easily with a course participant in South Africa as it can with someone in Edmonton." It also means she can write and file her *Civil Wars* column in *Edmontonians* ... no matter where in the world she may be.

Today, many of those trips include visits to Taddes in New York, or quick trips to her beloved Lithuania to participate in official functions as the Honorary Consul. During one of her early trips, she found herself in the middle of the coup that resulted in Lithuania gaining its independence; at that time, the new government allowed citizens to reclaim properties that had been confiscated during the Soviet Occupation. Korris's father started the reclamation process in 1993 but, unfortunately, died before the parcel of land was returned to her mother in 1998.

Now Korris is re-branding her company's image to more accurately reflect the professional path she has been on for the past seven years. As the CEO of the Sponsorship Group, which works with other independently owned firms, she has opted to change the corporate name to InterVeritas Int'l.—most appropriate given that 'veritas' is Latin for 'truth', and the 'inter' element can represent an abbreviation for interview, interactive, international or interrogation, all essential components of her work.

When asked what advice she would give young women starting out in business, Korris is thoughtful before responding. "I think to be successful today, a woman has to not only have a passion for what she does, but must have the desire to learn more about it every day, share that knowledge with others, expect high standards of not only herself but others, and always take the time to love and laugh in life."

Sage advice, indeed. ✓

*Marg. Pullishy is a freelance journalist and broadcaster. She is a former editor of Edmontonians.*

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