



Family Network for deaf children & deaf youth today

OUR SUMMER PROGRAM,

WINTER



December 2023

FNDC values sharing information to deaf children, families, professionals and the communities that support them. These events, advertisements and/or articles do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of FNDC or offer an endorsement

Merry Christmas
Happy Hanukkah
Happy Kwanzaa
Happy Holidays

As we approach the holiday season, and 2023 draws to a close, FNDC and our Deaf Youth Today program reflect on a year filled with gratitude, growth, and change. Our dedicated staff and board members have played a crucial role in our success.

We are delighted to announce the addition of Brianne Braun, who now works part-time on family support, advocacy, and events for FNDC. Hilary Potter has joined us as the Youth Development Coordinator, expanding our outreach beyond the Lower Mainland. Both Brianne and Hilary have seamlessly integrated into our team and have been valuable assets.

Regrettably, Scott will be stepping back from his role in DYT due to increasing family and career commitments. While we will miss his presence, we know that Scott's connection to DYT is enduring.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Andrea and Terry Maloney for their unwavering commitment to creating and running camps and opportunities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) children and youth.

As we bid farewell to Laura and Gwen, two exceptional FNDC board members, for their contributions. Gwen has been the "Donor Relationship Supermom". Gwen and Laura will both be GREATLY missed.

We welcome Monika Lane and Celeste Sage-Taylor, both Deaf individuals with Deaf children, to the FNDC board. Celeste also brings the experience of a mom of deaf children with diverse needs. Welcome!

A special acknowledgment goes to Bella Poato, the backbone of FNDC, who manages all paperwork, administration, and finances with unparalleled dedication.

FNDC and DYT are gearing up for a reviewing/revising retreat in mid-January. Operating within a limited budget while meeting high expectations from parents in our non-profit sector has been challenging. We are actively researching strategies employed by other camps to address similar challenges and will keep you updated on our progress.

On a personal note, as many of you know, I am a well-seasoned mom of a Deaf adult daughter – and I have the grey hair to prove it.

In September, our daughter, Mari and her wife, Nadine welcomed a baby into their lives. Such grandma joy! I always thought once our Deaf daughter was an adult, my wondering and worrying would be done, but here I was wondering to myself:

Will these 2 Deaf adults have a deaf baby or a hearing baby? If she's deaf, what does that look like for me as a grandma? It would definitely mean upping my signing levels yet feeling guilty that I'm not a natural signer. AND to add to that, I can begin worrying again about a deaf child in the BC School system, but then again, not worrying because she would have ASL as her first language and have two loving parents.

But, what if she's hearing? I can't just talk to the baby in front of my Deaf daughter and daughter-in-law and exclude them - I would need to sign all the time. AND, if they aren't around and I'm talking to the baby, will I have guilt that I am building speaking/listening relationship with her? Then again, she will have ASL as her first language and two amazing parents.

OH MY GOSH, I just realized that mom guilt never ends, but LOVE is forever!

Cecelia

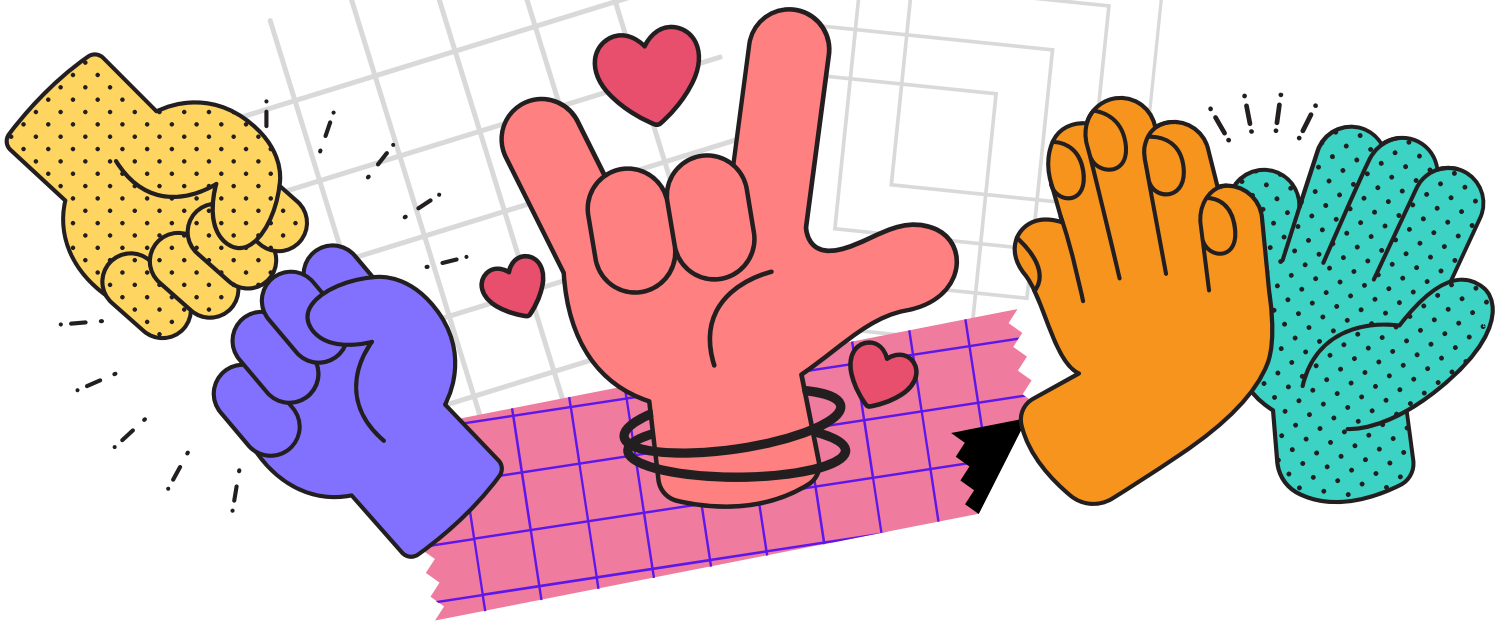
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wish to
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"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." - Franklin D. Roosevelt

OPPORTUNITY TO DONATE AND INVEST IN OUR YOUNG DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING FUTURE LEADERS!



What we hope to do?

- Hire a Youth Development Coordinator permanently
- Create online training modules for DHH Youth
- Reach more DHH youth throughout BC
- Offer more volunteer and work opportunities for DHH youth

Donations may be made securely on our website at: www.fndc.ca/donation or large donations may be arranged through cheque to avoid credit card processing charges

For more in depth information about Family Network for Deaf Children and our Deaf Youth Today Summer Program and why we are seeking donations, please contact cecilia@fndc.ca and we will be delighted to share more information with you.



FAMILY NETWORK
FOR DEAF CHILDREN & DEAF YOUTH TODAY
OUR SUMMER PROGRAM,

An empowering backcountry adventure for deaf and hard of hearing youth in BC's Garibaldi Provincial Park

From: https://www.outwardbound.ca/2023/12/04/backcountry-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-youth/?mc_cid=fb9f5a53d&mc_eid=73fa764eda



In October 2023, a group of eight young people embarked on a journey that showed them they were capable of much more than they had ever imagined.

On a challenging hike through Garibaldi Provincial Park in British Columbia, the grade 10-12 students, who are deaf and/or hard of hearing, left technology and assistive devices behind... and relied solely on themselves and their peers to succeed in the wilderness.

Five days later, they returned home with renewed confidence and ready for all of life's challenges — and we at Outward Bound Canada (OBC) couldn't be happier to have been part of this journey.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS TO FIND THEIR OWN IDENTITY

The expedition was an initiative of the B.C. Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POPDHH), which wanted to give students the opportunity to work together on a challenging task in an environment where they had to rely on each other.

Since the POPDHH team did not have the expertise to provide outdoor education, they partnered with OBC, drawing on our previous experience working with students from the BC School for the Deaf. OBC supported the project financially with funding from the Telus Friendly Future Foundation as part of our goal to make the outdoors accessible to all youth in Canada.

According to Terry Maloney, POPDHH's vice-principal, the goal of the expedition was to provide students with a unique bonding experience where they could make connections with other signing students in British Columbia, and develop their own sense of identity:

– These deaf and hard of hearing students are often isolated or the only member of their local community using American Sign Language (ASL). This comes with

a lot of anxiety and pressure. In the OBC course, they experienced a strong sense of connection and stress relief by being outside with others who experience the same thing. The participants had opportunities to show leadership qualities in this group that they might not have had in their home communities.

In addition to the OBC instructors, the students were accompanied by Terry and another Deaf mentor, Reighan Helyer, as well as two ASL interpreters, Nathalie Freyvogel and Rebekah Zorbakis, who also served as chaperones.

When selecting participants, POPDHH considered students who are learning or using ASL as their primary language and whether they would benefit from connecting with peers who also use ASL to further develop their skills and build confidence in the language. "This gave the students the opportunity to experience a Deaf world outside of their hearing environment, which they often have to adapt to," adds Terry.

FROM STRANGERS TO FRIENDS GROWING TOGETHER – IN A WEEK!

Terry says that the group that embarked on the journey knew little about each other at first, but that quickly changed:

– Over the course of the week, I witnessed remarkable interaction between these youth from diverse backgrounds and ASL levels. The expedition also served as a platform to encourage language development, self-advocacy and self-assuredness among the participants; and they accomplished all without the use of technology or specialized equipment, relying solely on their authentic selves. It was an amazing transformation that we all experienced through the offerings of nature in beautiful British Columbia.

The other Deaf mentor, Reighan Hellyer, describes the impressive development of the participants during the trip:

– It was amazing to see all the students come together, work hard and experience the challenge together as well as independently. It was something you had to see with your own eyes. Everyone supported and encouraged each other to complete the hike and overcome the challenging parts. They took turns and shared the duties without hesitation. I could tell that they all learned so much about each other and about themselves on this journey. I saw how each individual grew from the first day to the last. There were many remarkable moments and beautiful sceneries to explore and hike through. I was glad that I was able to witness this moment in these students' lives that they will remember forever.

Terry says it was clear to see how the students progressed through the experience from using more spoken language and relying on their listening skills to being fully immersed in a Deaf world as their equipment and devices such as hearing aids and Cochlear Implants stopped working. In addition, some participants were hiking for the first time and had limited beliefs about their abilities:

– They surprised themselves by how hard they could push themselves to complete the task and worked together as a team to get everyone through challenges. The

students told us how much more confident they were after the expedition, that they now appreciate nature much more, that they have made great new friends, that they no longer rely on technology (not even their cell phones!) and that their school backpacks feel much lighter now!

OBC SUPPORTERS MADE THIS TRIP POSSIBLE

This once-in-a-lifetime experience was possible thanks to the generous support of our donors. OBC was able to fund the entire cost of the expedition for the group, while POPDHH covered the accessibility costs (ASL interpreters) and travel expenses for students living outside of B.C. Lower Mainland.

This is just one example of how outdoor education can transform lives for the better and give youth the confidence they need to succeed in school, work, and life – something Terry wholeheartedly recommends from his experience:

– This was a life-changing experience for our students and we would recommend it to other organizations looking for a unique opportunity. It shows that all students can participate in and benefit from outdoor education, no matter what their barriers are.

[A donation to OBC](#) can help ensure that more youth have access to life-changing experiences, just like the POPDHH students had.



CHECK OUT WHAT OTHER PARTICIPANTS* HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE EXPEDITION:

"I loved the expedition; it was such a rewarding feeling when we completed the trail! I saw many different sights that I wouldn't see in my everyday life and made many new connections with other deaf and hard of hearing teens. I will cherish these bonds forever. This was a new experience and I loved every second of it."

Shea

"Hiking is one of the best opportunities to meet other people who have had similar experiences with hearing loss, where we can feel comfortable and relate. Thank you for this rare opportunity in my life. Since how essential it is, it should be a recurring event!"

Jacob

"I loved this experience! It was so much fun to be disconnected from technology and just be with everyone. At first, I was a bit nervous because I'd be with people I had never met before, but the first night at camp showed me that I had no reason to be nervous. Everyone was supportive and bonded quickly."

Once we started hiking, you always had someone to talk to or just walk side by side in comfortable silence. At every meal we spoke or signed to each other, which led to the guides wanting to learn more sign language. We soon had little sessions where we taught them signs, they could use.

The hikes were beautiful and every day was almost a new world, from trees and lakes to big mountains and valleys to stunning rivers and snow-capped peaks. My favorite moment on the trip was one morning when it was freezing cold and everyone was bundled in layers around the boiling water waiting for drinks and food. We were all talking, which was so much fun because we really all bonded that day, just like the last night when we all ate s'mores together and laughed around the fire."

Quinn

"The fact that I weigh less than 100 pounds might make people think I'm too small to carry big things. Some people have even mocked me as a lightweight. After taking the OBC course, I was able to prove people wrong! My backpack weighed up to 50 pounds and I walked uphill, flat and downhill for three days while carrying my sleeping bag, clothes, water, a tent and food."

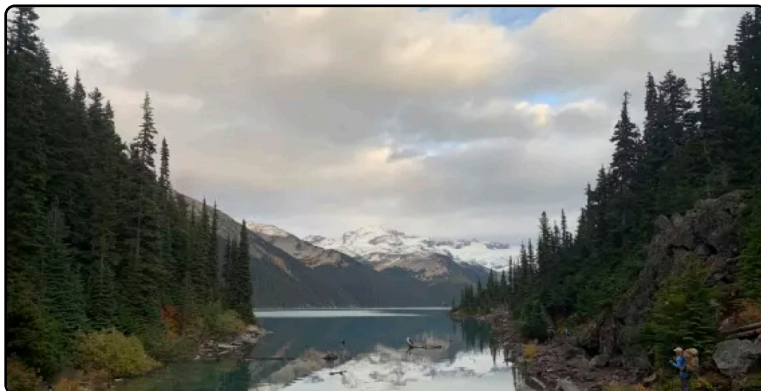
My journey also brought me closer to some amazing people and gave me a chance to reflect on my life. One thing I've noticed is that I'm constantly busy at school or with extracurricular activities. I realized that I need to take a break from some of my commitments and focus on myself. I'm grateful that I was able to be part of this journey and am inspired by the experience I had on the course."

Teanna

"My Outward Bound experience taught me a lot about what I'm capable of. I knew beforehand that I was capable of some pretty amazing things, but this trip helped me to better understand my limits and capabilities. It wasn't the first time I'd camped, but it was the first time I'd spent multiple days in a provincial park and really put in a lot of hours on the trail, and I really enjoyed that."

I enjoyed meeting the other deaf and/or hard of hearing students, catching up with some and getting to know our instructors – I couldn't have asked for a better duo! There were many different walks of life represented in our diverse group. I was happy to see how others in our group persevered and challenged themselves physically and mentally. All in all, I feel like I learned a lot, even though it's not your typical school course, and I'd definitely do it again!"

Ben



A Documentary about Oscar-winning actor Troy Kotsur & his Father

To My Father is a tribute to Kotsur's father

From: <http://www.deafnewstoday.com>



Filmmaker John Papola says the documentary is a powerful tribute to the love between Leonard Kotsur and his son, saying, "Leonard never saw his son as a victim. He saw his son as capable." Leonard Kotsur served as chief of police in Mesa, Arizona and was a devout Catholic. When Troy was in high school, he was paralyzed from the neck down from a car accident and was no longer able to sign to Troy.

In 2022, Troy won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his performance as deaf New England fisherman and father Frank Rossi in the 2021 movie *CODA*. The 23-minute documentary is available on YouTube. Here's more about it.

WATCH ON YOUTUBE: <https://youtu.be/ddyt2UYisHI>

HARMONIUM

From: www.theoddgentlemen.com

**Genre: Narrative
Adventure Game, Inter-
active Musical**

**Coming to: Netflix
Games & Microsoft
Game Pass**



Harmonium is an interactive sign language musical and adventure/narrative game that follows Melody Macato, an energetic 10-year-old Filipina-American musician who became Deaf at a young age. For her upcoming debut show, she wants to create a new type of music that can be felt, seen, and is accessible to her friends.

When Melody's notes leap off the page, she is pulled into a musical and visual wonderland called Harmonium. To make it home in time for her big show, Melody has to face Cacophony, an all-consuming force who can only be defeated with a masterpiece symphony.

In a world where all music is visualized, players explore the wonders of Harmonium through innovative gameplay mechanics and narrative puzzles that incorporate American Sign Language and allow the player to communicate through body language, handshapes, and gestures.

This heart-warming story features universal themes for players of any age and background to enjoy. Players are taken on a fantastical journey where Melody discovers her own painted symphony, a song that lives inside of her heart and through her hands.

History

Harmonium is a collaboration between writers, designers, artists, and animators in the Deaf Community coming together with an award-winning narrative game studio, The Odd Gentlemen, to create an accessible game for a wide, all-ages audience to enjoy. Through many years of development, the story, gameplay, and art has grown and been revised to authentically represent Melody's story. The team is excited to announce their passion project to the world.

Features

UNIQUE SIGN LANGUAGE GAME MECHANICS

The game uses sign language and a variety of other non-verbal communication in its puzzles and narrative gameplay. Players will observe and take action in gameplay mechanics that utilize body language and handshapes classifiers to describe things visually. No prior sign language experience is required to play.

AN ACCESSIBLE EXPERIENCE

Accessibility design has been baked in from the start. The game features a visual language for music, animated subtitles for musical numbers, customizable captions/UI/controls, characters who fully communicate through ASL, a high-contrast gameplay mode, dubbed or subtitled mode, and more.

INTERACTIVE MUSICAL NUMBERS

Inspired by animated musicals and Deaf theater, the game features interactive and musical numbers that are signed and sung, branching dialogues that affect lyrics and gameplay, and puzzles that invite the player to tinker with visual musical toys.

A NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL AGES

Harmonium The Musical is a highly polished narrative, seamlessly told through gameplay. Melody's story is touching, charming, and humorous with universal appeal. The game is designed to be an experience everyone can enjoy and share together.

HARMONIUM - d/Deaf & HoH Creator Spotlight



Harmony Baniaga - ARTIST | PERFORMER | ACTRESS PLAYING MELODY

Harmony Baniaga (she/her) is a Deaf Filipina, born and raised in Seattle, Washington. She's a Gallaudet University alumni, she graduated with a major in American Sign Language (ASL) and a minor in Dance, May 2022. A dance member of Gallaudet Dance Company at Gallaudet University, and recently she joined the Hip-Hop dance crew RTHMZ in Seattle and has been working alongside them for the past year. Also is a Deaf performer interpreting concerts and music festivals with Pro Bono ASL.



Matt Daigle - CO-CREATOR | CO-WRITER OF HARMONIUM

Matt Daigle is a comedic writer, the artist and co-creator of the online comic, That Deaf Guy. In addition to his creative work, Matt is a Deaf Studies professor at California State University at Northridge. Matt was an early collaborator on Harmonium shaping the game and building out the team.

Morgan Baker - LEAD ACCESSIBILITY | WRITER | DESIGNER



Morgan Baker (she/they) is an award-winning game accessibility specialist and inclusive designer. Being a Deaf musician herself, Harmonium is a project that is special to her and close to her heart. In addition to designing and writing for Harmonium, Morgan has also proudly worked on several other game titles ranging from indie to AAA to improve accessible design and authentic representation. When she isn't making games, you will find her enjoying a good book, organizing local esports tournaments, or cuddling with her two corgis.



Søren Bro Sparre - ANIMATOR

Søren Bro Sparre is a professional Deaf animator from Denmark. Has worked on feature films, TV series, commercials and computer games. Has a great passion for working with sign language in animation and takes on new challenges with great joy. For The Odd Gentlemen, Søren is a 3D animator and storyboard artist and dreams of working with more video games and films with sign language in the future.



Mandy Harvey - ADVISOR | SINGER | SONGWRITER

Mandy Harvey is a singer, songwriter, author, and speaker who happens to be deaf. After losing her residual hearing due to complications with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, Mandy created a new system for staying connected to music based on vibrations and touch. Mandy was Simon Cowell's "Golden Buzzer" pick on America's Got Talent. The video has collectively received over 600 million views. Mandy uses her talents and artistry to encourage others which can be seen by her many acts as part of nonprofit organizations such as No Barriers USA and work for "Music: Not Impossible" with Not Impossible Labs which was named one of TIME Magazine's Top Inventions of 2023. She has released 5 studio albums and a book "Sensing The Rhythm." Her heart is to help others achieve their dreams by encouraging them to "Try" and move forward as a community.



Leo Samaniego - PROJECT ADVISOR

Leo Samaniego (he/him/his) is a Deaf Filipino American born and raised in Southern California. He graduated from California State University, Northridge in 2012 with a Bachelor's degree in Kinesiology. He has been employed by the City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works as an Office Engineering Technician for 5 years. Outside of work, he loves to spend time with family, explore new foods, play video games (currently engrossed in The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom), watch and play sports, and collect NBA/NFL digital moments.



Amber Galloway - PROJECT ADVISOR

Amber Galloway consults and coordinates a multitude of projects in the music and entertainment world. She is a Hard of Hearing music performance interpreter and her life's work has been in the entertainment field, creating music interpreting standards and changing the common perspective of what music access means to Deaf and Hard of hearing individuals. She is the owner and operator of Amber G Productions.



Derrian Tabilin - PROJECT ADVISOR

Derrian Tabilin (they/them) is a Pilipinx hard of hearing signer from Riverside, California. They're currently a PhD student attending the University of California, Riverside where they study intersectionality and identity development among Deaf and hard of hearing individuals and its impact on mental health outcomes. Alongside being a cultural consultant on the advisory board, they are involved in the Deaf community in various ways including being the ASL Club Advisor and part of the Deaf Education Task Force at UCR, and a representative for the Southern California Asian Deaf Association (SCADA).

What I learned from deaf grandparents:

'the mark of a good heart can be found on a face'

From: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jul/01/what-i-learned-from-deaf-grandparents-the-mark-of-a-good-heart-can-be-found-on-a-face>

Note: the term AUSLAN refers to Australian Sign Language

Of all the distinctive quirks – the idiosyncrasies that marked Nanny and Grandpa as deaf – none was more enduring than their preoccupation with facial expressions



Melvyn Hunt (far left) with Jessica Kirkness (centre right) and Phyllis (far right). Melvyn and Phyllis are Jessica's grandparents, and both profoundly deaf.

I was three when I first realised my grandparents were deaf. Before then, I'd sensed that they were somehow different from me, that there was a line that separated us. They didn't use the telephone; their doorbell had a flashing light and not a bell; and maybe Mum and Dad had told me that Nanny and Grandpa couldn't hear. But it was when I was three that I decided to experiment on my grandma.

She was stooped over the sink, washing the dishes. I stood behind her and screamed with all the force my little frame could muster. She didn't flinch. I howled, cried for help, thinking surely she'd respond to that. Nothing. In my indignation, my temper rose. I stomped on the ground, at which point Nanny turned around. "I hate you," I snarled, and watched as the colour drained from her face. I knew then that she hadn't heard me, but she'd understood. Afterwards, when I found my grandmother sobbing in the bedroom, I patted her hands and stroked her back, like Mum would do for me when I was sad. "I'm sorry," I mouthed, making sure this time that she'd seen my lips.

As a child I spent a lot of time in the company of deaf people. Nanny and Grandpa's deaf friends often dropped by for a chat and stayed for several hours. They spoiled and flattered me, pinched my cheeks affectionately. Whenever my grandparents held parties, I was drawn to the liveliness of signed conversations. Information was delivered with such verve and gusto, I wanted so badly to be involved. But mostly, I was an observer. To me, Auslan looked operatic and grand. There was something artful, perhaps even musical about its prosody.

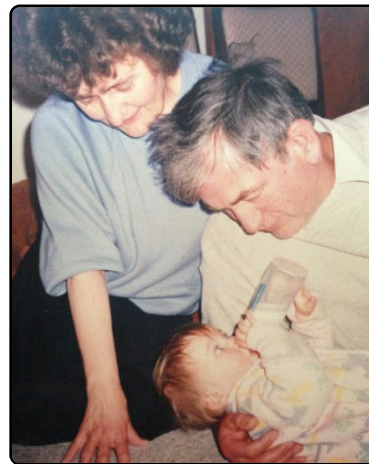
It felt like an elaborate secret code that I could penetrate on occasion but that otherwise remained obscure and unknown. The adults signed so quickly, while my skills were limited. I'd soon reach the inevitable juncture, the point where I could no longer follow or contribute to discussions. I would then

gaze at the crowd before me, mesmerised by the uniqueness of individual signing styles. Everyone had their own flair and panache, their signature tone and energy. There were those who signed with utilitarian brevity, some were slower and drawling, and then there were others who possessed a cascading gestural intonation, with a seamlessness to the flow of their prose. Looking on as they chatted, I'd hum quietly to myself, composing accompanying soundtracks to the motion pictures before me: tunes that rose and fell with the dynamics of their movements. At other times I listened intently, enjoying the murmurs and sounds that punctuated deaf interactions: the soft clicks and clacks of jaws, lips and teeth.

I loved the raw, breathy notes of my grandparents' vocalisations: the expulsions of air, the throaty gurgles of excitement and their raucous laughter that soared in pitch and volume. I liked to hear the swish of skin against skin as their hands brushed together in motion. Even the clunk of bone meeting bone, or the thump of a hand against a chest cavity felt to me like a kind of percussive refrain. When I was small, Nanny would often rock me to sleep while humming her own sort of lullaby. 'Tee tee tee,' she'd croon over and over on a single note. I'd doze off to the steady monotony of that repeated sound. Somewhere in the space between knowing and not knowing, and between deaf and hearing cultures, I grew up. My mode of communicating with my grandparents was mixed, and sometimes fraught. Because Nanny and Grandpa attended oral schools for the deaf, where they were taught to speak and lipread in English, my family members relied heavily on their ability to follow spoken conversations. It was a point of pride for both of them that they use the dominant mode of the hearing world. It was easy at times to forget the drain on their energy that would follow extended periods of watching and deciphering lip patterns. But English was our default, and we used Auslan mainly for clarification purposes – for those instances where communication broke down.

My grandparents referred to themselves as "stone deaf" and saw no need for amplification of sound. Seeing provided a set of principles they lived by. For them, anything that could be seen was fair game for discussion. Nanny

would often comment on how friends and family members were ageing or putting on weight. She'd pore over photos sent to her from England, and gasp over so-and-so's greying hair or bulging belly. If someone looked too thin, she'd suck in her lips and draw her pinkie finger down towards her navel.



Phyllis and Melvyn Hunt, Jessica Kirkness's grandparents.

When my great-aunt fractured her hip a few years back and sent pictures during her recovery, my grandmother was concerned. Beryl was still in pain, she insisted. It was written all over her.

In the deaf community, people are given sign names, which work a little like nicknames. They're used to identify people quickly and tend to reflect


a distinguishing physical feature or aspect of personality. These names are often visually striking. I know of one woman whose sign name resembles the sign for eyelashes – four fingers of each hand extending up and outwards from the eyes.

Another friend's name is performed on the forehead: an index finger drawn diagonally above his brow to reference the scar he acquired during childhood. Others are less flattering and might seem cruel. I know of one woman with the sign name for snot, because her nose used to run as a child, and another with the sign for breast because she's busty.

Of all the distinctive quirks – the idiosyncrasies that marked my grandparents as deaf – none was more enduring than their preoccupation with faces. Nanny was always pushing hair off my cheeks. Hats and sunglasses, though she conceded their use in the Australian summer, were a nuisance that prevented full access to my facial expressions.

According to my grandmother, the mark of a good heart can be found on the face. Body language is observed and noted, but the face has primacy. It is the canvas upon which she reads sentiment, and by extension an individual's character. Politicians, friends and even strangers are held to account over the shape and movement of their features. Ex-prime minister Tony Abbott's crooked mouth and weasel eyes are enough to convince my grandma that he can't be trusted. By contrast Peter, the home-help cleaner who visits once a fortnight, has a gentle, honest smile – a sign of his inner virtue. If Nanny likes someone, she'll remark that they have a "kind face". When I ask her what she means, she struggles to tell me. "I just know," she says. "You can see it"

This is an edited extract from **The House with All the Lights On**, by Jessica Kirkness, Allen and Unwin, \$32.99



Access to Education: Deaf Students in Inclusive Settings

Debra Russell, Ph.D
Funded by: Social Sciences Humanities Research Council

Abstract

Increasingly Deaf children are educated in settings with a sign language interpreter, which is perceived as making the educational environment inclusive.

This makes education one of the largest employers of sign language interpreters.

However, there have been several authors who have questioned the accessibility of this setting (LaBue, 1998; Marschark, 2005; Wauters, Marschark, Sapere & Covertino, in press; Winston, 2004; McKee & Beiderman, 2003; Ramsey, 1997; Schick, Williams & Kupermintz, 2006).

This research project focuses on the inclusive supports offered to Deaf students in several Kindergarten to Grade Twelve educational settings.

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CONTACT:
Debra Russell, Ph.D.
David Peskoff Chair of Deaf Studies
debra.russell@ualberta.ca
(780) 492-1156
www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/deafpsychology/wocsd.html

Research Questions

Q: To what extent and in what ways does the use of interpreting services impact the academic performance and social development of Deaf students?

Q: What perceptions are held by Deaf students, their parents, teachers, and administrators on the quality and impact of interpreting services on the academic and social success of Deaf students?

Overall Patterns Emerging

- ✓ Experienced Interpreters possess more strategies to represent metacognitive purposeful language of teacher
- ✓ Scaffolding – when interpreters are familiar with the class content, they can often represent scaffolding language
- ✓ Content – managed inconsistently if interpreters have not prepared for the class or do not understand the content
- X Reconceptualization– both experienced and inexperienced interpreters struggle to manage this element
- X Feedback & Affect – pace of class barrier to representing teacher/student affect and feedback
- X Reciprocal Teaching – prosodic elements lost in rapid turn-taking and fast moving classes; frequent omissions; sequencing frequently incorrect

Preliminary Findings

- Students held back by lack of qualified interpreters both in academic and social development
- Children lack meaningful relationships with other children who can use sign language, especially from Grade 3-12.
- Mediated communication - it may be effective for academic work when interpreter is qualified, but not for social interactions.
- Some older Deaf students know they are not getting full interpretation.
- Interpreters - various strategies and levels of success demonstrating the teaching methods.
- Impact on students: higher level thinking processes are not activated when interpretation lacks skopos behind the teaching processes.

Methodology:

Qualitative and Quantitative methods, including case studies, classroom videos of interpreting, and on-line surveys and interviews with:

Interpreters, Teachers, Administrators, Parents of d/Deaf and hard of hearing children, and students

Data Collection

Focus of Analysis of Classroom Interpretation:

Data being analyzed for linguistic functions in teaching/learning discourse.

Six common teaching processes chosen:

- Metacognitive Questions
- Scaffolding
- Reconceptualizing
- Reciprocal Teachings
- Feedback
- Sequencing

61% of the Interpreters surveyed work in the K - 12 Education system.

Implications

Evidence and Policy?

- Evidence-based practices or policies of convenience?
- Canadian practices - what can change?
 - Need for solid training and hiring of interpreters who can work with children.
 - Need for solid training and hiring of teachers that can work with Deaf children.

Inclusion or the Illusion of Inclusion?

The reality is that many school programs do not hire qualified interpreters, which negatively impacts Deaf students' education, including academic performance and social integration (Schein & Mallory, 1992; Russell, 2000, Winston, 2004).

Appearance of access creates the illusion that the setting is inclusive for the Deaf student.

What Does the Research Tell Us?

What does it mean:

- To meaningfully include a Deaf child in an inclusive setting, both academically and socially?
- Inclusion - works well for whom? Under what context?

FNDC Winter • 2023

AT&T and Gallaudet Co-Develop 5G-Connected Football Helmet for the Deaf

<https://hearingreview.com/hearing-products/accessories/assistive-technologies/att-and-gallaudet-university-co-develop-5g-connected-football-helmet-for-the-deaf>



AT&T and Gallaudet University(1), a global provider of bilingual education for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, collaborated on the development of a [5G-connected](#) football helmet, which was designed to make the game more inclusive by enhancing on-field communication for student-athletes who use American Sign Language.

The helmet(2) was used for the first time in NCAA Division III competition during Gallaudet's home game against Hilbert College, on Oct. 7, 2023.

"As a staple of college sports, we're always exploring ways to use our expertise in connectivity to advance the way coaches, athletes and fans experience the game," AT&T says in a news release. "When it came to developing the helmet, we saw an opportunity for [5G technology](#) to make sports more inclusive—and there was no better partner to take possibility to reality than Gallaudet."

The helmet is designed to allow coaches on the sideline to select a play from a tablet that will send the play to a lens inside the helmet. The quarterback wearing the helmet will receive the play in augmented reality on the digital display located within the visor. AT&T 5G provides the reliability and low latency for plays to be sent and received at a speed that keeps up with the pace of the game.

"We work out the same way as every other college football program, we practice the same way, we compete the same way," says Coach Chuck Goldstein, head football coach, Gallaudet University. "The difference between coaching a hearing team compared to a Deaf team is first the communication. The AT&T 5G-connected helmet will change football."

By displaying the coach's play through augmented reality (AR), this technology eliminates a gap for deaf and hard-of-hearing athletes, making

football more inclusive. It can also reduce miscommunication and unwarranted penalties, according to the organizations.

Further reading: [Risk of Hearing Loss for Students in Sports](#)

"The new AT&T 5G-connected helmet will have a major impact on the game of football, especially for our deaf and hard of hearing players who lacked direct access to communications with their coaches during their high school years," says Shelby Bean, special teams coordinator and former player for Gallaudet University. "This will help to level the playing field for mainstreamed athletes. As a former player, I am very excited to see this innovative technology change our lives and the game of football itself."

The applications for a 5G-connected helmet have reach beyond college football and could open possibilities of inclusion for any sport that requires helmets, according to the organizations.

"Together with Gallaudet, we are proving that connecting changes everything," says Corey Anthony, senior vice president of network engineering and operations at AT&T. "Our expertise in connectivity combined with Gallaudet's legacy of breaking down barriers has created a helmet that not only transforms the way deaf and hard of hearing athletes engage in sports but opened up endless possibility for innovation."

References

1. AT&T is a supporter of the Gallaudet Bison.
2. Not for sale.

'Barbie' Gets Streaming Release with American Sign Language Interpretation

Published Dec 4, 2023

From: <https://collider.com/barbie-streaming-release-date-asl-interpretation/>



THE BIG PICTURE:

- ▶ Barbie, the highest-grossing film in Warner Bros. history, will be available to stream on Max starting December 15, bringing the star-studded comedy to everyone.
- ▶ An American Sign Language version of Barbie, created with input from the deaf community, will also be available on the same day, emphasizing inclusivity.
- ▶ With a talented cast, an engaging story, and a Grammy-nominated soundtrack, Barbie offers a funny and musical journey of self-discovery for the iconic doll and Ken.

It's almost time to party with Barbie from the comfort of your own home. Greta Gerwig's box office-breaking summer blockbuster brought the theater industry to life this year, grossing \$1.44 billion throughout its run while sharing the stage with Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer*. Now, the star-studded, plastic, and fantastic film is coming to Max on December 15 and the comedy will be accessible to everyone. In addition to the original film, an American Sign Language version, which was made in close counsel with the deaf community, will be available to stream on the same day.

Released back in July, *Barbie* has ascended into a phenomenon, becoming not only the highest-grossing film in a year that also included *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* and the aforementioned *Oppenheimer* but also the highest-grossing film in Warner Bros. history, passing *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2*. The film goes on an adventure with Margot Robbie's Barbie and Ryan Gosling's Ken as they live it up in Barbieland. When they decide to venture beyond the borders of their perfect paradise, however, they find themselves navigating the trials and tribulations of humans who live and work in the real world every day. The movie delivers a funny, musical journey of self-discovery for Barbie and Ken as they come to grips with mortality and their place in the world.

The dynamic duo of Robbie and Gosling are joined by an eye-watering list of stars, including America Ferrera, Kate McKinnon, Michael Cera, Ariana Green-

blatt, Issa Rae, Rhea Perlman, Simu Liu, and Will Ferrell among many more. In addition to the excellent stars and a script penned by Gerwig and Noah Baumbach, the film features no shortage of bops to sing along to, including Gosling's showstopping "I'm Just Ken." Other notable titles include "Dance the Night" by Dua Lipa and "What Was I Made For?" by Billie Eilish which add to a soundtrack that's been nominated for 11 Grammys.

'BARBIE' IN ASL IS A FITTING STEP FORWARD FOR INCLUSION



Considering that *Barbie* places a ton of emphasis on inclusion and diversity, creating a faithful version of the film for those who use ASL is the perfect way to ensure everyone gets to be involved during movie night. The version is made utilizing research from the deaf community and features ASL performer Leila Hanaumi. Chairman and CEO of HBO and Max Content Casey Bloys championed the move as a testament to the commitment to quality and diverse storytelling on Max, adding in a statement:

"Max is the premiere destination for storytelling, so being able to share the biggest movie of the year in ASL, the first language for many, will make this story resonate in a more meaningful way. By offering sign language interpretation, we will build upon the film's empowering message of inclusiveness and offer a unique viewing experience for the Deaf community to enjoy with family and friends."

BARBIE STREAMS ON MAX ON DECEMBER 15, INCLUDING IN ASL

Having a deaf child in the family

From: *That National Deaf Children's Society – UK*

https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/parenting-and-family-life/family-relationships/information-about-siblings/having-a-deaf-child-in-the-family/?utm_campaign=228658_Families%20e-newsletter%20November%202023%20Generic&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20National%20Deaf%20Children%E2%80%99s%20Society&dm_i=7K6A,4WFM,1GNJGK,JTYZ,1



When you find out your child has a hearing loss, it's easy to feel overwhelmed with new information and the pressure of getting the right support for your child. Your other children may find the news confusing, especially if they don't understand what's happening, and feel a range of emotions because of all the changes. They may feel sad, insecure or even jealous of the time you need to give to your deaf child. It's important to make sure the whole family are included in the process of adjustment, and that they feel reassured.

► Hester is mum to Harold.

"Our daughter couldn't understand why Harold was ignoring her when she called to him and at times she did get upset. We decided to give her as much information as we reasonably could. We got her to explain to us how we hear and what we can hear. We then said that her brother didn't have any of that and as such we needed to communicate differently with him."

Delleep is dad to Isla (6) and Anya (3). Anya is profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.

"We explained that it was like wearing glasses. Mummy needs glasses to see, and Isla needs hearing aids to hear."

Here are some simple strategies to support brothers and sisters of a deaf child.

Explaining

For many parents, telling the family about a child being deaf can be challenging, especially explaining it to children. It may be helpful to use stories, books, and games – anything to help siblings understand.

One parent said: "We wanted to make sure they understood what deafness meant. We found a storybook with a deaf mouse which I read to them at bedtime."

Another parent used it as an opportunity to be inventive: "We decided to play a game of giving everyone earmuffs. We asked our children what they thought it was like to be deaf and how we can help."

Parents have told us children ask questions such as "will my sister grow out of it?" or "is it because he's a boy?" Some wanted to know why they were deaf, asking if their parents could have prevented it. Others want to know the implications for their own lives, why the deafness can't be cured, and why their brother or sister is the only deaf person in the family.

"I felt a little bit sad because I knew I wouldn't be able to talk to him that much and I didn't know what hearing aids would do," said one sister.

Feelings

As most of us know, growing up with a brother or sister has its ups and downs. Many children experience sibling rivalry and jealousy, often resulting in the occasional squabble! However, children with deaf siblings may experience a host of conflicting feelings because of their sibling's deafness, including:

- ▶ not knowing how to support their deaf brother or sister
- ▶ feeling a responsibility for their deaf brother or sister
- ▶ resenting their brother or sister having more attention because of their deafness
- ▶ embarrassment about people staring at their deaf brother or sister
- ▶ worry about the future
- ▶ guilt about their brother or sister's need for extra support
- ▶ feeling alone and not sure who to talk to about their feelings
- ▶ happiness playing with their deaf brother or sister
- ▶ pride in being able to communicate with their deaf brother or sister
- ▶ excitement about meeting other siblings of deaf children.

It's important for children to be able to express their feelings. Some feel their brother or sister gets more attention, gets treated more leniently and gets priority, and some feel left out, like this sibling:

"Sometimes my sister gets all the attention but most of the time we do things all together that we can all understand."

Many siblings feel responsible for their deaf brother or sister, adopting a caring role. Many act as interpreters for them if they use sign language—some feel proud to help, others aren't so happy and would prefer to be free to enjoy themselves. One sibling explained:

"At the holidays I wanted to have a day with my friends, and my dad said I had to take my sister even though I didn't want to." Another added: "Sometimes I miss what my friends are saying as I have to interpret for her."

Friends can be an issue – some siblings don't want their deaf brother or sister to feel left out but feel pressured to including them. And some worry that though friends are supportive and respectful, they won't cope well:

"Sometimes when you have friends round, they seem to be scared to say anything because they don't want to offend you."

The whole family can feel some really positive aspects of having a deaf child in the family, including being proud of signing, and having a strong compassion for others. "I don't see my sister as a 'deaf sister' – she is simply my sister, whom I love and would do anything for – whether she be deaf or not," said one sibling.

Communication

Developing good communication as early as possible is vital – this way, siblings can develop emotional, personal and social skills alongside their deaf brother or sister. There are many different ways deaf children choose to communicate, and the whole family can adapt or learn new communication skills.

"When I first found out I had a deaf sister, I felt very disappointed and nervous because I did not know how I would talk to her. I soon learnt sign language and can now tell her jokes and make her laugh," said one sibling.

Communication is more than sign language, lip-reading or spoken language – body language, facial expressions and being included in activities are equally important, as this sibling explained:

"My brother talks and lip-reads so I have to talk clearly but I also use my face to show what mood I'm in so he understands. We all play together on activities and I make sure he understands."

Tricky occasions where it may be difficult for a deaf child to follow conversations might include mealtimes or when a parent is driving or doing chores, as family members are unable to sign if they're using their hands. This can result in interrupted conversations, with people stopping to interpret.

Advice from other parents

- ▶ Be patient and understanding with siblings – it takes time adjusting to the changes.
- ▶ Encourage and help all your children to find out more about deafness and what it'll mean to the family.
- ▶ Plan to have special time with each child as regularly as you can
- ▶ Although your deaf child may need more of your time, as long as your hearing children have special time with you they will know they are loved too.
- ▶ Take time to explain and share aspects of both deaf and hearing culture with both deaf and hearing siblings.
- ▶ Everyone has their own feelings – your other children may feel differently to you about their brother or sister's deafness but that's OK.
- ▶ Take your children to events where there are other deaf children and siblings – it can reduce the isolation they may feel.
- ▶ Remind your children that their deaf brother or sister can still do all the normal things children do – deafness doesn't stop them playing and having fun together.
- ▶ Remember all families need time to be together, but some time apart too.
- ▶ Your whole family needs you and it can be overwhelming to meet everyone's needs. However busy you are, you need to make time to do something for yourself each day, so you can be there for them when they need you most.

To be a better ally to the Deaf Community...

Caption your videos

Learn sign from a Deaf teacher

Support Deaf businesses

Acknowledge deafness is a spectrum

Advocate for accessibility

@adventuresindeafed

Deaf Students 101: Fundamentals for General Education Professionals

mini-conference

January 13
8:45 - 4:30 pm
ET

info@language1st.org
language1st.org/events



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WHAT IS VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING?

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- 40 spoken languages via video
- American Sign Language via video
- 200 spoken languages via audio

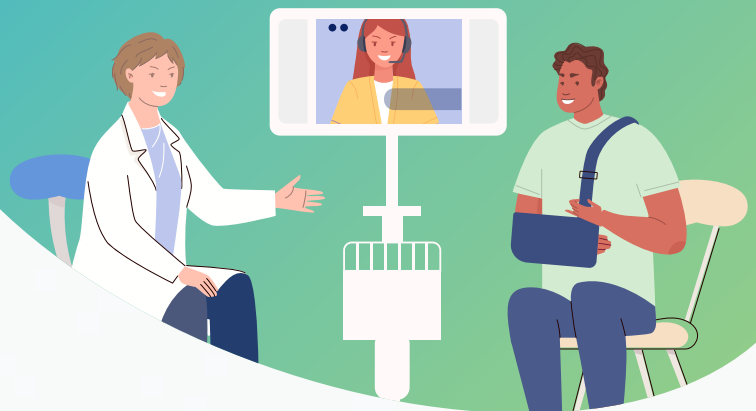
LEARN MORE

Video remote interpreting devices can be found in several emergency departments, ambulances and clinical settings across British Columbia. If you are interested in using VRI at your next medical appointment, speak to your health care provider.

For more information, visit www.phsa.ca/pls.



**PROVINCIAL
LANGUAGE SERVICES**
Provincial Health Services Authority



QUICK FACTS



VRI is currently available in approx. **300** ambulances and **102** emergency departments in B.C.

Findings of a recent survey conducted in clinical settings at select health authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of VRI concluded that:



100% of patients agree that they were able to communicate clearly with their health care provider and understood the instructions they received



83% of patients agree that VRI reduces reliance on family and friends for interpreting during medical appointments or while receiving care

Kristen E.

Stratton, JM, is a Southern California-based educational advocate and professional speaker. She serves as a member of the Deaf Steering Committee for the California Department of Developmental Services. Previously, she was a law clerk for Disability Rights California and a former ASTra special education advocate with the California Hands & Voices. She and her husband, Jon, are the proud parents of three children, two of whom are Deaf. Stratton welcomes questions and comments about this article at kristen.e.stratton@gmail.com.

Deaf Role Models

((Kiss Fist))

By Kristen E. Stratton

As a deaf adult who was raised using spoken English and who received no education in Deaf culture or American Sign Language (ASL), I was determined to raise my sons—one deaf and neurotypical and the other deafdisabled—differently. I wanted them to be “Big D Deaf*.” I wanted to give them access to a visual language, a culture deeply rooted in history, and a beautiful and supportive community. The only problem was I couldn’t give them that myself. I needed help. I needed to find a Deaf Role Model.

Truth be told, I had no idea there was such a thing as a Deaf Role Model until I began to interact with the Deaf community. Though I identified as “hearing impaired” growing up, used hearing aids, and voiced, I quickly began to assimilate into my newly found Deaf identity. Having not learned ASL until my sons were identified as deaf, I didn’t realize what a beautiful community it was. I quickly fell in love with the language that was fully accessible to both of my Deaf children and to me!

We were referred to our family’s Deaf Role Model by a local Deaf itinerant teacher in early 2018. We learned that her role would be to walk alongside our family and be a language model for our Deaf sons, our hearing daughter, and us as parents. She would encourage us, answer our well-meaning but sometimes ignorant questions, and help our sons grow to be confident Deaf adults.

Tina Hall, our Deaf Role Model, has been so much more than that. We consider her family and are truly blessed to know her. Tina is a graduate of Gallaudet University and a Gallaudet Hall of Famer for track and field. She has worked as a Certified Deaf Interpreter. She is patient, kind, enthusiastic, supportive, understanding, flexible, loving, and humble. She has visited our home once a week for over five years (with the exception of when our Deafdisabled son was ill).

Photos courtesy of Kristen E. Stratton

Working with William

On a typical day with Tina, she will warmly greet our family. Depending on how my Deafdisabled son is feeling, she and I will usually sign away about how our day went and catch up with each other. Together, we model reciprocal communication, and Tina always has eyes on my son to reinforce and connect with him. She works most effectively with William through play. Tina has been known to bake cookies and “bribe” his cooperation. She has also jumped on the trampoline with him while asking him questions and encouraging him to respond. They will also play pretend games, such as cooking or restaurant work, or just sit and color together. Tina meets William where he is at on each particular day and is never impatient. She also holds him accountable and sets high expectations for his behavior. She believes in William’s ability to be a respectful and successful young man, and she doesn’t let him think he can be anything less. I love her for that.

Working with Steven

As for my neurotypical Deaf son, Tina takes a more academic approach. She usually focuses on a particular skill she wants to develop that day. Lately, she has been working on improving Steven’s expressive fingerspelling accuracy and speed as well as better developing his receptive language by reading fingerspelling at the speed of a fluent Deaf adult. Tina will also do skill checks with Steven’s basic vocabulary by asking him how he is and what’s going on in his life. When he is fatigued or sometimes just not in the mood, she is supportive and accommodating but also pushes gently so that Steven still learns what she wants him to that day.

Depending on the day, my hearing daughter, Elizabeth, will join in. Her receptive language has grown so much



over the years but, as with many bilingual children, she is shy about using her second language in front of people she doesn’t know well. I hope that with time she grows to be a proud CODA/SODA (child of deaf adult[s]/sister of deaf adult[s]). I know she has it in her.

A Family Affair

My husband and mother-in-law also treasure Tina. Though they get the least amount of time with her, she greets them as warmly as she does the rest of us. We will all sit together at the end of

Above: Steven and William work with Tina to build language through interaction and fun, including jumping on a trampoline together and having conversations.

her sessions with our sons and just chat about life, family, pets, work, home repairs, travel plans, faith, gratitude, and dinner plans. We talk about it all. Tina has been an open book, sharing her life with us so generously so that we can benefit from her storytelling and her experiences. I am grateful my sons are her “mentees.”



Left: Tina and William practice 1:1 correspondence using a visual aid while Tina signs the corresponding number in ASL. **Below:** Tina and Steven pose for a photo during one of their weekly sessions.



ASL are accessible to our community in ways that spoken language just cannot be. I am grateful for the choices our Deaf Role Model has given us by showing us how to confidently and competently be Deaf.

Most of all, I have learned that it is okay to need help raising my Deaf children. While I want to be their support system and safeguard them from any harm, I don't know how to navigate life as a Deaf person as I grew up in the "hearing" world and largely functioning as a hearing person. As my own hearing loss progresses, I find that I, too, am being "role modeled" and learning to self-advocate. That lived experience is so valuable.

As for me, I could be classified as a mentee, too. Tina has helped me step confidently into my own Deaf identity. I look forward to our talks. Some days, I can feel my brain is fatigued and my hands do not flow as smoothly through the air as I know they can; my fingerspelling will be fumbled. She knows our family goes through a lot and that I am one tired mom and wife.

Our perspective as the mentees is different than hers will be as a Deaf Role Model, but I want to share what I have learned as a deaf adult who was not affiliated with the Deaf community growing up and also what I have learned as the parent of Deaf children:

- Deaf Role Models are valuable—their time, knowledge, and wisdom. Families should make every effort to pay their Deaf Role Model for their time or use an agency through which that time is subsidized. Advocate for your Deaf Role Model to be a service in your child's Individualized Education Program or to be paid for by another community-/state-funded disability services program. Deaf Role Models are worth it. It is an investment in

your child's educational and vocational future as well as in your relationship with your child by ensuring you can communicate with them effectively.

- Always graciously accept correction or feedback from Deaf Role Models, who are taking time out of their day to help you be better.
- ASL is valuable no matter how much hearing a d/Deaf or hard of hearing child has. Hearing aids break, cochlear implants come off at the end of a long day, listening fatigue is real, and a whole signing community awaits you if you just take that leap! ASL and ProTactile

Deaf Role Models have an important role in helping families with d/Deaf or hard of hearing children to build effective and meaningful communication with each other and in offering them support—even for families in which a parent is deaf like me.

To learn more about Deaf Role Models, check out <https://nationaldeafcenter.org/news-items/importance-of-deaf-role-models>.

**The uppercase 'D' in "Deaf" is used to describe people who identify as culturally Deaf and are actively engaged with the Deaf community.*

An Interview with a Deaf Role Model

While I could continue to go on and on in praise of Tina and the importance of Deaf Role Models for families raising d/Deaf and/or hard of hearing children, it makes the most sense to ask Tina what wisdom she would like to share as well as for a candid explanation of her experience as a Deaf Role Model working with our family.

KRISTEN: How would you describe your role as a Deaf Role Model?

TINA: My role is to encourage strong relationships between d/Deaf and hard of hearing children and their family members. I am not there to replace the parents but to help them build strong connections with their children.

KRISTEN: What are some of the things you do as a Deaf Role Model?

TINA: One thing I do as a Deaf Role Model is to help reinforce patience for parents and behavior for the kids. For example, when I first met you and Jon, you both had learned a little sign language and knew how to communicate a bit. The first things we focused on were facial expressions and setting behavior expectations with your children. I helped you [Kristen] and Grandma to really emphasize your facial expressions, which definitely helped open up communication with William. These skills and expectations helped you all to understand why William was frustrated and also allowed William and Steven to build a stronger relationship and connection. Starting with facial expressions and empathizing patience helps while parents are picking up the language and allows them to still interact with their child.

Another thing I do comes later, over time, as parents pick up more words. I help to support their role and encourage their kids to respect them. Learning to sign builds a strong relationship.

I have learned that I need to be very flexible in what I do in order to best support each individual family member in the way they need it.

KRISTEN: Would you explain a bit about your experiences working with our family?

TINA: First, I met with you and Jon to see what was happening with your children. I wanted to watch you with your children, to see how you made eye contact with them, and to observe your children at home. When I first met your family and your son William, he was shy. I worked to help him improve his interactions with other Deaf people. Now I see he is happy to have me come over. I have helped the whole family, including the grandparents, and I am there to support you all. I sit side by side with every member of the family, and I am very patient with everyone. I have seen a lot of improvement over the years. William doesn't feel lost in his own family. I can see that with my help, he really feels pride and happiness. I do the same for Steven. Again, I see lots of improvement.

KRISTEN: What would you say to parents who feel nervous or overwhelmed by learning to sign?

TINA: I would tell them to take things one day at a time and to try to be patient with themselves. Language is something that gets picked up over time.

KRISTEN: You are a Deaf Role Model to our neurotypical Deaf child and to our Deafdisabled child. How would a family find a Deaf Role Model, especially for their Deafdisabled child?

TINA: You should get a referral from someone in the Deaf community to help find a Deaf Role Model—maybe from an agency or a deaf school. For example, you found me through a referral from my friend who is a Deaf itinerant teacher and she interviewed me. I have worked with a lot of people in the Deafdisabled community as both a Deaf Role Model and a Deaf interpreter. I have also worked as a Deaf Role Model for people who are

deafblind, deafdisabled, deaf autistic, and deaf CP [cerebral palsy]. It is especially important for the Deafdisabled community to have access to role models because their access to the Deaf community is sometimes limited but their need for community is just as important. Sometimes it takes the right person to be patient, to help stop behaviors, and to gain the attention of the d/Deaf or hard of hearing child, but it is so important. It is also especially important for a Deaf adult to be involved in a Deaf child's education because often those children are perceived as more delayed than they actually are based on a language difference.

KRISTEN: Did you have someone who was a role model for you as a Deaf child?

TINA: I grew up oral at first. I was surrounded by audiologists and hearing teachers. I only had one Deaf person to look up to when I was little. That single person modeled language for my sister and me, and we picked it up quickly. That person was my role model until I was 15. Then I attended a Deaf high school and was able to be with other Deaf students. I am so grateful for that experience. Once I was around Deaf teachers, it absolutely changed my life. It made me want to be a Deaf Role Model and encourage that confidence and development of language in others.

KRISTEN: Do you have any last thoughts to share?

TINA: While most of the time the mother is the primary caregiver, it's also really important for dads to learn sign language as well. Both roles are equally important. Whoever is involved in raising that child, it is so important for them to learn.

Christy Barr, MEd, BCBA, is a board-certified behavior analyst and teacher of the deaf. She began her career as an itinerant teacher for deaf and hard of hearing students in Illinois. In 2014, she earned her BCBA and served as a clinician with Trumpet Behavioral Health providing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services to children with autism, increasing their language and independence skills. Barr has since returned to the field of deaf education with the goal of bridging research from the fields of ABA and deaf education. She also serves on the board committee for Deaf Education Ohio. Barr welcomes questions and comments about this article at christy.barr@gmail.com.

A Letter to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students: The Hard-Won Wisdom We Earn

By Christy Barr

*“Pick up a pen, start writing. I wanna talk about what I have learned.
The hard-won wisdom I have earned.”*

- “One Last Time” from *Hamilton*, written by Lin-Manuel Miranda

Dear students who are deaf or hard of hearing ...

I would like to share 10 lessons with you that surely apply to so many of us who are deaf or hard of hearing. These lessons, learned from my own experience as a person who is deaf, have made me a better person, and I am hoping you will find them useful in your own lives as well.

1. **You have been excluded from conversations.** You have been left wondering what is happening around you and had to work through your frustration. This may build you into a great leader. You will ensure everyone on your team has a voice and has the opportunity to be heard.
2. **You have been unfairly accused of not listening to or ignoring people.** This will make you more understanding of others. For example, if an employee shows up late for work, instead of labeling that person “lazy,” you will wonder what happened to delay his or her arrival. Further, if someone writes “I want publish book,” instead of branding that person “unintelligent,” you will wonder if the person uses English as a second language.
3. **You have followed others as a coping skill.** Your world is visual, and you watch what others do. For example, when other students are lining up for recess or for a fire alarm, or when they are doing the gym class relay, you watch what everyone else does and you copy them. This will not set you up to be a follower. Instead, you will realize your own power of seeing everything from a unique perspective. You will notice body language, environmental clues, and when other people are excluded. You will notice things that other people won't. This will make you an asset and a leader.

Photos courtesy of Christy Barr



4. **You constantly have to explain what you need and to fight for it.** This can be exhausting. You struggle with having to work so hard. You find yourself asking, “Why? Why do I have to go through all this effort? Always ask for accommodations in advance? Always ask for interpreters a month before a conference? Why do I have to search for special dates and times for interpreted plays? And why do I always have to educate an uninformed and sometimes rude public?” These experiences will not defeat you. Instead, they will allow you to become an activist and an advocate—both for yourself and others.
5. **You deal constantly with the unfairness of it all—the struggle, the lack of access, the fighting for accommodations.** No, it is not fair, but when you work 10 times harder than other people, you develop grit. Instead of accepting the status quo, you will develop a strong work ethic, exceptional organizational skills, and perseverance. You may learn to fight for other people as well, perhaps leading to a career as a lawyer, a judge, or a lobbyist.

Above: The experiences and challenges deaf and hard of hearing individuals face can teach them many important life lessons.

6. **You sometimes “miss the whistle.”** This may mean missing a soccer whistle during practice or a game, a lifeguard whistle at the pool, or the microwave timer when your food is done. Missing these and other sound-based alerts can be frustrating. However, being able to miss them can also be a benefit. When you are older and someone decides it’s a good idea to give your child a whistle, the sound won’t bother you a lick. Your daughter in sixth grade bangs away as she learns to play the xylophone? Totally fine. Your son in fourth grade brings home a school recorder? No problem. A screeching smoke detector is hurting people’s ears during a drill? Not an issue for you. Each of these challenges can be met by taking out your hearing aid(s) or cochlear implant(s). Protected from the unwanted sounds, you’re good to go. Remember to enjoy “the deaf benefit.”

Right: As deaf adults, we have a responsibility to make education more accessible for the children coming up behind us.

7. **You may worry about not hearing your children cry.** Someday you may have children. Worrying about not hearing them when they need help may cause you to become a “helicopter parent”—to ensure they are always in your line of sight so you can see that they are okay, to hover over them. Alas, no matter how hard you try, you may miss their crying. Another parent may bring your hurt child over to you, and you may feel like the world’s worst parent. However, from this experience you will understand that it truly takes a village to raise a child; it’s not all on you. A relative may show your child how to play ball, a neighbor may teach your child about responsibility when raking leaves, and another parent may help you when your child is hurt. This builds a support system for you and your family. You will assist others, they will assist you, and you will work as a community, a team.



8. **You are hyperaware of different environments—their benefits and drawbacks.** This is a mark of success. If you are hard of hearing or a cochlear implant user, you have already experienced struggles with listening in various situations. You already know that talking

with hearing friends in a small room is much better than trying to talk with hearing friends in a noisy, dark restaurant or outside on a windy day. You know the difference between



the listening environment during car rides and in the library as well as between lunchtime and study hall. You know that lighting is important—whether for conversations in speech or for conversations in sign. Signers especially know the frustration of intrusive pieces that block visual space and the difference in communicating in darkness, diffused light, or light that flickers or comes with a harsh glare. This knowledge will make you aware of how environments impact other people and how different environments can change their behaviors. You may notice how a friend on the autism spectrum becomes overwhelmed with lights, conversations, and music at a school dance but flourishes during small gatherings in family homes. In the workplace, a supportive supervisor can change an employee from feeling like a failure to seeing their skills. As a deaf or hard of hearing individual, you have unique insight into matching environments to people to bring out their best and support their success. You know that some people shine in the spotlight, some people communicate best through writing, and some people build amazing contraptions. This skill is an asset to you as a leader.

9. **You are used to mishearing/misunderstanding hearing people and reading body language and facial**

expressions. This is a complex issue and it has progressive steps, all of which lead to outstanding critical thinking skills:

- **Mishearing people 1.0.** This experience provides you with scientific skepticism. You learn sooner, faster, and more deeply than most people to investigate questions related to what you are told. You ask yourself, “Is what I heard or read really accurate? Is there data to support this claim? Is the measurement they cite accurate?” You already know that sometimes results don’t make sense, and you’ve learned to dig deeper. You already see the world like a scientist.
- **Mishearing people 2.0.** You are a “code breaker.” All your behind-the-scenes efforts (e.g., reading context clues, body language, knowing the history of the person and their claims) have made you automatically think, “What sounds similar to/rhymes with the sounds I just heard or saw on the person’s lips, and does it fit the context?” You fill in the gaps moment by moment, all while continuing to listen, pay attention, and adjust your understanding to what is being said. You are exceptionally good at figuring out what people are saying with limited information. You’re like a detective, a spy, or a researcher. Most people cannot do this; they’ve never needed to. It’s one of your strongest muscles to flex.
- **Mishearing people 3.0.** You can tell authentic people from fake people, truth from lies. You have the ability to tune out people’s words and look at their body language and actions instead. You know more deeply than most people how actions speak louder than words, and you are less vulnerable to advertising and its gimmicks. Often people are inclined to believe information—and misinformation—just because it has often been repeated. Easily remembered slogans are repeated so often that most of us know some of them by heart (e.g., “America runs on Dunkin’,” “You’re in good hands with Allstate,” and “Every kiss begins with Kay”). We are bombarded with advertising almost every moment,



even when we pump gas into our cars. With our ability as deaf and hard of hearing people to tune out unwanted noise, we can shelter ourselves from the claims of advertisers, and we may make more objective decisions.

10. **You will come to understand how the continuum of accessibility in society is similar to the continuum of credibility in research.** If you choose to go into the field of science or a similar field, you will learn through your courses how to analyze research articles and realize that there is a range in quality of research. This range of quality is much like the range of quality of accessibility. In one day, as a deaf or hard of hearing person, you move through environments that vary in accessibility. For example,

accessibility may be near total with a friend who signs well or when using an FM microphone at a restaurant with a family member. However, the same FM microphone at a rectangular table with a group of non-signers may yield only medium accessibility. Attending a conference with an interpreter and having closed captioning on video clips may result in strong accessibility. Road trips with friends who don’t sign, with the windows down, the music cranked up, and a profile view of the driver will yield very poor accessibility. Similarly, research, depending on how it’s done, can yield strong, medium, poor, or very poor results. If research design is poor and the procedural integrity is low, the results are essentially meaningless. You understand this because you experience it through the varying accessibility you have in your own life.

While we—when we become adults—have a responsibility to make education more accessible for the children coming up behind us, we also have a responsibility to acknowledge both the difficulties and the triumphs—

the pain and the gain—of being people who are deaf or hard of hearing. We live in a world in which accessibility is varied and sometimes poor. Still, the coping we do as deaf or hard of hearing children makes us strong, and figuring out meanings as we interact with people makes us caring and perceptive. Our experiences are valid and our emotions are raw. Sometimes life is hard and it hurts, but as adults we still do it. We do it because we want to be the person for other deaf and hard of hearing students that we wish had been there for us. **Thank goodness for us, and thank goodness for you!**



What is FNDC all about?

Family Network for Deaf Children (FNDC) is a parent run, non-profit, charitable organization supporting families with deaf and hard of hearing children that use sign language or are interested in learning sign language.

Even though technology and methodology have changed over the years, we seek the wisdom of parents, professionals and Deaf/HH adults so that common themes of “access, equity and a sense of belonging” continue to be highlighted in areas such as: social/recreation, leadership, education, employment, general services and community involvement.



What is Deaf Youth Today?

Deaf Youth Today (DYT), is FNDC’s summer social/recreational program and is committed to providing recreational experience and leadership opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing youth in British Columbia that use sign language for all or part of their communication or who are interested in learning sign language.

FNDC Board of Directors

Hester Hussey	Mentor, Advisor
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FNDC Staff

Cecelia Klassen	Executive Director cecelia@fndc.ca
Bella Poato	Executive Assistant accounting@fndc.ca
Scott Jeffery	Info Tech Manager FNDC/DYT scott@fndc.ca
Brianne Braun	Advocacy, Events & Family Support brianne@fndc.ca
Jason Berube	Newsletter Tech & IT Support webmaster@fndc.ca
FNDC	General Inquiry fndc@fndc.ca

DYT Staff

DYT (General Inquiries)	dyt@fndc.ca
Andrea Maloney	DYT Coordinator dyt@fndc.ca
Terry Maloney	DYT Coordinator terry@fndc.ca
Scott Jeffery	DYT Mentor, Advisor scott@fndc.ca
Hilary Potter	Youth Development Coordinator hilary@fndc.ca

Membership (Paid)

Membership is open to those who support the goals of our Organization.

- * Our membership is open to individuals, schools, and organizations. Parents/guardians of deaf and hard of hearing children are eligible to vote.

Join Our E-Mail List (for free)

Join our email list (for free) and receive:

- * Our newsletter (which is published four times a year)
- * Email Updates regarding upcoming workshops and courses, children & youth programs as well as community updates

Contact Us

Contact us below and be added to our email list or to request a membership form:

Family Network for Deaf Children & our summer program, Deaf Youth Today

PO Box 19380 Metrotown RPO

Burnaby, BC V5H 4JB

604-684-1860 (voice/text message)

www.fncd.ca (website) fncd@fncd.ca (e-mail)