



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

SPRING



May 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*

Happy Spring and now Summer is just around the corner!

Some exciting updates for you: FNDC has contracted with Brianne Braun to be our **Advocacy, Events & Family Support Worker**. Brianne has been working during the past year, supporting me (Cecelia) with those exact things: advocacy, events and family support! Many of your already know Brianne and as the mom of a Deaf child understands the whole advocacy thing, and will be at events meeting you and providing support and direction where needed!

We are also super excited to announce that Hilary Potter is our first ever – **Deaf Youth Development Coordinator**. Hilary has a wealth of experience and is passionate about investing in the next generation of d/Deaf and hard of hearing youth and young adults! We are so fortunate to have her and when you meet her you will definitely understand why!



I want to take the opportunity to thank Brianne and Hilary for joining us but also a huge thank you to Andrea, Terry and Scott. Believe me when I say, that the pay for these positions isn't at all close to what any of them are worth, but they do it because they want the best for d/Deaf and hard of hearing children youth and young adults. They go above and beyond their pay scale to do this! THANK YOU!

Hilary, Scott, Terry and Andrea spent the long weekend in Whistler leading a team of youth in training and team building! The weekend was a great success!

Twitter: @FNDcandDYT  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/fndc.ca](http://www.facebook.com/fndc.ca)



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

## 2023

### CHECK OUT DEAF YOUTH TODAY EXCITING SUMMER LINEUP!

#### PROGRAM DETAILS

FNDC Family Camp registration will be available online beginning April 1, 2023

[www.fndc.ca/familydeafcamp](http://www.fndc.ca/familydeafcamp)

DYT camps registration and program details will be available online beginning May 1, 2023.

[www.fndc.ca/deafyouthtoday](http://www.fndc.ca/deafyouthtoday)

#### CAMP LOCATIONS

##### Whistler Camp

To be announced

##### Hornby Island

Tribune Bay Outdoor  
Education Centre  
6050 St Johns Point Road,  
Hornby Island

##### Week 2 – 5

Provincial Deaf and  
Hard of Hearing Services  
4334 Victory Street,  
Burnaby

#### QUESTIONS

Contact Deaf Youth Today at  
[dyt@fndc.ca](mailto:dyt@fndc.ca) for more  
questions.

#### WHISTLER STAFF TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP CAMP | May 18 to 22, 2023

**Ages:** 16+

**Time:** Overnight

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cost:** Staff Free

**Details:** Staff only ([must apply for DYT employment](#))

#### FNDC FAMILY CAMP AT HORNBY ISLAND | July 5 to 9, 2023

**Ages:** All ages

**Time:** Overnight Camp

**Open to:** Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children or CODA

**Cost:** \$400

**Details:** Max 30 Families

#### Week 1: HORNBY ISLAND KIDS CAMP | July 10 to 14, 2023

**Ages:** 8-15

**Time:** Overnight Camp

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cost:** \$175 / \$225 (after June 30)

**Details:** Max 40 spots

#### HORNBY ISLAND LEADERSHIP IN TRAINING PROGRAM | July 10 to 14, 2023

**Ages:** 16-18

**Time:** Overnight Camp

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cost:** Free

**Details:** Max 8 spots

#### Week 2: SCIENCE AND EXPLORATION | July 17 to 20, 2023

**Ages:** 5-10

**Time:** 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cost:** \$100 / \$150 (after July 7)

**Details:** Max 15 spots

#### Week 3: OUTDOOR WEEK | July 24 to 27, 2023

**Ages:** 5-10

**Time:** 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing / CODA / Sibling

**Cost:** \$100 / \$150 (after July 14)

**Details:** Max 30 spots (10 - Saved for Outreach families)

#### Week 4: WATER WEEK | July 31 to Aug 3, 2023

**Ages:** 5-10

**Time:** 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cost:** \$100 / \$150 (after July 21)

**Details:** Max 15 spots

#### Week 5: ADVENTURE WEEK | August 8 to 10, 2023

**Ages:** 5-10

**Time:** 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cost:** \$75 / \$125 (after July 28)

**Details:** Max 15 spots

#### Week 6: WHISTLER TEEN ADVENTURE WEEK | August 13 to 18, 2023

**Ages:** 13-18

**Time:** Overnight Camp

**Open to:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cost:** \$250 / \$400 (after Aug 3)

**Details:** Max 15 spots

# DROP-IN

**Deaf Youth Today**  
**Summer TEEN “drop in” days for**  
**Deaf & Hard of Hearing Teens**  
**(ages 11 to 14)**

Tuesday July 18 & Thursday July 2  
Tuesday July 25 & Thursday July 27  
Tuesday August 1 & Thursday August 3  
Tuesday August 8 & Thursday August 10

Cost: \$25 per day

*Teen Days will join the DYT Camp programs on Tuesdays and Thursdays but teens will be in their own group.*

NOTE: a Teen Day maximum is 8 registrations

Register at: [www.fndc.ca/deafyouthtoday](http://www.fndc.ca/deafyouthtoday)

## FAMILY NETWORK FOR DEAF CHILDREN

Thanks

**LEDCOR**  
**GROUP**

for supporting our  
summer camps for  
deaf children & youth



If you wish to donate:  
[www.fndc.ca/donation](http://www.fndc.ca/donation)



## Deaf Ukrainian family re-settling in Canada seeking a place to live

"I am the host to a wonderful, responsible, hardworking and clean Deaf Ukrainian family of four with two very delightful children who currently attend Deaf Children's Society and BC School for the Deaf. They use their native sign language from Ukraine and are learning ASL/English.

I am not able continue to be their host forever and they are to leave my cozy home by July 1st to allow transition before starting school again in September.

A simple clean two bedrooms and a kitchen that they can use is all they need at this point. They are on a budget still at this point. "

For any interest or leads, please contact [EileenEdinger@gmail.com](mailto:EileenEdinger@gmail.com) or text: 604-506-2837 to set up a meeting discussion with this family.



# Making religious celebrations deaf-friendly

***FNDC Editor's Note: This article is from the United Kingdom, so they refer to BSL (British Sign Language)***

FROM: <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/parenting-and-family-life/practising-your-religion/making-religious-celebrations-deaf-friendly/>

“My faith is very important to me. Being deaf and being Muslim all tie in as parts of my identity.”

In many faiths, religious celebrations play an important role in how a child develops their religious identity, values and beliefs.

However, for deaf children and young people, a busy, noisy celebration can feel overwhelming.

If your child finds some of your traditions and customs challenging, it doesn't mean they don't want to take part in the celebration at all! You might just need to celebrate in a different way.

On this page, we look at some of the ways you can help deaf children to feel included in religious celebrations. You may want to share these with family, friends, teachers, preachers, or anyone else who'll be helping your child to celebrate.



## Managing mealtimes

"He can struggle if we go out to a restaurant to celebrate. He asks for my phone because he just wants to watch something and eat. He takes himself away from everyone because he finds it's too much processing everything that's going on."

Enjoying a special meal with extended family and friends is a big part of many religious events. Here are some tips to make mealtimes deaf-friendly.

- Use tablecloths to absorb sound from clattering cutlery.
- Think about positioning – can the child see everyone clearly to lip-read or sign? A round table is ideal as it means that everyone can see each other.
- Let the child choose where they want to sit. Some deaf children might prefer to sit facing a certain way, or with their back against the wall, to reduce background noise.
- Encourage people to speak one at a time.
- Don't talk with your mouth full or cover your mouth when speaking.
- Put your cutlery down from time to time to sign.
- Be aware that a deaf child may choose to eat all their food and then get involved in conversation rather than trying to follow while eating.
- Let the child know what the topic of conversation is so that they can follow more easily.
- When eating out, ask for a table in a quiet, well-lit area.
- Encourage your child to ask the waiting staff or host for what they want. Try not to order for them.

## Managing noisy environments

"Sometimes, if there are lots of people all in a large, echoey room, the noise can feel like it's destroying my ear drums. It can happen at prayer time in school or at the synagogue. I can stand it for a while, but sometimes I step outside if the noise becomes too much."

Just because a child is deaf, it doesn't mean they won't be affected by noise. In fact, people who wear hearing technology can often find loud noises and music uncomfortable or even painful, as the hearing technology might make the sound very loud or distorted. Hearing technology amplifies all noises, not just what the child is trying to listen to.

- Try to keep background noise to a minimum. Consider turning music down or off during conversations or mealtimes.

- If a child is expected to join in with singing or prayer, offering a written or signed copy of the words will help them to follow.
- Allow your child to leave the room if it's too noisy for them. Agree a safe space where they'll wait until they're ready to come back in, or until the room is quieter.
- Noisy firecrackers and fireworks might be especially uncomfortable for deaf children. Silent fireworks like sparklers or noiseless rockets can look just as dramatic and help everyone enjoy the evening.

## **Managing religious services**

"The weekly service takes place on a Saturday when the use of microphones is not allowed as it's the Sabbath in Judaism. Maxi always makes sure to sit near the front, facing the Rabbi, so that he can lip-read."

Religious services held in large, echoey rooms can be difficult for deaf children to follow. There are lots of ways you can help your child to take part in the service.

- Try to sit close to the front or near the speaker, in a position where your child can clearly see the speaker's face. Your child might prefer to sit against a wall instead of being in the middle of the room.
- If your child uses equipment such as a radio aid at school, ask if you can take it home for religious services. The speaker at the service can wear the radio aid around their neck or place it at the front of the room if they prefer.
- Many religious buildings have loop systems installed which can help hearing technology users to hear the speaker more clearly. Find out more about loop systems and how they work.
- If your place of worship doesn't allow technology to be used on certain days such as the Sabbath, ask if a special exception could be made for your child. Alternatively, consider going to a service on a different day.
- If your child uses British Sign Language (BSL), find out about signed services in your area. If there aren't any, ask your place of worship whether they could provide interpreters for special occasions.
- Find out about BSL services online. For example, the organisation Islam for Deaf offers hadiths, lessons and sermons in BSL on their website. Make time to watch these as a family to help your child feel included.
- If your child is expected to take part in activities such as singing, dancing or prayer during the service, explain this in advance. Be aware

that a deaf child may struggle to follow instructions if there are other distractions happening at the same time.

### **Head coverings and headscarves**

“Hamza can’t wear a hat because it interferes with his implant, and risks covering up the microphone. So he doesn’t wear a hat when he goes to the mosque.”

For children who wear hearing technology such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, wearing a head covering such as a taqiyah, kippah or hijab can be difficult, especially if it would cover the part of the hearing technology where the microphone is. Try different styles and sizes to see what works or ask other deaf members of your community how they manage. You could also ask other parents for their advice on Your Community.

Some children might prefer not to wear a head covering at all. Allow your child to make this decision for themselves. They might want to try again when they’re a bit older.

### **Coping with candles**

Lighting candles is an important part of many religious celebrations. However, for deaf children, candlelight can make lip-reading and understanding facial expressions difficult. If you usually light candles as part of your celebration, consider keeping your electric lights on at the same time as lighting candles to help your child follow the conversation.

If you prefer to keep the electric lights off, explain exactly what’s going to happen when you light the candles and what they mean before you turn the lights off. Be aware that your child might not join in while you light the candles or might prefer to go to a different room where the lights are on.

### **Joining in with dancing**

For many children, joining in with dancing is a highlight of any religious celebration! Lots of deaf children still enjoy dancing, even if they don’t hear the music. You can help your child to join in with dancing by clapping, clicking or tapping their hand or shoulder to show the beats in the music. Dancing in a room with hard floors instead of carpets can also help a deaf child to feel the vibration of the music. Using technology such as a Bluetooth streamer might allow your child to listen to the music directly through their hearing technology.



# CARTER CHURCHILL V. SCHOOL DISTRICT

<https://www.carterchurchill.ca/board-of-inquiry-decision-2023.html>

Board of Inquiry  
Decision  
Released March 1, 2023

Kimberly Churchill and Todd Churchill, on behalf of Carter Churchill v.  
Newfoundland and Labrador English School District et. al.  
(Complaint File # 10171)

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Some excerpts below.

*"[365] I struggle to conceive of a complainant more vulnerable than Carter Churchill. I am concerned by the potential long-term, perhaps permanent, impact upon Carter's future prospects for independence. I am concerned by how his exclusion, social isolation and language deprivation have impacted his sense of identity and self-worth as well as his concept of the world around him. I worry about the potential long term impacts on his mental health. I am also concerned by the fact that the District does not acknowledge the systemic issues which contributed to the discrimination experienced by Carter. If my decision is going to prompt change in the practices and approaches taken by the District, I must take into account the purpose of deterrence in assessing an appropriate award for general damages. The award for general damages must compensate Carter for his loss of the right to be free from discrimination. An elevated award for general damages consistent with these concerns does not make the award inconsistent with prior awards and Human Rights jurisprudence."*

*"[362] I am particularly concerned by the Districts' failure to adequately support Carter in the area of language development generally, and in particular its failure to respond to the concerns raised by its roster of ITDHH. These teachers were sounding the alarm with respect to the programming being offered to students with severe language delays such as Carter. At times they explicitly framed this as a Human Rights issue. They made specific proposals for changes to the programming offered to these students. Their proposals were dismissed summarily without being properly explored or evaluated by the District. This meant years of delay in providing intensive supports to address the language delays experienced by this cohort. The expert evidence presented emphasized the critical importance of early intervention in language acquisition – the impact on these students and Carter in particular may be long lasting or permanent."*

*Years of opportunity have been lost. Carter will be entering junior high and high school in the near future. It is unlikely that there remains time to fully address his language delay and he will continue to experience disadvantage flowing directly from these years of missed opportunity. With each year he fell further and further behind. It appears there is a strong probability that negative consequences will persist into his adult years."*

*"[288] With respect to the substantive aspect of the duty to accommodate, I have several concerns. As a general statement with respect to the level of accommodation required to adequately respond to Carter's need – I would say that it was not realistically possible to offer reasonable accommodation while at the same time have Carter placed in a mainstream classroom with hearing students. Carter's severe language delay required intensive intervention. The only solution which appears to adequately address Carter's need was to remove him from the mainstream and offer an alternative setting where he could receive intensive intervention for language development. Only by addressing his severe language delay is there a reasonable prospect that he could have meaningful access to school curriculum. This seems to have been understood by the District's roster of ITDHH and it motivated them to seek changes in programming. There were missed opportunities to explore such options early in Carter's education."*

*"[289] The failure to adequately support Carter's communication needs and language development resulted in him being socially isolated, deprived of opportunities for incidental learning and development of social skills. Although I believe he was cared for by hearing teachers and students alike, there was a tremendous communication divide and Carter suffered as a result. These issues were not addressed until he was placed in the DHH Classroom."*

*'[290] With respect to the Kindergarten year in particular, the level of student assistance was wholly inappropriate. Carter's ISSPs and IEPs contemplated that Carter would have a student assistant who could communicate with him in ASL. Without assessing the ASL proficiency of student assistants in advance of their work with Carter, the District really had no way of knowing whether the level of student assistance would meet Carter's need. Nevertheless District personnel made representations to the Churchills that not only could the student assistance support his personal needs but they could be a bridge for communication with Carter's hearing teacher. The only student assistant whose ASL proficiency was subsequently assessed received a proficiency rating below "survival" – during the assessment she failed to correctly fingerspell her own name, and she failed to produce the correct sign for "school". The Churchills repeatedly raised concerns regarding the level of student assistance provided for Carter. In the evidence*

*presented to the Board of Inquiry, I find examples of instances when these concerns materialized into real situations where Carter's actual needs were actually not understood or addressed during school days."*

*"[291] Also with respect to the Kindergarten year, the level of support from an ITDHH appears to have been insufficient. The ITDHH assigned to Carter during his Kindergarten year recognized that Carter's language delay meant that supporting him in his language development had to be one of her priorities even if this meant other students would not receive the level of support she wish to provide them. However, her caseload was heavy and she worked with Carter less than 3 hours per week. She acknowledged that based on his need he ought to have been receiving support more regularly at least 3 sessions per week and probably 4-5 sessions per week in order to meet the minimal guidelines of the Department's guidelines contained in the "Criteria for DHH Services – NL." She was not able to provide this level of support due to her caseload. In my view achieving even this standard, if it meant 5 hours per week, would not be sufficient to address Carter's level of language delay."*

*"[300] In this case, I do observe evidence of systemic issues which persisted during Carter's Kindergarten through Grade 3 school years. These issues relate to the District's approach to education for a cohort of students with cochlear implants who arrived in the school system with severe language delays. This cohort included Carter Churchill. In my view it is evident that issues in this area were known or certainly ought to have been known to the District. Nevertheless I find the District's response to these issues lacking. I see evidence that problems addressing the needs of this cohort were brought to the attention of District personnel who were in responsible positions within the District bureaucracy and who could have responded by exploring these issues, evaluating options, and implementing change. I see no evidence that this would have imposed a burden upon the District amounting to undue hardship. It was not an issue of lack of resources. The most that can be said is that the District failed to recognize opportunities for efficient reallocation of resources."*

*"[306] I also find that when the roster of ITDHHs raised concerns with their superiors they were discouraged from discussing their concerns with parents. Carter's ITDHHs were involved in developing his ISSPs and IEPs. I have concerns that they would have been reluctant to discuss their concerns openly during these meetings and that they would not have been able to express their opinions on what changes they supported related to Carter's programming. No direct evidence was presented on this point and I am reluctant to make inferences or draw conclusions about the state of mind of the ITDHHs during particular meetings where the Churchills were present, and whether the ITDHHs*

*felt pressured by the District. I am however satisfied that the ITDHHs involved with Carter's education had concerns regarding his programming, and they did not share these concerns with the Churchills in developing plans for Carter. The Churchills were deprived of the opportunity to advocate for the satellite classroom proposal or other similar change."*

*"[307] By the time Carter arrived in the school system, he was exhibiting a severe language delay and he needed intensive support in language acquisition Both expert witnesses who testified were in agreement that early intervention is critical to properly support a child's acquisition of competence with a language. The delay in addressing Carter's need in this area is very concerning and the adverse impact upon him is significant. He is now in Grade 6 and as of the date of the hearing he continued to require intensive support in this area and he remains unable to access grade level curriculum. The degree to which past delay in addressing his needs will continue to affect Carter in the future remains to be seen. However years of opportunity for early intervention have been lost.."*

*"[314] There is an inherent risk associated with any system which is vulnerable to a single point of failure. It seems reasonable to conclude that there is a need to put in place a process which is less reliant on the personal familiarity of one individual. Part of the solution would be to implement some objective system or standard for evaluating the ASL proficiency of those persons directly involved on the front lines of the education of students who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing. These are issues for the District to consider and it is not my function to conduct a comprehensive review of the education system of this province. My comments suggesting options for systemic changes are obiter dicta."*

-Above statements made by the NL Human Rights Commission Board of Inquiry Adjudicator, Brodie Gallant



# Parents of deaf child win human rights case against N.L. school district

From: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nlesd-parents-deaf-child-win-human-rights-case-1.6766067>

Kimberly and Todd Churchill have won a human rights case against the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District. They filed a human rights complaint against the district after learning their son, Carter, wasn't learning American Sign Language in his school. (Gary Locke/CBC)



Parents fighting for the education of their deaf son have won a human rights case against the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District.

The commission ruled that the district failed to provide reasonable accommodation for Carter Churchill and discriminated against him during the 2016 to 2020 school years, from kindergarten to Grade 3.

It has ordered the board to support Carter with education in American Sign Language and evaluate him in that language. The district will also have to pay Todd and Kimberly Churchill close to \$150,000, according to the human rights commission's decision, released Wednesday.

"It's not shock, but it's just this disbelief [that] finally, this is finally over," said Kimberly Churchill. "There was so much evidence there to show that there was discrimination."

The Churchills, who are from Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, have been involved in a nearly six-year long battle with the school district. They filed a human rights complaint in 2017 after realizing their son, Carter, wasn't learning American Sign Language in his school.

Carter, who is 12 years old, has cerebral palsy and is deaf and non-verbal, and uses ASL to communicate.

## Years in the making

Todd Churchill says the commission's decision is going to be a landmark case in Canada because it will help protect other deaf children from enduring discrimination similar to what his son Carter had to face for years.

Carter was a student at Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's for four years, while he was in kindergarten to Grade 3. He now attends East Point Elementary in St. John's.

East Point Elementary created a classroom for deaf children when Carter was in Grade 4 in 2020. The classroom was made up of eight children who were all learning American Sign Language.

Todd Churchill says the long-fought battle was worthwhile but he wishes his son never had to experience discrimination in the first place.

Kimberly Churchill uses sign language to communicate with Carter, who is deaf and non-verbal, in 2017. (CBC)

Todd Churchill said when Carter was a student at Beachy Cove Elementary the school was dismissive about their concerns and he and Kimberly were told numerous times that Carter was receiving a quality education.



In a statement, the school district said, "As the adjudicator's decision has just been released, district staff will take some time to review the decision before providing any additional comments."

"There's a sense of relief in the fact that we had the acknowledgement that he was discriminated against, and that there are systemic problems with deaf education in the province," said Todd Churchill.

"We've had other parents reach out to us in other parts of the province echoing similar concerns that we've experienced."

Todd says Carter's ASL is still not at the level it should be. During Carter's time at Beachy Cove Elementary, said Todd, Carter was assigned teachers who didn't know ASL and who had no training in teaching deaf children.

Kimberly says she experienced a lot of gaslighting through the past few years, frequently told by others that her child was getting a quality education and that he wasn't being discriminated against.

"It's been a roller-coaster. I personally have had myself close to breaking down, I've had mental breakdowns of great proportions," she said.

"At times I swear that I was being drove crazy because I felt as if what I was asking for was completely irrational."

## Mental health concerns

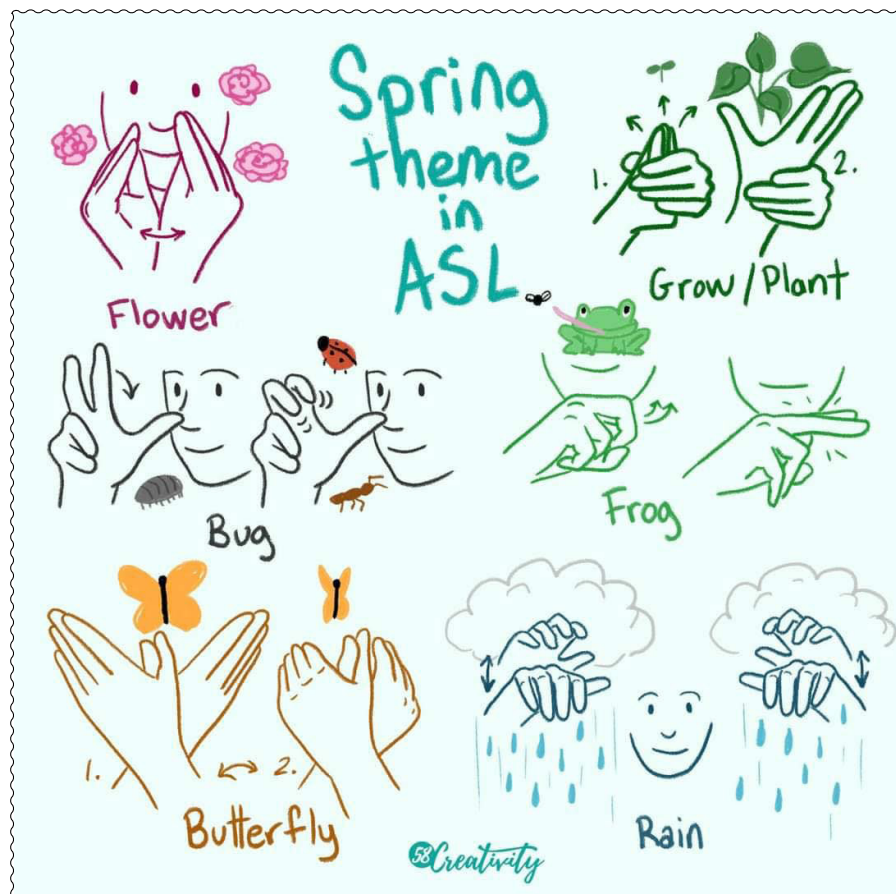
The decision says Carter is to be supported in the development of ASL, in accessing and being evaluated upon school curriculum via ASL, in communicating his safety and personal needs via ASL, and in ensuring he is not isolated from peers who are able to communicate with him.

When Kimberly read the commission's decision, she said, she felt the adjudicator appreciated and understood that the discrimination Carter faced affected his mental health.

Expert evidence cited in the decision said it's important for students like Carter to be exposed to a native ASL user and to participate and observe conversation in ASL to "mitigate the risk of social isolation and mental health problems."

Kimberly said it was reassuring to read that after years of being told by some that Carter's mental health was nothing to be concerned about.

"For the first time, I feel that we are finally, finally believed, that Carter's story is now one that we've been saying since Day 1 that this has been happening to him, and now that we are looked at as, OK, this was happening."





# Three Future Tradesmen from BC School for the Deaf – LEDCOR Field Day

Submitted by: Ryan De Temple



Great day in the field with three future tradesmen from the BC School for the Deaf! These three deaf grade 10/12 students are interested in a career in carpentry or wood work. Eric Wood, P.Eng, Dan Braun, and I signed/spoke (with help from sign language interpreters) about a career in the trades. Everyone we met on site was great with the students. They were more than happy to share their experience in the trades and offer great advice, like:

- Don't get hung up on which trade to pick. Get your foot into the field and grow from there!



- There are many times in the field where visual communication is more valuable than spoken language; pile driving, crane signaling, noisy saw mills, signaling to an excavator operator, and more...

A role model in the community, Dan Braun from RACKsteel Inc. is a deaf adult who shared his experience as a deaf red-seal millwright. As you can imagine, he's had good and bad experiences. He's found a great company which is a leader in the industry. As an operations manager for Rack Steel, Dan has a full crew of deaf rack installers!

Big thanks to Ledcor, their partner on this project Kiewit, and a great client for making this all possible. Special thanks to RACKsteel Inc. for freeing up Dan for the day.

Are you interested in learning more about the deaf community and how you can support deaf/hard of hearing youth? Message me directly, or check out Family Network for Deaf Children (FNDC), a great organization which supports youth, builds community and teaches valuable leadership skills!



Ryan De Temple [ryan.detemple@outlook.com](mailto:ryan.detemple@outlook.com)

# Genevieve's journey to communication

From: [https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/parenting-and-family-life/families-magazine/your-stories/primary-years-stories/genevieves-journey-to-communication/?utm\\_campaign=Families%20email%20March%202023%20-%20generic&utm\\_source=emailCampaign&utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/parenting-and-family-life/families-magazine/your-stories/primary-years-stories/genevieves-journey-to-communication/?utm_campaign=Families%20email%20March%202023%20-%20generic&utm_source=emailCampaign&utm_content=&utm_medium=email)

**After contracting meningitis at five weeks old, Genevieve has been through a lot. Now she's a bubbly eight-year-old and has begun to use speech and sign.**

In the playground at school pick-up time, one of Genevieve's classmate's parents approached her mum Mary and asked if she'd help out at the school fair. "I thought, 'Are you serious?'" says Mary, who's a single parent. "I have to drive to



Manchester Hospital three times this week and you want me to bake cookies?' In the playground, every child was always healthy and able-bodied with two parents. They cared about things that I couldn't even think about caring about."

Genevieve had a very difficult start to life with a [meningitis diagnosis](#) at five weeks old. "We've really been through it," explains Mary. "She had seizures up until recently and she's partially sighted. "When I first found out she was going to be profoundly deaf too, it was like being swallowed by a black hole. The charity Meningitis Now funded some counselling for me. After everything we'd gone through, to be told your child is completely deaf, I just thought 'Are you kidding me?'"

Mary was lucky enough to have a very supportive family. "At one point, I remember I had to have a few weeks' break. I gave my mum the children. Admitting you need help is the hardest part. In my head I had planned out the kind of parent I wanted to be. When that didn't happen, it was hard."

Genevieve got her [cochlear implant](#) at just eight months old. During the treatment for meningitis, Mary was told her ears had begun to ossify. This is where, if a child has hearing loss after meningitis, there's a risk of excess bone growth in the cochlea after recovery which can make hearing loss worse and treatment more difficult. "The doctors said she wouldn't be able to have the implant if this happened," Mary explains. "It was very scary because the operation is so close to the brain. We'd refused other operations after the meningitis because she'd been through so much, but this one was important to us."

Looking back, Mary wishes she'd known that cochlear implantation isn't a quick fix. "The implant was turned on and it wasn't like you see in the news. Nothing happened. Those

internet videos are so misleading. It took a long time and a lot of work for Genevieve to process sound.”

In fact, it has taken Mary and Genevieve eight years of hard work. “In the beginning I did a lot of singing to her,” Mary explains. “The doctor said she’d be more likely to pick up on sing-song noises. I used to get in trouble with my neighbours because we’d make so much noise! “We were also told about the importance of play, and I loved that because I’ve got a Media Performance degree. My whole family did a sign language course, but even before I did the course, I’d made up my own signs to use with her.”

Mary worked hard to put all the advice from Genevieve’s support staff into practice, but it didn’t always feel like it was working. “There were many times during the journey when I wondered if she would be able to communicate at all. I thought, ‘Oh my god, she’s not going to ever talk, she’s never going to be able to tell me how she feels and she might get manipulated because of it.’ But I just kept going. “The small wins are the best wins. They can catch you off-guard. My favourite was the first time she signed ‘sorry’ to her brother through gritted teeth and with an upset look on her face. That incorporated everything for me. She was communicating, she understood the emotions of the situation, she knew she’d done something wrong, but she wasn’t happy about it. It was amazing.”

Finding the right school for Genevieve has also been a journey. “When it came to choosing a school, we chose her brother’s mainstream school,” says Mary. “I don’t drive so it was the only accessible place. Genevieve was the first disabled child they’d had, and they were supportive with her Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, but the curriculum wasn’t catering for her and she was slipping further and further behind. She was good at communication without speech; she’d get up and show you, she has a very emotive face and uses expressions. But her friends babied her. They were too young to slow down and learn how to communicate with her.”

Feeling lost, one day Mary turned to Google and found a deaf-specialist school, which uses a [total communication approach](#), not far from their home. Luckily, Genevieve could get a taxi there. “It’s fabulous,” says Mary. “Since moving at the beginning of Year 2, she signs a lot more and her speech has come on hugely. They use a radio aid which really helps as she gets distracted easily. Every single person at the school has to know sign language. I actually asked them once, ‘What, even the cleaners?’ And they nodded.”

Now Genevieve’s eight years old, Mary feels like the family can see the light at the end of the tunnel. “She speaks differently, she’s still struggling and she’s very behind,” Mary says. “But her speech is progressing all the time. She’s just started stringing sentences together, she’s started asking ‘Why?’ and ‘When?’ She sings now and loves Abba!

“She’s learning to write her name, and she’s working at school on learning to socialise. She even has a best friend now! “We make jokes in my family all the time about the things Genevieve will go on to do. I just know she’s going to change the world.”



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# Deaf poet from Bend makes debut at National Poetry Out Loud contest

From: <https://centraloregondaily.com/deaf-bend-poet-kari-morgan-national-poetry-out-loud/>

A Bend poet who is deaf made her debut on the national stage Tuesday, representing the state of Oregon at the [National Poetry Out Loud](#) contest in Washington, D.C.

"I am so so nervous. I'm really nervous for tonight," [Kari Morgan](#) said.

Kari, 16, went to D.C. in hopes of becoming the first deaf poet to ever win the national contest.

"In all 50 states, I'm the only one that's deaf. I'm competing against all these hearing kids, so it feels like a big moment to get other deaf people involved and it's really important," Kari said.

Kari says that's a lot of pressure.

"I want to show the deaf community all around the U.S. that I can win. If I can do it, so can you. Out of all of these hearing kids, there's one deaf person. I just want them to know that they can do it," Kari said.

One contestant from each of the 50 states compete at the national level. Only 24 of those 50 advance to the second round. After that, the top nine poets in the U.S. face off in the final round.

Kari unfortunately did not advance to the round of 24 on Tuesday night. She hopes what she did accomplish inspires people in the deaf community.



# Deaf History: MEET DOROTHY

Meet Dorothy "Dot" Sueoka Casterline, age 95, a proud Hawaiian, Asian-Pacific Islander, who was born when Hawaii was a U.S. territory. She was educated orally at the Diamond Head School for the Deaf, which is now the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind.

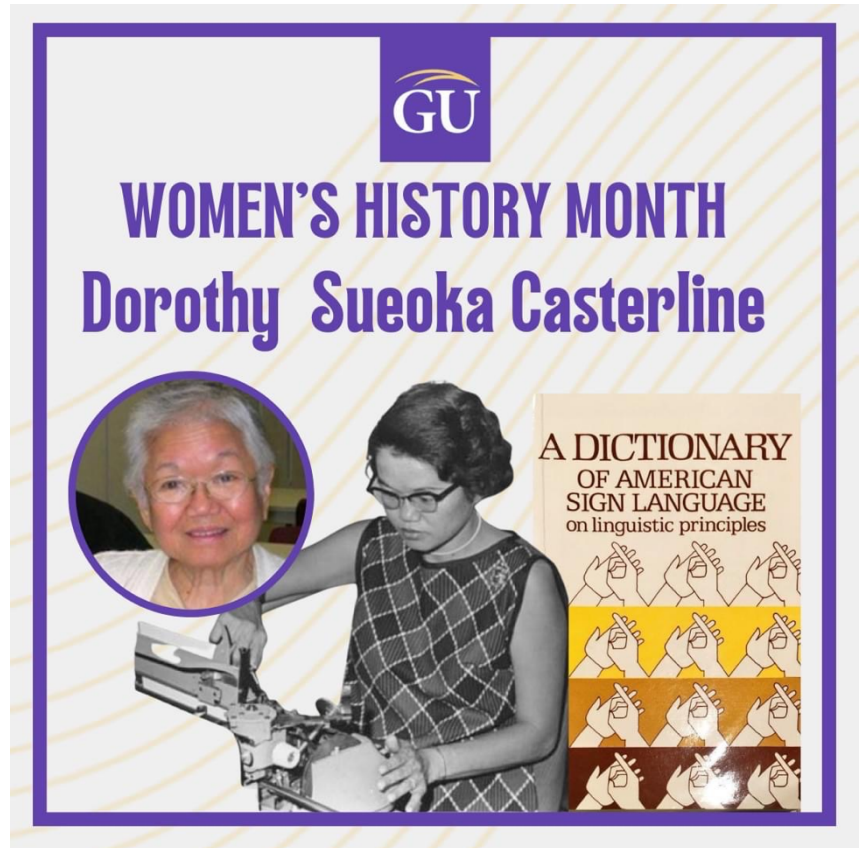
After graduating from high school, she enrolled at Gallaudet where she completed the requirements for her bachelor's degree in just three years, graduating in 1958. Upon graduation from Gallaudet, Ms. Casterline embarked on a distinguished career spanning three decades as an educator, linguistics researcher,

She was one of the instrumental players in Dr. William C. Stokoe's efforts in recognizing American Sign Language as a full fledged language in the 1960s. She was co-author of the history-making "A Dictionary of American Sign Language on Linguistic Principles" in 1965 with Carl G. Croneberg and William C. Stokoe. This dictionary was the book that grabbed people's attention and flared a growing interest in ASL.

Ms. Casterline is living proof of how forward-thinking Gallaudet was in 1949 when it first accepted international students. She was among the first international students to enroll – and the first Deaf Hawaiian to graduate – from Gallaudet, and is a shining example of the countless other graduates from other countries who have gone on to demonstrate how a Gallaudet education improves the lives of deaf people around the world.

In 2022, Casterline (along with Croneberg) was given an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Gallaudet in recognition of her contributions to ASL linguistics and deaf studies.

#GallaudetU #DeafHERstory #Womenhistorymonth



## **GVAD – raises money for DYT – THANK YOU!!!!**

On a fabulous day, September 24th 2022, GVAD proudly hosted a 41st annual Corn Party and was spearheaded by chairperson David Johnson with a valuable committee including Leonor Johnson and Forrest Smith. Surprisingly, it was a sold out event with over 100 people in attendance. GVAD asked Christian Vasquez to cater BBQ foods. "It is a tall order," or so he thought.

The phenomenal team who carried out a tall order: James Barrett, Carlo Gris, Magdalena Szelezin-Vasquez, Michal Szelezin, RJ Espinoza, Ali Nutt, Ashley Mann and VCC students came and helped with serve hotdog, Vegan and hamburgers (Joel Kvarnbery was able to cook for 3 hours straight. A shocking feat, indeed!), smokies and a special item: El Salvador burrito, which was a hot commodity. The homemade burrito was made by the Vasquez Family.

The event couldn't have happened without BCDSF support from Mohlin and Cecilia Tung was grateful to loan us two huge canopies for the outdoor BBQ as well. It was a fantastic event with tons of fun games. Everyone walked away smiling from ear to ear. The Corn Party BBQ team also was able to use some of the funding towards the Deaf Youth Today Program (FNDC), Douglas College Interpretation Program and Vancouver Community College ASL/Deaf Studies Program. They are important programs to maintain for communities years to come."      Youtube link: [GVAD Corn Party Recap](#)

### **Do You Need a Tutor?**

Terry Gardiner has over 30 years of experience teaching at BCSD, and holds a current B.C. Teaching Certificate, and can teach B.C. Curriculum. Can tutor/teach Grades 5 through 12 but prefers Grades 5 through 10. Preferred instructional areas are as follows: English (Reading, Writing), Science (Biology, Physical Geography, Earth, Chemistry), Social Studies (History), and Math. ASL shall be used during online tutoring only.

Terry Gardiner: [tgardiner77@gmail.com](mailto:tgardiner77@gmail.com)

# Fake sign language is spreading on TikTok.

## Deaf people are worried

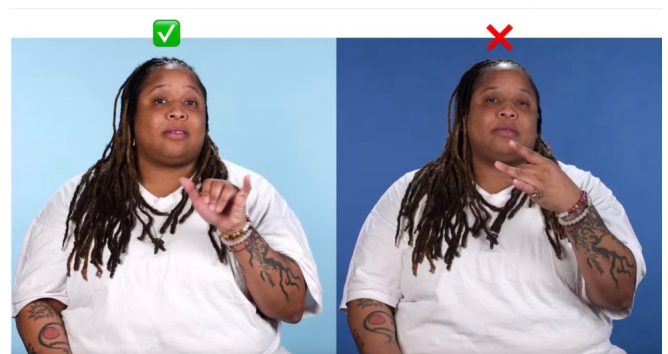
*Sign language has become trendy on TikTok, but many videos feature incorrect signs, sparking fears the trend will cause lasting damage to American Sign Language*

*Anthony Eagle Jr. is big on TikTok. He boasts over 850,000 followers, many of whom love the way he performs sign language renditions of songs. There's just one problem — the sign language is sometimes wrong.*

When Eagle, 39, of Winston-Salem, N.C., signs the song, [“Love the Way You Lie,”](#) his rendition is riddled with mistakes, like signing the word “lie” with two hands in the wrong position. To a deaf person who uses sign language, it looks like gibberish.

The Washington Post asked Sheena Lyles, 37, of Baltimore, [a Deaf comedian on TikTok](#), to demonstrate several sign language mistakes made on social media. Here she shows the right way to sign “lie,” as well as the wrong way used by Eagle in his video.

Sign language set to music has become trendy on TikTok, particularly among hearing creators, spurred in part by the representation of sign language in popular movies like “CODA” or “A Quiet Place.” But with its growing popularity, many deaf and hard of hearing creators, who rely on sign language to communicate, worry that TikTok is allowing incorrect signs to spread like wildfire.



Eagle acknowledged that he sometimes makes mistakes with his signing, but accused some in the deaf community of “gatekeeping,” and trying to prevent hearing people from using it.

“I think it’s really crappy that they keep their language in a box,” Eagle said. “Sign language is something to love, and everyone should learn it.”

The issue has grown so large that the National Association for the Deaf [posted a video](#) last month criticizing the rapid spread of unqualified people teaching incorrect sign language on social media, saying that it’s doing “devastating harm” to the deaf community.

When using sign language, even seemingly small changes, such as using the wrong hand shape or moving hands the wrong way, can make a sign unintelligible or give it an entirely different meaning than intended.

In a sign language rendition of the song [“We Are The World,”](#) for example, Scott Berends, 47, of Holton, Mich. who has 1 million followers, tries to sign the word “children.” The sign is supposed to look like he’s gently patting children on the head — instead critics say it looks more like he is playing bongo drums. The sign Berends uses doesn’t have any meaning in American Sign Language.



Sheena Lyles, a deaf TikTok creator, demonstrates the correct sign for the word children and the incorrect sign being used on TikTok. (Video: Alexa Juliana Ard, Justin Sculetta, Amanda Morris/The Washington Post)

The sign language mistakes on social media can be so significant that [Kilee Ashton](#), 40, of Salt Lake City, who is Deaf, said she often can't understand what someone is trying to say. "It's ugly to watch," she said.

Ashton said she and other deaf people have tried to point out mistakes to creators like Eagle and Berends, but they have been blocked or had their comments deleted.

Berends admits that he sometimes makes mistakes with his signing, but maintains that he posts his videos with positive intentions to spread sign language. He said he is open to feedback but deletes any comments he feels are negative or mean-spirited.

"Hard of hearing people or people from the deaf community have thanked me for bringing cultures together," he said. "I'm a big supporter of everyone, and the deaf community is extremely important in my life."

Subtle changes in hand direction, shape or placement are common mistakes among novice signers on social media and can change the meaning of a sign.

When Eagle signs the song "[Simple Man](#)," he tries to sign the word "young," but moves his hands down his chest instead of up. In doing so, he accidentally signs the word "tired" instead.

Similarly, when Berends signs the Beatles song "[Let it Be](#)," he tries to sign the word "trouble," but his incorrect hand shape, movement and positioning means he signs the word for "awesome" instead.

Sheena Lyles, a deaf TikTok creator, demonstrates the correct sign for the word trouble and the incorrect sign being used on TikTok. (Video: Alexa Juliana Ard, Justin Sculetta, Amanda Morris/The Washington Post)

Because of the explosion of bad sign language videos she has seen, Lyles has started selling merchandise with the "S.O.S." acronym, which she said stands for "Save Our Signs."

"We cherish ASL because this is our communication tool. We need this language for access; we need this language to communicate with others," she said.

[John Troumbley](#), 29, of Kokomo Ind., who is Deaf, estimates that he only understands half of what is being signed on some popular TikTok accounts.

"It's already hard enough for us to communicate with the hearing community and then you have people learning incorrect sign language and that complicates things even more," he said. "Some signs are really close to each other, and if you don't know what you're doing, you're going to cause problems."

Deaf people say that fake signs like those seen on TikTok can have serious consequences. There have been several cases of "fake interpreters," which prevented deaf people from accessing

critical information. For instance, in 2017, a [news conference](#) for Hurricane Irma featured an interpreter who signed gibberish like “pizza” and “bear monster” instead of information about evacuation orders. Other notable ‘fake interpreters’ include the man who interpreted [Nelson Mandela’s funeral in 2013](#), and a woman who delivered an [incoherent sign language translation](#) during a 2017 Florida news conference about a murder suspect.

### **Making translation errors**

Another common sign language mistake is trying to sign the way English is spoken, rather than following the grammar rules of American Sign Language. This is sometimes referred to as Signed Exact English, or SEE — and it’s a controversial way of using sign language among the deaf community.

Some creators acknowledge that they don’t follow ASL grammar rules. They still make translation mistakes when choosing specific signs for English words.

In a [free sign language class](#) that Berends runs through his Facebook [page](#), the teacher, Kat Jaret, 43, of Forest, Va. uses some signs incorrectly. When she tries to sign “like I said,” she uses a sign for *liking* something (as in “I *like* ice cream”) rather than the sign used to indicate something is similar. (“This ice cream tastes *like* my grandmother’s.)

“I know sometimes we don’t sign perfectly,” Jaret said, in reference to both herself and Berends. “Nobody speaks English perfectly sometimes.”

But deaf people point out that fans who follow these accounts don’t always realize the creators are making mistakes — especially if critical comments are deleted.

### **Teaching sign language sparks debate**

Whether hearing people should teach sign language remains a topic of debate in the deaf community. One reason is that it takes opportunities away from deaf people, but another is that hearing people who aren’t trained properly often don’t know they are making mistakes and aren’t qualified to teach.

Ashley Noelle Russ, 38, of Shawano, Wisc., [a Deaf woman who has about 40,000 followers on TikTok](#), said the safest way to learn sign language is directly from deaf people — many of whom teach the language for free on TikTok.

“American Sign Language is what we use everyday for our communication,” she said. “It’s so important to look for deaf creators and learn from deaf creators.”

She and many others were alarmed recently when Berends posted on social media that he would be teaching sign language to a local store, despite the fact that Berends is not a licensed interpreter or teacher.

When asked about his qualifications, Berends said he started learning sign language when he was a child because he had a deaf friend. As an adult, he said he took American Sign Language classes through [cudoo.com](#), which offers basic sign language lessons.

Eagle, who is Native American, said his interest in sign language stems from seeing [Native American sign language](#), also known as ‘hand talk,’ as a child. He calls himself an “innovator for sign language.”

But some Native Deaf creators on TikTok say his videos don’t show proficiency in Native American sign language or ASL.

“If you want to do sign language, fine, but don’t charge for classes, don’t ignore or block people who live in these communities every day,” said [Christina Yeates](#), 39, a Native Deaf woman in Salt Lake City. “It’s not a trend. This is our daily accessibility.”

Jullian Mitchell, 38, of Puerto Rico is a [Deaf ASL teacher](#) and believes that many people who are now using sign language on social media don’t know the history of sign language, and why it’s important to preserve it. In the late 1800s, international educators voted to remove sign language from deaf education, and schools started punishing students who used it. Most schools for the deaf did not start using sign language again until the latter half of the 20th century.

“Sign language is at war, true biz,” Mitchell said, using a popular ASL slang phrase. “It’s hurting us. They think it’s nothing, but hearing people don’t understand what it’s like to be oppressed, to be at the bottom.”

### **Deaf creators struggle to be seen**

Deaf creators say they often struggle to gain the same popularity as hearing creators on TikTok. They worry TikTok’s algorithm favors hearing creators, who tend to talk and use music on their videos more often.

“It becomes a slap in the face when you see new people who aren’t really part of the culture get like 500,000 views, and they’re signing awkwardly,” said Matt Maxey, a 34-year old Deaf man in Atlanta who has been trying to monetize various social media platforms under the account name “[Deafinitely Dope](#).”

He and other deaf creators say that they want more hearing people to learn sign language — but they want people to support the deaf community at the same time.

Jon Urquhart, 29, of Boston, has [over half a million TikTok followers](#). He can hear but is the child of deaf adults, otherwise known as a CODA, and is viewed among the deaf community as a “heritage” signer and ally.

He uses his platform to promote online classes with deaf teachers. He said people who learn sign language should engage with the deaf community, rather than just using the language for entertainment or performative value.

“Learn ASL to break down barriers, make deaf friends and include deaf people in your life,” he said.

# Children face developmental delays after cochlear implant bungle at Women's and Children's Hospital

From: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-20/wch-hearing-bungle-leave-children-with-developmental-delays/102117512>



Six-year-old Logan Smedley's cochlear implant fitted at the Women's and Children's Hospital was wrongly programmed. *(ABC News: Claire Campbell)*

The state government will launch an independent external review into Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital for wrongly programming the cochlear implants of one in four children in its program, causing what are expected to be lifelong development problems.

It follows calls from the families of the 30 children affected for an independent investigation, with the cause of the problems still unclear nearly a year after the hospital was alerted to the issue.

Six-year-old Logan Smedley is one of at least 30 children whose cochlear implant fitted at the hospital was not mapped correctly, meaning he could not hear many sounds crucial to learning to listen and speak.

"As a result of the hospital's failure to turn up Logan's cochlear implants over approximately four years, we believe he's severely delayed in his hearing and his speech," his father, Dale, said. "It's stressful, day in, day out."



The Smedley family believe six-year-old Logan's hearing and speech has been delayed due to the mistake. *(Supplied)*none

On Monday morning, South Australia's Health Minister Chris Picton said he agreed with the families involved, that an independent review was needed. "I thank the families for speaking yesterday, I can't imagine how difficult it would be to be a parent and have that situation for your child," he said.

"Today I have asked the chief executive of SA Health Dr Robyn Lawrence to commission an independent review ... I think we need to learn what's happened over these past four plus years at Audiology ... and make sure that we can learn the lessons, so that this is not repeated in the future."

Mr Picton said the hospital's own investigation would be superseded by the external review which would be conducted by an "interstate expert". "I think people will have a lot more confidence if somebody from outside our system coming in with a fresh set of eyes to look completely objectively at what's happened over the past many years," he said. "We want to have family and patient involvement in that so that they've got the opportunity to have their voices heard as part of that interstate review into this matter. "I absolutely commit that that external report will be made public."

### **Concerns raised last April**

Audiologist Nicole Eglinton alerted the hospital and health regulators last April after seeing the same problem in nine of her patients. "The first child that came through, we thought that might be an anomaly," she said. "This is not something we see often and we were alarmed and really in disbelief."

She said she had to "battle" to get the hospital to investigate her and the affected families' concerns. "Our initial testing has shown that they didn't have the important access to all of the sounds that they needed to learn to listen or speak. "Critical periods are between zero and three years to learn and develop language. "Many of these children have missed this opportunity."

Audiologist Nicole Eglinton alerted the hospital and health regulators last April after seeing the same problem in nine of her patients. *(Supplied)*none

Natalie Salter said she was "devastated" to find out the cochlear implants in both her sons were not allowing them to hear any sounds. "This meant everything we had done over the last couple of years in relation to our boys' hearing had been done in vain," she said. "We lived in the country at the time, so we had frequently driven six-hour round trips to appointments to seek the best care. "I want to be clear that this should never have happened.

"We want assurances that no other families will have to experience what we have over the last couple of years. "We need to do better to ensure our family and others are given informed based audiological care, given a choice in their providers, and confidence that our children are receiving the treatment they deserve."

The Women's and Children's Hospital network said an internal review into what went wrong had been underway since last May, but it was still months off completion and it

did not yet know what the cause of the problem was. "We immediately took action to investigate this problem, we notified all of the families in our program which was 117 families," Women's and Children's Hospital director of surgery Sonja Latzel said.

"We identified approximately 30 children who had maps that were not correctly adjusted and we have taken steps to adjust those maps. "We have great regret over the fact that these children did not have these maps adjusted correctly and wish to express our apologies to the families involved.

"We are taking every step we can to ensure that this will not happen in the future and investigate the causes that led to this."

### **Apology to families**

The hospital said it was "a very complex" investigation and could not discuss whether compensation would be paid to the affected families and whether the review's findings would be released publicly.

The hospital's management said it had been very open with the affected families and apologised to all of them, but the state opposition said that was not the case.

Opposition Health Spokesperson Ashton Hurn yesterday called for an independent inquiry into the incident. "It's heartbreaking and devastating in equal measure," Ms Hurn said.

"We believe the government should be demanding answers of this, so that no other South Australian family have to endure the same genuine heartache and despair that these families have had to.

"The only way to get these answers is by launching an independent investigation."

**"While you speak, interpreters are actively listening to what you say, understanding what they hear, breaking it down into parts, finding the main idea and important details, then they will convert it into a totally different language, restructure the message so it makes sense in the new language, put it out in sign language, and then monitor what they are saying to make sure it is making sense all while keeping the integrity of the original message and continuing to listen to what you are saying as this process repeats over and over again."**

# TINY, POWERFUL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

From: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/essentialsoflinguistics2/chapter/11-1-tiny-powerful-language-learners/>



If you've ever taken care of a newborn, you'll know that they're so busy growing that they can't do much else. They can sleep, they can eat (as long as their food is in liquid form), they can pee and poop, and they can cry. That's pretty much it. When they're just born, they can't even really focus their eyes or control their limbs! But by the time they start school at age four or five, most of them can walk and run and jump, some can swim and ride bikes, and they can hold fairly sophisticated conversations with complex sentences and multi-syllable words. Here's an example of an utterance by one of my twins when they were about four and a half years old:

"Mummy, do you remember that time we made chocolate pudding? Maybe we could make some on Saturday. This Saturday, in the afternoon. I don't need to take a nap. Let's do it together, and maybe then we can eat some!"

As awesome as my kids are, there's nothing remarkable about their language development. Every typically-developing child who has access to language will become fluent in the language (or languages!) used around them, mostly without explicit teaching. So how do kids' minds get from the newborn stage where the only sounds they make are crying and hiccuping to this stage of being able to bargain about naptime and kitchen projects? There must be an awful lot of learning that happens in those first few years. As we'll see in this chapter, that learning can start even before birth! In this chapter we take a look at some of the elements of grammatical knowledge that children acquire, and we ask what that tells us about mental grammar.

Children's rapid language development can look quite magical from the outside, but it results from immense brain activity in response to the language environment, also known as the ambient language, the language used by the family members, caregivers, adults and older children that a child spends time with. The baby brain tracks the patterns in the language environment and uses them to build up the child's own mental grammar. If the language environment is English, the child develops a mental grammar for English. And obviously, children in a Tamil-speaking environment develop a mental grammar for Tamil, children in a Mandarin-speaking environment develop a mental grammar for Mandarin, and so on. If the ambient language is American Sign Language

(ASL), then the child will develop a mental grammar for ASL, regardless of whether they're deaf or hearing. If a child is in an environment where two or more languages are used, they'll develop mental grammars for both those languages.

## The Language environment and oralist culture

There is one group of children who don't have access to the language environment. About 90-95% of babies who are born [deaf or hard of hearing](#) are born into families where the primary language modality is speech (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). In some cases, families who learn that their child is deaf choose to start learning a sign language like ASL. If they use sign in their interactions with their child, then the baby has access to an ambient language in the visual modality and will develop a mental grammar from that input. But some families of deaf children choose not to use signed language, which means that their child does not get access to any ambient language: neither auditory nor visual. Why might a family make that decision? To answer that question, we need to talk a bit about cochlear implants.

A cochlear implant (CI) is an electronic prosthetic device that is implanted surgically. It takes sounds from the environment and converts them to electrical signals. Those signals then get transmitted to the brain via the auditory nerve (NIH NIDCD, 2021). In developed countries, it is very common for deaf children to receive a CI between ages one and three years. Even so, most kids with CIs still score well below hearing kids on standard tests of language proficiency, even when they've had the implant for several years – not because of any deficit in the children, but because the electrical signals from a cochlear implant are not a sufficient language environment for typical development (Mauldin, 2019). But in spite of this evidence, there's still a persistent stigma around sign languages and deafness, and many parents, teachers, and medical professionals consider it so important for children to “pass” in a hearing world that they don't offer access to signed language because they fear that it might interfere with the child's eventual acquisition of spoken language.

Because of this belief that vocal language is better than sign language, known as **oralism**, many deaf children have no exposure to language before receiving a CI, and after implantation have access only to the atypical electrical signals produced by the device. This language **deprivation** leads to long-term impairments in social and cognitive function and, ironically, to lower scores on tests of vocal language comprehension (M. L. Hall et al., 2019; W. C. Hall, 2017; Humphries et al., 2016; Lillo-Martin & Henner, 2021). In contrast, when deaf children of hearing parents have access to ASL by age six months, their



vocabulary develops at a comparable rate to deaf children of deaf signing parents (Caselli et al., 2021).

This evidence from deaf kids shows us just how vital the language environment is, and how important it is that children have access to an ambient language as early as possible. The neural connections that make up mental grammar can only form in response to language input from the environment. Without that input in the first year of life, it's much harder for the brain to build a mental grammar.

**A note on notation.** When we're talking about very young children, their age in months is often more relevant than their age in years. The convention in this literature is to use a semi-colon between the years and months of a child's age. So a child aged 1;6 is one year and six months old, or one-and-a-half.

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# Check out this great YouTube Channel: @LearnBright

This channel provides educational videos for kids that are fun & engaging.

In addition to their videos in English, they also have many of their videos available in ASL. To access, go to @LearnBright YouTube Channel, search ASL and you will find:

ASL Language Arts - 14 videos  
ASL reading Videos - 13 videos  
ASL Math – 12 videos  
ASL Social Studies – 58 videos  
ASL science – 86 videos  
ASL - various – 184 videos

Learn Bright is focused on providing educational videos for kids that are fun and engaging but that also teach the topic properly and accurately.

They are passionate about education and helping kids learn! Their channel is designed to support parents who homeschool their kids as well as teachers who are looking for resources in a traditional classroom. In addition to the videos you can see on the channel they also provide a full catalog of comprehensive K-6 Lesson plans on Science, History, Math, Reading, and Language Arts. Resources at <https://learnbright.org/>



# Funding supports sign language interpreter education

From: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023PSFS0033-000737>

People training to become American sign language (ASL) interpreters will be able to continue their education at Vancouver Community College as the ASL interpretation diploma program moves from Douglas College.

Sign language interpreters are vitally important to the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community and are essential for accessibility. Interpreters use sign language to translate spoken language and vice versa during meetings, conversations or television programs. They work in schools and courts, and for social service agencies, interpretation services, government services and television stations.

The B.C. government is providing \$655,000 to support the transition of the province's only ASL interpretation diploma program from Douglas College to Vancouver Community College in time for the fall 2023 semester.

Vancouver Community College offers a one-year certificate in ASL and Deaf studies, and the transition will have the one-year certificate and the two-year sign language interpretation diploma co-located together at Vancouver Community College. Co-location of the programs will allow the institution to explore options for different credential types, methods of delivery and entry pathways, all of which are intended to better serve students, graduates and the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, while improving supports for students, curriculum co-ordination and alignment of program goals.

With provincial funding, the ASL interpretation diploma program at Douglas College will continue for another academic year to allow current students to graduate without interruption to their studies and with opportunities to transfer available for staff. Meanwhile, the program will also be available at Vancouver Community College starting in September 2023.

## Learn More:

Vancouver Community College: <https://www.vcc.ca>

ASL supports and services: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/services-for-people-with-disabilities/supports-services/american-sign-language-asl-interpreter-services>





May 16, 2023  
Our Ref. 129170

I want to take this time to inform you that Douglas College’s Sign Language Interpretation diploma program will be transitioning to Vancouver Community College beginning in the Fall 2023 semester. As you have reached out to my office to share your concerns about the initial news of the program potentially closing, I wanted to update you with the most recent information regarding the status of this program and the work done to date to ensure a transition for the students of this program that is as seamless as possible.

This solution was developed through collaborative discussions between Vancouver Community College, Douglas College and my Ministry, and will ensure this vital program continues and students are able to begin their sign language interpreter training.

As mentioned in [today’s information bulletin](#), the co-location of both the certificate and diploma programs at Vancouver Community College will provide immediate benefit for students through improved supports, curriculum coordination and alignment of learning objectives across the certificate and diploma programs.

Additionally, this transition provides an opportunity for Vancouver Community College to work with BC’s Deaf and hard of hearing community to explore new methods of program delivery and streamlined entry pathways to increase interest and enrollment in the program. Any proposed program changes would be discussed with the community and be made to increase enrolment, support students and ultimately help graduate more of the well-prepared sign language interpreters the province needs.

As part of the transition, and in response to feedback from community, Douglas College’s Interpretation program will continue for another academic year, ensuring current students can complete their training and graduate, while the program will also be available at Vancouver Community College for new students this September.

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The success of this program and the communities and people that rely on it is very important to me and the Ministry. In my conversations with stakeholders, I have assured them that I will work with members of the Deaf and hard of hearing community to explore ways to strengthen this programming. I share that commitment with you as well and hope you can be a partner in the future as we make advances in continuing to build a robust, relevant and responsive program that will further remove barriers to and strengthen our province's inclusivity.

Sincerely,



Honourable Selina Robinson  
Minister



## 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
Colleen Peterson .....	Board President   <a href="mailto:colleen@fndc.ca">colleen@fndc.ca</a>
Nicki Horton .....	Director
Charlie Coyle .....	Director
Joy Santos .....	Director
Gwen Wong.....	Director
Laura Batista.....	Director
Leigh Chan.....	Director
Dan Braun .....	Director
Pauline Anderson .....	Director
Yasu Shigemitsu.....	Director

**The Board of Directors are parents of deaf children.**

## FNDC Staff

Cecelia Klassen.....	Executive Director   <a href="mailto:cecelia@fndc.ca">cecelia@fndc.ca</a>
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## DYT Staff

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Scott Jeffery .....	DYT Mentor, Advisor   <a href="mailto:scott@fndc.ca">scott@fndc.ca</a>
Hilary Potter.....	Youth Development Coordinator   <a href="mailto:hilary@fndc.ca">hilary@fndc.ca</a>

## 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](http://www.fncd.ca) (website) [fndc@fndc.ca](mailto:fndc@fndc.ca) (e-mail)