

Monday, Sept. 21 - "What is IWD? Why is it important?"

[Jodi appears]

Hello everyone, who are watching from around the world! Thank you for tuning in and joining the bandwagon to learn more about the International Week of the Deaf (IWD). My name is Jodi Birley, I'm the Manager of Translation Services and Community Engagement at Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility based in Vancouver, BC, Canada! American Sign Language has been my mother language since birth. Everyone in my family and community speak ASL so I've been exposed to the authenticity and richness of its language, culture and history with great pride to this day. I've been very fortunate to be able to travel and witness the beauty of many sign languages in all different nations that I've visited. Now, I'd like to introduce you to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), which has been around since the 1950s. WFD is the reason we have this week to celebrate globally. Let's watch a video they've created for all of us, which sums up what International Week of the Deaf is about.

[play WFD video]

The International Week of the Deaf (IWD) is an initiative of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and was first launched in 1958 in Rome, Italy. It is celebrated annually by the global Deaf Community during the last full week of September to commemorate the same month the first World Congress of the WFD was held in 1951. The International Week of the Deaf is celebrated through various activities by Deaf Communities all around the world. These activities and events welcome the participation of all members of deaf communities, which include families of deaf people, professional and accredited sign language interpreters, peers, as well as the involvement of various stakeholders such as national governments, national and international human rights organizations, and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

The theme of the 2020 International Week of the Deaf will be "Reaffirming Deaf People's Human Rights" This year, we want all stakeholders to unite in endorsement of the need to secure and promote the human rights of deaf people! Affirm your support for full human rights for all deaf people by signing the WFD Charter on Sign Language Rights for All!

[Back to Jodi]

That's right! Sign languages are for everyone! But why is it important to acknowledge and celebrate sign languages, you might ask.

I could go into many reasons but the bottom line is it starts with language deprivation.

Sign languages around the world have existed for centuries until the second International Conference on Education of the Deaf in 1880, in Milan, Italy, where they passed a resolution that banned the use of sign languages in the education of deaf children. This motion had widespread and long-lasting repercussions for the language and linguistic rights of deaf communities worldwide. By taking away the most fundamental human right to speak through sign language, many deaf children suffered language deprivation along with years-long mental, physical and emotional abuse. For example, oral communication was (and still is today) forced upon deaf children in schools, prohibiting them from using their hands to communicate and penalizing them for not listening or speaking properly. Such practices have, unfortunately, led our society to become less exposed to sign language, causing more misconception, degradation and systematic oppression upon the linguistic minority. However, thankfully, sign language was preserved and protected in secret for some time and thrived again because Deaf people fought for their right to sign. Recognizing this as an injustice affecting deaf people throughout the globe, the WFD, in collaboration with the United Nations (UN), was established in Rome, Italy on September 23, 1951. To this day, the WFD remains actively involved with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) through the implementation, monitoring, and promoting of its ratification by Member States.

Aligned with the goals of the IWD, the Wavefront ASL team worked hard in creating our own daily themes that we wish to share, educate, and inspire communities, locally and across the country. It is with appreciation for the help of many people that we're able to produce a whole week's worth of short videos of interesting information and stories.

We're starting today with a very special guest of honour: the World Federation of the Deaf President, himself! Please welcome Dr. Joseph J. Murray from the United States of America to our humbled side of the country!

[over to WFD - Dr. Joseph Murray]

The theme for the International Day of Sign Languages this year is "Sign Language is for Everyone!" This theme has something special happening this year: global leader challenge. We are challenging leaders around the world to take this theme and use it in your own sign language in your country. Let your challenge prompt another leader to challenge one other, and another, bringing us to many more leaders around the nation. I wish to begin a challenge in Canada starting with this one person: Frank Folino, President of Canadian Association of the Deaf. I challenge you to say "Sign Language is for Everyone!" in your country's sign language! *high five*

[Frank Folino, CAD-ASC President, Ottawa, ON]

Who? Me? Thank you Dr. Joseph Murray, WFD President for the challenge. I am very honoured and accept your challenge. My name is Frank Folino. I am the CAD-ASC President from Ontario, Canada.

- Board Member of World Federation of the Deaf
- Member at Large, Executive Committee, of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities
- Steering Committee Member of the Civil Society Coordination Mechanism for the Conference of States Parties to the UN CRPD
- Passion for better quality of life for all sign language communities in Canada
- www.cad.ca

Thank you. I nominate Shawna Joynt as the next person to challenge. Shawna is the CAD-ASC National Indigenous Director. I look forward to her challenge and her telling us that Sign Language is a human right. *high five*

[Shawna Joynt, CAD-ASC National Indigenous Director, Warren, MB]

Who me? Thank you for the challenge, I accept. My name is Shawna Joynt, I am the Indigenous director for CAD-ASC. I live in Warren, Manitoba.

- Director of Canadian Deaf Sports Association
- Vice President of Manitoba Deaf Sports Association
- Passion for the rights of Indigenous Deaf people and their sign languages
- www.cad.ca

I pick Gary Malkowski because he is known for his advocacy as well as the first Deaf Politician in the Ontario MPP. Now he is a Sign Language Institute Canada Director and he just published and released his book about his life. Now I challenge Gary Malkowski. *high five*

[Gary Malkowski, Sign Language Institute Canada Director, Toronto, ON]

Thank you for challenging me. I gladly accept. My name is Gary Malkowski. My role is Director of Sign Language Institute of Canada, which is to advance sign language across Canada.

- Ambassador, Spokesperson & Consultant
- Published "Deaf Politician - The Gary Malkowski Story" by Richard Medugno
- Former Ontario Member of Provincial Parliament
- World's First Deaf Born & Sign Language Legislator
- Deaf Professional, Community Development & Advocacy Education for over 30 years
- www.garymalkowski.ca
- www.slicanada.ca

I would like to introduce you to Vincent Chauvet, who is the president of the Canadian Culture Society of the Deaf. He is an expert in teaching and training sign language. I challenge you, Vincent! *high five*

[Vincent Chauvet, Canadian Culture Society of the Deaf President, Vancouver, BC]
I am happy to accept Gary's proposed challenge. Thank you Gary. My name is Vincent Chauvet. I am the President of Canadian Culture Society of the Deaf and have been for the past 10 years.

- Board President of the Deaf Children's Society of BC
- 35+ years of teaching ASL & Deaf Studies
- Passion in ASL, Deaf Arts / Culture and supporting Deaf Youth in language development, arts & leadership
- www.slicanada.ca

Now, I would like to call on Joanne Cripps. I challenge her to come forward and tell us about her work as the Executive Director of the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, a division of the Canadian Culture Society of the Deaf and it's something I am proud of. Especially Joanne's help in getting CCSD more recognized. I challenge Joanne Cripps. *high five*

[Joanne Cripps, DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, Executive Director, Toronto, ON]
Thank you Vincent Chauvet for challenging me. My name is Joanne Cripps. I work as the Executive Director at the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE in Toronto, which I also established.

- Producer of "The Black Drum", a signed musical performance at Soulpepper Theatre Company
- Authored "Quiet Journey: Understanding the Rights of Deaf Children"
- Passion in advocacy work, celebrating and strengthening Deaf life across Canada and around the world through Deaf arts & heritage
- www.deafculturecentre.ca

Now I challenge Kamil Burnat, who is the Deaf Youth Canada (DYC) President. I am happy to see DYC continuing to operate. *high five*

[Kamil Burnat, Deaf Youth Canada President, Edmonton, AB]
Me? Thank you for challenging me! Challenge accepted. I am Kamil Burnat. I am involved in the Deaf community by working for Deaf Youth Canada (DYC) as the president.

- President of the Edmonton Association of the Deaf
- Passion in reconnecting Deaf youth with the Deaf community and sign language accessibility
- <https://dycjsc.wixsite.com/home>

Now I want to challenge Joe McLaughlin, who is one of the founders of DYC and CDYLC back in the 1970's. Now I challenge you- are you ready?

[Dr. Joe McLaughlin, Canadian Deaf Youth Leadership Camp Founder, Surrey, BC]
What? Oh, me oh I thank you Kamil for challenging me. I accept and I want to thank Kamil for taking over the organization.

My name is Dr. Joe McLaughlin. What I do... I'm half semi retired and half working. I work as a consultant, an instructor at the University, researcher, and trainer.

- Adjunct Professor at the University of BC
- Board of Director, Canadian Hearing Services
- Board of Director, Accessibility Standards Canada
- Former Dean of Deaf Studies & Special Services at the Ohlone College in Fremont, CA
- Passion in advocacy work

Now I challenge Leanne Gallant, she is the chairperson of the Canadian Deaf Women's conference that will happen in 2022 which will empower deaf women and give them opportunities.

[Leanne Gallant, Deaf Women Conference Chair 2022, Riverview, NB]

Me? A challenge? I'm honoured! Of course I accept! My name is Leanne Gallant. I'm from New Brunswick. I am the co-chairperson of the Canadian Deaf Women Conference 2022 which will be in Halifax/Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

- Community Outreach Worker at NB Deaf & HARD of Hearing Services
- Established Deaf & Hard of Hearing Youth Association of the Maritimes
- Passion in supporting and advocating for Deaf Youth to reach their full potential in life

I've decided to choose Rick Zimmer. When I first went to the Canadian Deaf Youth Leadership Camp (the very first one!) in 2005, I was very shy, I had low self-esteem, and no confidence. When I met Rick Zimmer, I felt motivated! He had such a positive attitude, I was inspired and he gave me the energy to come back to my home and establish this association for youth, I'm so very thankful to Rick.

[Rick Zimmer, Canadian Museum of Human Rights, Inclusive Design Advisory Committee, Winnipeg, MB]

You challenge me? Well of course, I accept! What an honor! I am Rick Zimmer, I am from Winnipeg Manitoba. I am the coordinator and a teacher of Deaf studies, history, culture and ASL at a local college.

- Program Coordinator and instructor of Deaf Studies & ASL-English Interpretation programs at Red River College
- Accessibility Committee Member of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights
- Passion in advocating for the rights of Deaf Canadians, the importance of education, ASL & accessibility

Now, I challenge Alain Turpin. Alain is the Executive Director of the Canadian Deaf Sports Association in Montreal, Quebec. I picked Alain because the CDSA has changed so much and expanded. The CDSA has established programs improving training, promotion, sharing of information, and recruitment opportunities to involve youth in planned events across Canada. Wow! Thank you for everything you do, Alain

Turpin!

[Alain Turpin, Canadian Deaf Sports Association, Executive Director, Montreal, QC]
Me! What! Sure, I accept the challenge. Thank you. My name is Alain Turpin. I'm from Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Deaf rights are very important to and valued by me.

- Board Director for Défi sportif AlterGo
- Former Executive Director of the Service d'interprétation visuelle et tactile (SIVET)
- Secured the SRV Canada VRS contract to offer the Video Relay Service in LSQ / French with SIVET
- Passion in defending and advocating for accessibility to sports, communication & interpreting services
- www.assc-cdsa.com

I challenge Pamela Witcher. Pamela is a strong and smart woman who is Deaf, from a Deaf family, and is an artist. Since the first time I met Pamela 25 years ago, I have been fascinated and impressed with her life journey. Pamela currently works for Canada VRS and works as an artist. Wow! I challenge you, Pamela.

[Pamela Witcher, Canada VRS Community Relations Manager, Gatineau, QC]
My name is Pamela Witcher. I live in Gatineau, Quebec but am originally from Montreal. My family roots come from the east-end, Newfoundland and my journey brings me to Gatineau, Quebec and that's where I am today. I work as a Community Relations Manager with Canada VRS.

- Manage within Canada VRS' Deaf-centric ecosystem
- Artwork and signed musical performances have been featured in festivals & events across North America & Europe
- Passion in passing down, supporting, and empowering the Deaf Existence, Deaf Culture & Sign Languages
- www.srvcanadavrs.ca

Looking through the history, and now to Lewis who was recently chosen as an ambassador by the Canada Deaf Arts Advisory Council to work with Deaf Youth artists with the Northerners and Canadians. This exciting project is at its beginning stage and I am looking forward to its development! So, now, let us give Lewis the high-five!

[Lewis Hartland, Northern Lights Deaf Association, President, Whitehorse, YK]
Oh, me! My name is Lewis Hartland. I am from Whitehorse, Yukon. I have been involved in advocacy work for almost 30 years in the Yukon.

- Founder / Director of Yukon Video Relay Service
- Board Director on Canada Deaf Arts Advisory Council
- Disability Rights Monitor & Director of Yukon
- Disabilities Rights Executive Committee

- Former President / Owner of Visual Language Interpreter Services of Yukon
- Passion in ensuring services, including at government levels, are accessible for the Deaf

Now, I am working on writing a book. Thank you. I challenge you, Jodi. Goodbye!

[back to Jodi]

Wow! Wasn't that fun, going from one leader to another and learning about these people who made a difference in our country! However, as we all know, they're not the only people who have so much passion to advocate and shape our society. There are many more leaders around us who lead with their own styles, some are obvious and some aren't, some contributed their part briefly and some contributed for years, some seem to have made a big difference and some seem small, but they all count! You know, being a leader can be intimidating and exhausting and you may wonder how they stay focused and committed to their passion. Stay tuned tomorrow as we learn more from other leaders on how and where they find the drive to keep advocating for our sign language. Thank you for watching with us today and see you tomorrow!

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[end of video]