

**Tuesday, Sept. 22** - “What fuels your passion?”

[Slide: Wavefront logo + IWD logo]

[Jodi appears]

*Hello! Welcome back to day two of International Week of the Deaf (IWD) at Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility in Vancouver, BC, Canada. I’m Jodi Birley, Manager of Translation Services and Community Engagement. Yesterday, we had the opportunity to learn about how IWD was established and the importance of celebrating sign languages around the world. We also had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Joseph Murray, the President of the World Federation of the Deaf, and other Deaf leaders in a nationwide challenge. We saw a chain of Deaf, DeafBlind and IBPOC people who did incredible things in their own ways, small and big. I’ve personally been honoured with a lifetime experience of watching and learning from pioneers who have advocated for communication accessibility in sign language for as long as I can remember.*

*For example, the Deaf community joined the movement in bringing closed captioning to TVs, telecommunication relay services to our TDD/TTY (now Canada Video Relay Services to our mobile and computer devices), sign language interpreting services to our medical, legal and education systems, just to name a few. Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility, also known as Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, advocated for these changes, as well, for 64 years. Most recently, the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) advocated to amend the recognition of American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes du Québec (LSQ), and Indigenous Sign Language (ISL) as primary languages spoken by many Deaf people into Bill C-81, the Accessible Canada Act. Advocating for our sign language rights in this 153-year-old country that still has so much to learn is exhausting and discouraging at times but many of our leaders are still at it. What is it that keeps them going? What fuels their passion? Let’s listen to several leaders who wish to share their stories and words of wisdom with you to reach deeper within yourselves to ignite that ‘fire’.*

[play the “fuelling passions” video]

Shawna Joynt, Warren, MB

Natasha Bacchus, Toronto, ON

Dawn Jani Birley, Regina, SK

Frank Folino, Ottawa, ON

Anita Harding, Vancouver, BC

Gary Malkowski, Toronto, ON

Leonor Vlug, New Westminster, BC  
Kamil Burnat, Edmonton, AB  
Pamela Witcher, Gatineau, QC  
Vincent Chauvet, Vancouver, BC  
Dr. Jenelle Rouse, Toronto/London, ON  
Nigel Howard, Vancouver, BC  
Leanne Gallant, Riverview, NB  
Dr. Joe McLaughlin, Surrey, BC  
Paula Wesley, Terrace, BC (Stó:lō & Tsimshian)  
Rick Zimmer, Winnipeg, MB  
Forrest Smith, White Rock, BC  
Joanne Cripps, Toronto, ON  
John Warren, Port Coquitlam, BC  
Alain Turpin, Montréal, QC

[Vincent Chauvet]

The reason why I'm still involved in what I do is because of my love for the Deaf community. I want Deaf people to have a good life, a satisfying job, and have access to services etc. It is fair because we're simply all human beings who have rights.

[Frank Folino]

What made me do my work is because of my work with the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Why? The human rights treaty has an impact on the establishment of national laws on all levels in the Canadian government.

[Gary Malkowski]

It is important that we stay connected and educate politicians, people who put policies in place how important sign language rights are for all children, youth, adults, and elders. Sign Language is precious.

[Leonor Vlug]

I remember a lot of things we did achieve. For example, we lobbied for a better education in Deaf schools, we also advocated for medical interpreting, fought to get closed captioning on TV, and now recently with the government news about the COVID pandemic we pushed for sign language interpretation on top of closed captioning. We achieved all of those things by working together.

[Rick Zimmer]

With this, I have noticed that high levels of the government are still not being reached. What happened then was they built the Canadian museum for Human Rights. When they were in the planning stages they needed a committee to ensure that the building was accessible. I volunteered immediately for this. After a long application process I was selected to be on the committee. I advocated strongly for ASL to be incorporated around the building and the importance for that accessibility. We were asked to send one representative to present in front of 600 people about our committee. The impact of that would be incredible. I was chosen to present and it was an incredible feeling.

[Kamil Burnat]

The thing I value the most is ASL. Sign Language is important. Without the Deaf community there would be no ASL. No one else would be able to pass along ASL to the future generations.

[John Warren]

When I was offered a job in Saskatchewan and I took it. As soon as I moved there, I was in complete shock with the quality of community, education, social communication, and politics. Looks like what? Let me show you what it looks like (hand in cage). The person holding the cage represents the people who are against sign language. The Deaf community was collapsing and I was dismayed.

[Dawn Jani Birley]

I want to show that Deaf "can". I grew up always having to repeatedly prove people wrong. Many hearing people, when they look at us Deaf people, they look at us as incapable. They would rub the word "you can't" or "impossible" in my face as I grew up. I took in the word "can't" and transformed it into "can" all the time.

[Nigel Howard]

For a long time even to now, the society in general views Deaf children as something that needs to be fixed and will heavily criticize Deaf children's English literacy and skills, along with downgrading learning in the education system. That puts a lot of pressure and stress on the children's growth, making them feel like something is wrong with them. They become passive and unprepared.

[Paula Wesley]

I have struggled with racism, injustice, stereotypes, and abuse.

[Leanne Gallant]

I myself grew up as a Deaf student isolated in a mainstream setting, apart from the other Deaf students around. I didn't have knowledge or understanding of Deaf culture, and Deaf history, amongst other things. I felt lost...

[Alain Turpin]

I was oral growing up and the teachings in my mainstream school, my friends, and my life were all hearing focused. Not until the age of 21 was the first time I met with the Deaf community. I was shocked, scared, and wow, I was interested in the Deaf culture and sign. I love learning and became involved with the Deaf community.

[Anita Harding]

So if we don't have sign language, we become disconnected from the world and we become lost with who we are. It is not possible to get through life without sign language. That's not right. We should be able to explore sign language and culture that help the person find their identity and have that realization of connecting with the world through communication with daily people, family, work, school, and socialization. Sign Language is a language right we should value.

[Dawn Jani Birley]

I have a strong Deaf identity as in "culturally and linguistically" Deaf along with Canadian-American Sign Language as my native tongue. Due to my background coming from a third generation Deaf family, the identity was already an integral part of me growing up even before I was born. What is more, my family believed in me.

[Pamela Witcher]

Without them, I will not be here. I will be a different person. Who I am today comes from the very core of their existence, and that is very endearing.

[Dr. Jenelle Rouse]

My answer to the question of what fueled me to achieve my lifelong goal of completing the PhD is curiosity. I have always wanted to know information (facts) and explore by re--- reading book extensively, reaching and conversing with people. All—with a purpose of learning. A lot of learning.

Did you know that I am the first Black Deaf (Canadian) female finishing the doctorate this year 2020? Wow. Even years before that—in 2008, I was the first Black Deaf female teacher across Canada! Being the first—twice...oh my....

[Paula Wesley]

When I decided to enrol at Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Art, I studied carving and drawing etc. That's when it hit me in my core which started to ignite the small flame. It felt good!

[John Warren]

Then I decided to make a vlog and many more. When each person comes up to me, it gives me the fuel because it shows that my vlogs were effective, especially when a parent comes with their child. It inspired me.

[Pamela Witcher]

There are so many hidden gems and pearls new to me, those who I am learning about. My goal is to flourish Canadian people, to elevate the value of those precious people.

[Forrest Smith]

Be proactive by thinking creatively, meeting people, and making connections. For example, I am involved in the local Deaf association. I founded the Kickball tournament which fundraises money for Deaf children. I established an information sharing website in BC. I have been involved with the BC government disability COVID group. I am also involved in the BC accessibility legislation and the list goes on. None of it is about money, it is all about volunteering. I enjoy doing it.

[Natasha Bacchus]

My passion about sign language is Black sign language, in particular. Canada stole our Black sign language but I am fuelled to do more by picking up research and getting the IBPOC people together to find out more about Black sign language and how to preserve it.

[Shawna Joynt]

To engage with our Indigenous peoples across Canada, because together we can change the future.

[Leonor Vlug]

I see the need for young people to connect with the elders. We elders have the experience that we can share and we should share.

[Leanne Gallant]

Of the same isolation that I went through, I didn't want that to happen to them, and that was why I established this organization. I felt inspired. They can now make connections with Deaf culture, Deaf history and continue to pass our traditions along to future

generations.

[Nigel Howard]

So the public needs to be open minded and it is ok to see a Deaf child be Deaf.

[Dr. Jenelle Rouse]

I am Deaf, so what. I am Black, nothing wrong. Being different, that's ok.

[Joanne Cripps]

Something we have for ideas, love, dreams, or different plans, don't be afraid to do it!

[Dr. Joe McLaughlin]

it is very important to have what I call the three T: Time, Talent and Treasure. Your time is very important. You should have enough energy to focus on one or two organizations...don't focus on too many different organizations or you can become overwhelmed. It's important to focus on one or two at a time. Use your talents, you have talents in different areas and in different ways, your beliefs and your skills can contribute to organizations through volunteering. Another person's skill may be different, it's important to have people's different skills combine so that your organization will become strong. Your treasure, you can make a wonderful contribution, your time and contribution will help your deaf organization to grow strong.

[Paula Wesley]

That small fire grew and became stronger and bigger. TMy culture, community, family, and art are what fuels my fire and now I'm hungry for more.

[Dr. Jenelle Rouse]

I love to find answers to the "why" and "how" questions in regards to ways people interact with each other, appearances of societal and educational systems and how they work. It is my deliberate attempt to "transform" such issues with solutions through action.

[Natasha Bacchus]

Continue to explore and find your group of Deaf people who are Indigenous, Black, and Persons of Colour to grow together, learn, and develop their own sign language. Don't let anyone take it away.

[Anita Harding]

Don't let the Deaf community be lesser than the general society. Bring them up on par with accessibility. We are all humans fighting for change and justice. That means pushback with education, integration, and participation in academics, at work, and in daily life.

[Nigel Howard]

The society needs to see and realize that we are not about disability. We are a cultural and linguistic minority.

[Leanne Gallant]

I became aware of more and more Deaf people in the community. I started to develop my Deaf identity. I felt inspired, my self-esteem began growing!

[Leonor Vlug]

The young people have the skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm if we can draw those skills, their interests, and those who want to do more with their life. We need to make that connection.

[Alain Turpin]

I think sports, interpreting, Deaf culture, Deaf community. It doesn't matter which, the most important thing is valuing and to welcome a variety of those who are Deaf oral, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf with Cochlear Implant.

[Rick Zimmer]

I see Winnipeg now, as compared to 30 years ago, where I see people using ASL and being aware of Deaf culture and ASL. This just inspires me further to keep teaching, keep educating, and keep pushing for awareness so that more people are reached.

[Paula Wesley]

Let me tell you we need to remove racism, stereotypes, and addictions . If you have a mental illness that cannot be eliminated, it can still be managed. If I can do it, you can do it too!

[Forrest Smith]

Be strong. Just keep going. Grow thick skin and keep driving. Be positive and fair with each other.

[Dawn Jani Birley]

It can get really difficult with a lot of oppression. Despite all of that, I strived to become a professional Deaf actor. It is my dream to connect both the Deaf and the hearing together by building bridges of collaboration through sign language. I want to show how our language and culture can be shared for the hearing people would definitely benefit from us.

[Anita Harding]

Support each other for that safe space to socialize in sign language because it gives us happiness and peace.

[Pamela Witcher]

We need each other to survive, for our communities and sign languages to continue running on our engine – moving forward.

[Leonor Vlug]

Our Deaf Community will be rich and keep on going because we need each other at all ages from seniors to young children and babies for their future. Who will pass it along after I'm gone in maybe 10 years. We need to keep encouraging them.

[Nigel Howard]

It is important for Deaf children to be able to look up to the Deaf role models who can share and instill their culture and identity in children for them to dream big. Make their small world bigger and make them believe they can achieve regardless of their deafness. They need to become proud and confident being Deaf getting through life and achieving their dreams.

[John Warren]

In the end, it is not about making ourselves happy but about others.

[Frank Folino]

Show Canada that sign language is a human right. All the five sections in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are important for your rights in society, culture, and politics. That's why I am actively involved.

[Anita Harding]

Continue to bring sign language to justice which can happen someday because sign language will give us the power to do that.

[Dr. Janelle Rouse]

Be positive—all the way. Try your best. Stay positive and keep on chasing your goals (dreams). You will achieve (small or big).



[Jodi appears]

*Do you feel inspired and motivated yet? I sure do! I hope the positive and uplifting messages will encourage you to push forward with your goals and dreams even when things do not go as planned, especially at the beginning. Just remember that there is always a light at the end of every tunnel! Take advantage of the power of the media to spread awareness and education about sign language preservation and exposure, seeking support from each other, and advocating for accessibility and sign language rights.*

*Stay tuned tomorrow as we discuss the importance of celebrating International Day of Sign Languages and explore the impacts of sharing our passions and advocacy work through the power of media. Thank you for watching with us today and see you tomorrow!*

[Slide: Wavefront logo / [www.wavefrontcentre.ca](http://www.wavefrontcentre.ca)]

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