

Wednesday, Sept. 23 - International DAY of Sign Languages / “The Power of Media”

[Slide: IWD logo + Wavefront logo]

[Jodi appears]

Hello! Welcome back to day three of International Week of the Deaf (IWD) in Vancouver, BC, Canada. I'm Jodi Birley, Manager of Translation Services and Community Engagement.

Yesterday, hopefully you were inspired by messages from Deaf, DeafBlind and IBPOC leaders across Canada on what keeps them going through the ups and downs of advocacy work. With technology continuing to expand and improve at a rapid pace, why not take advantage of the media to benefit us to support our leaders and each other, along with bringing education and awareness to others, as we navigate through the challenges of advocacy in this world and on International Day of Sign Languages like today.

How do we preserve, protect and present sign languages in more creative and contemporary formats to a wider audience of all ages using technology and media at our fingertips? It may not be as difficult as you might think if you put in hard work with a positive attitude. I am proud and excited to introduce someone who is a great example of perseverance and is a tireless leader overcoming many barriers on her way to a successful acting career. I've watched her and followed in her footsteps my entire life. I would not be the person I am today if it was not for her inspiration and influence. As an internationally renowned, award-winning Deaf Canadian actor and advocate, she also happens to be my sister. Please meet Dawn Jani Birley in her video presentation dedicated to Wavefront Centre's IWD program and learn more about the Power of Media.

[over to Dawn Jani Birley]

[H3 Media plays]

Hello everyone, I'm Dawn Jani Birley, a Deaf actor with more than 15 years of professional experience in arts, theatre and media. I'm here to discuss the power of media and why it is important for the Deaf community.

[WhyNot - Prince Hamlet promo plays]

[Slide: “What is Media and its Purpose?”]

What is media? Why do we have it? What can it do? Why is it important? According to Wikipedia, media is “plural form of medium”, which means “ways of doing something” that is collective and communicative. The goal of mass communication is to deliver information or data that is intended to reach a large audience. In our world today, the medium of mass communication is TV, radio, newspapers and the

Internet. Other forms of mass media can be motion pictures, theatre shows, video games, audio recordings, blogs, podcasts, mobiles, printed media, outdoor media (billboards, signs, blimps, skywriting, etc).

[WhyNot - Prince Hamlet promo plays]

[Slide: "The Influence of Mass Media Leading to the Internet"]

There are many different reasons for mass media but the primary purpose falls to advocacy, entertainment and public service. Advocacy is for business or social concerns (advertising, marketing, propaganda, public relations, political communications, etc) Entertainment is acting, music, sports, TV shows, video and computer games. Public service are announcements and emergency alerts. Why is media so powerful? It has the ability to push or force necessary change(s). Each individual has power, however, when individuals come together, it becomes "collective power" and it can push for a social change, for instance, Black Lives Matter. On the other hand, Malcolm X said that media controls the minds of the masses so it has the power to make the innocent guilty and the guilty innocent. Knowing that there are good and bad media, we have to be careful and responsible in what we read and who to believe.

[WhyNot - Prince Hamlet promo plays]

[Slide: "Power of Media: Then & Now"]

Mass media has been going on for the past 500 years. It started with books then newspapers, magazines, photography, sound recordings, films, radio, television, Internet and now social media. The influence of mass media has grown exponentially with the advance of technology. The Internet is the powerhouse of the 21st century and nowadays we depend on information and communication to keep the world running. Work, education, health care, leisure activities, entertainment, travelling, personal relationships and other stuff, basically nearly everything is on the Internet. Ask yourself, how do you live your lives everyday? What do you do the first thing you wake up?

[WhyNot - Prince Hamlet promo plays]

[Slide: "The Daily Influence (Among Ourselves & the Public)"]

The daily influence of the media is in our daily lives. We use our phones to check for messages and notifications, watch TV or movies, read the news, read emails, schedule meetings and make phone calls. Most of our decisions are based on the information that we gather from the mass media and interpersonal media sources. We really need to understand the power of media because the influence is truly unmeasurably powerful. We unconsciously trust the media for news, information, education and entertainment. It shapes our values, beliefs and decisions. Public opinion is one of them - people are influenced in how to perceive others. For instance, racism and stereotyping (Black people and Indigenous people) in our country as well as other countries.

[Riksteatern Tyst Teater promo plays]
[Slide: "Positive Vs. Negative"]

Media brings better understanding of other cultures as well as social understanding for everything (from human suffering in lower classes to higher classes). There are cyberbullying and people sharing their personal and horror stories online. Let me ask you a question. How are we Deaf people being portrayed in the media? We see both positive and negative images of deafness and sign languages. In general, the perceptiveness is always weighed so if we can harness the power of the media for the greater goodness for the community, it can bring tremendous results.

[Riksteatern Tyst Teater promo plays]
[Slide: "Our Advantage (for the Deaf Community)"]

I personally believe that social media might be the best thing that ever happened to us, Deaf people. The power is within us to push for changes that we have been fighting for a long time, ever since sign language was prohibited by the Milan Conference in 1880. We see more vlogs, the global Deaf communities are brought closer together, use of International Sign has exploded in the past 10 years, our accessibility to information has improved, more materials in sign language, Deaf-owned businesses have boomed, communication within the hearing world (video-relaying, emailing, Siri, texting, etc) has become easier, and there are so much more.

[Riksteatern Tyst Teater promo plays]
[Slide: "Harnessing the Power of Media to Make an Impact"]

If we know how to grab advantage of the power media offers, we are able to do incredible things. Keep in mind that using the power can have consequences so it is really important to be aware of what you want to present. Through my professionalism, I learned that mass media is more powerful if I am able to offer true facts through research data such as statistics, percentages and history information. Deliver these with clarity and precision in making more impact.

[Riksteatern Tyst Teater promo plays]
[Slide: "Reaffirming the Deaf People's Human Rights"]

All of us know that Deaf people come from one of the most historically oppressed minorities in history. So, as a Deaf person coming from a third generation Deaf family, I know what it is like and how we have to work twice or thrice as hard but it is within my power to take the power back by using the media, resources and laws to fight for Deaf people's rights. You can too... On a final note, for me, I am showing the hearing world that being Deaf is a gift and that I am entitled to my rights as a human like any other. Thank you and I wish you the best of luck!

[back to Jodi]

Thanks, Dawn! That was informative and helpful! It is, undeniably, so important to choose our message and intentions carefully because the power is within us to make a difference one way or another.

Did you know that Silent Voice Canada hosted its first virtual event for the Canadian Deaf Youth Film Festival (CDYFF) in May 2020? With the pandemic, Deaf youth have reported feeling lonesome and depressed due to self-isolation and a lack of communication accessibility at home. Silent Voice Canada decided to keep these young people busy during this challenging time by showing their creativity to the Deaf community through the use of media, hence the event. As a result, we were met with amazing talents and creativity from the Deaf youth in their videos and Silent Voice Canada was so impressed that they decided to make this an annual event. However, we hope and need to see more Deaf Youth from the West Coast and Territories so Silent Voice Canada is planning a series of workshops on filming, techniques, developing storyboards and so much more in the coming months. Deaf Youth will learn and develop skills to prepare for another film festival in Summer 2021! For now in our IWD program, We have invited a CDYFF representative, Alexandra Hickox, who wishes to share a fun yet important message for you and Wanda Blackett, an expert in video editing for Silent Voice Canada, who has some great tips for you in exploring your creative self and flourishing through the art of digital media.

[over to Alexandra Hickox, CDYFF Representative]

Hi! My name is Alexandra Hickox.

I am a Canadian. However, I was raised on Toronto Island.

I am a Deaf artist. I went to Ontario College Arts and Design university (OCAD U).

My major was in Photography and minor in Film.

I studied at OCADU for four years and graduated with Bachelor of Fine Arts degree (BFA).

Then, I went to York University and majored in Film Production. Recently, I graduated with Master degree.

As an artist, I am into a various kinds of Art. I worked a several different kinds of film. Here are examples of film; Comedy, Fitness, Melmira, Cooksign, Pranks, Experiment, The 5% short film.

Be honest with you, I like a different kinds of film — even Documentary!

I enjoyed having a different kinds of experiences doing film.

Knowing that I love doing a variety kinds of film, this passion led me to built a production called,

“Undivided”

“Undivided” production helps me to work with different Deaf artists as collaboration on series and projects.

Let me show you some examples.

They can check my videos on their own times.

So Undivided’s goal is to bring in more projects and to support different Deaf artists.

Maybe someday, it can be as well as you!

All works I had done, was it easy? NO!

It's a long process — be patience and keep on going.

Keep on practicing with my skills.

You can do it too!

I encourage you to explore different kinds of film to find your passion and do what you love to do.

Go ahead and try different kinds of film. It is okay to dislike a certain kind of genre and checking out other kinds of genre. You will eventually know on which genre you do not like and do like of doing in.

The key is you to keep on trying, keep on going with it, and be patience with yourself. Keep on exploring and do not give up.

If you want to jump in and become a video creator. Make sure you keep up with the work and develop your own style (ex. colour grading, editing style). Find your own signature. Just try it out!

I encourage you to do some collaboration work with other artists and/or filmmakers. These collaborations are a great way of developing a teamwork and great experience to learn.

There is one quote I like, I will show it to you.

I know you can. Just do it!

[Slide: Silent Voice Canada logo]

[over to Wanda Blackett, CDYFF / Silent Voice Canada Representative]

Hello! I love editing movies! This is my playground! What do you see as I'm filming? There's a camera, a few lights shining on me and the background, and there's the green backdrop behind me. Sure. But, what I see is the many different possibilities!

Maybe I'm on a city street, with cars going by. Or perhaps it's a quiet, winding country road. How about on a beach! I could even be up high... here in the clouds! My playground can be anywhere!

In the movie world, I can be creative and brainstorm lots of different ideas. It's a lot of fun!

But, how did I get started as a video editor? I'm actually self taught. Using the internet, I was able to research, find articles and video tutorials and learn that way. There is so much information available online!

Plus, I learned a lot by playing. Yes! Playing was a really important part of my learning. I would experiment with different filming and editing techniques. Sometimes everything would work out, and the video turned out amazing. Other times I would struggle, and everything would go wrong. But, that's absolutely fine – because when things go wrong, I had the opportunity to really look to see why it didn't work and learn from that. I can then take what I've learned and use that to improve my next project.

I have made many mistakes, and I look at them as a good thing – because that experience is so beneficial to me. Today, I don't know everything there is to know

about filming and editing. I will always continue to learn and grow. Technology is constantly changing, and new tools are being added. I have no idea what movies will look like in the future, but I'm so excited to see the new technology coming.

What will your movies look like as Deaf film makers? I'm so excited to see your creativity and your stories - I'm really looking forward to it!

[back to Jodi]

To see the 2020 winners' film, please go to <https://silentvoice.ca/cdyff/>. Stay tuned for next year's CDYFF, follow Silent Voice Canada:

Facebook - @silentvoicecan

Instagram - @silentvoicecanada

website - www.silentvoice.ca.

So you see, there are indeed plenty of resources to keep you educated, busy and entertained! It is amazing what we can do with media, more specifically social media, to get our creativity and key messages across! We need to keep riding the wave and carrying the torch forward by utilizing the tools we have at our disposal to the full extent, including how to bridge the gaps between Deaf Youth and Deaf Elders to educate, advocate, and draw awareness to others through technology and the media. It is true that our Deaf Elders did not have access to the same technology and media as the Youth do today. The Deaf Elders worked hard to better the lives and future of all Deaf individuals through their collaborations, teachings, and mentoring without the power of media so imagine what we can do now!

Stay tuned tomorrow as we, including the Deaf Youth, honour the Deaf, DeafBlind and IBPOC pioneers (elders) for their passionate advocacy work, paving the way for us today. Thank you for watching with us today and see you tomorrow!

[Slide: Wavefront logo / www.wavefrontcentre.ca]

[end of video]