Many stigmas exist in our world surrounding education for the Deaf around the world. One woman is fighting these in the most remote of areas, Bushenyi, Uganda - showing the rest of the world both the dangers in maintaining these stigmas and solutions to overcoming them. Amazing and inspirational locals have joined in her fight and together they are educating the Deaf... once an unthinkable feat in rural Africa!

I invite you to read my article which describes not only the remarkable challenges these people face in achieving their goals, but the positive life changing impact they have had on the families and communities in Bushenyi Uganda.

Happy Readings

Deaf Children Found Living In... continued on page 4
The AVLIC News...

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Editorial Note

In keeping with the theme for this issue of the AVLIC News, Farah Ladha has definitely ‘gone global.’ Her journey, post 2011 WASLI and World Federation of the Deaf conferences in South Africa, keeps us mindful of the importance of small steps. Discover how the dream of one and the work of many make education a reality for deaf children in Bushenyi, Uganda. Grab a cup, or a glass, of your favorite beverage and enjoy this incredible journey.

The AVLIC 2012 conference, Creativity and Collaboration: Shaping Our Future, has certainly ‘gone global,’ with presenters from at least two other continents. True to form, with a little collaboration and creativity, the conference committee was able to expand the professional development opportunities for members by adding two pre-conference workshops: Interpreting Legal Interactions (Debra Russell & Risa Shaw) and Interpreting in Medical Settings (Karen Malcolm & Nigel Howard). Find the registration information in the pages of this issue.

On the global front, this issue of the AVLIC News will touch your heart and inspire your soul. On the home front, it challenges you to Shape Our Future. So create some excitement in your community and collaborate on a nomination to help form AVLIC’s 2012 - 2014 Board of Directors.

The Editorial Team

Theme for the next issue of the AVLIC News

This section of the AVLIC News is intended to provide inspiration for article submissions. Each issue features a theme, yet submissions not related to the theme are always welcome. We particularly welcome article submissions from members of the Deaf community (AVLIC membership is not a requirement for anyone considering a submission). If you have suggestions for future themes, we look forward to hearing from you.

Remember: if it is of interest to you, it is of interest to the AVLIC News!

“So How Are YOU Shaping the Future?”
Deadline for submission – July 31, 2012

From legal, medical, and educational interpreting workshops, to teaming, grammar, pragmatics and ASL discourse workshops, there is definitely something for everyone at the AVLIC 2012 Conference, Creativity and Collaboration: Shaping Our Future. These workshops are cutting edge and promise to deliver many interesting perspectives around what our field of sign language interpreting looks like now, where we need to go, and what we need to do to get there. This issue of the AVLIC News challenges you to share your insights with the nation. So, how are YOU shaping our future? Drop us a line and let the nation know.

Email submissions to avlicpublications@gmail.com
Deaf Children Found Living In...continued from page 1

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Farah Ladha and I am a Registered Sign Language Interpreter living in Vancouver BC. I recently travelled to South Africa for the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) conferences. After the conferences, I had two weeks that I could travel around. My curiosity led me to get in touch with an organization in Uganda called Silent Voices to see if I could come by and visit. The founder, Nathalie Arinda, welcomed my proposed visit and said she would make all the arrangements. In her words she would “prepare a schedule” for me, arrange my accommodation to stay with teachers of the deaf and with Nathalie herself, as well as arranging local transportation for the length of my stay. I would only be responsible for the cost - a better than reasonable deal as I received more than I bargained for.

The next two weeks would prove to be a life-changing adventure for me as I met teachers of the deaf who shared their personal experiences and challenges about their jobs. I also met some wonderful deaf children and their parents. I learned of a unique program set up to support parents who want to learn sign language. Although, my most exciting experience was meeting my hero, Nathalie, the founder of Silent Voices.

My first stop in Uganda was the small town of Kabhowe, a five and a half hour drive from the capital city of Kampala. Here I was met by a lovely young woman named Joy Kabatoro who took me back to her home.

“It is late in the evening by the time we arrived at her home so we sat down and had some tea and bread. We chatted late into the night. I learned that Joy was one of the original four female teachers to join the Special Needs Education Program and was involved in implementing the project from which Silent Voices came to exist. The Ugandan Government employs Joy as a regular teacher. There is no additional pay for teachers working with students with special needs. It was a risky gamble for Joy, a single mother of a young son, and the three other women who dedicated their time to get the program off the ground, learn basic signs and become teachers of the deaf.

However, Joy felt it was well worth the gamble because she loves what she does although she would prefer to be more fluent in sign language. Fortuitously, Joy was among five teachers selected to undergo a Sign Language Certificate course at Kyambogo University sponsored by the local governments. Unfortunately, due to the remoteness of the villages where she and the other teachers live, there is no one to teach them.

Joy also shared with me that on more than one occasion, she has had to take some of the deaf students into her home when their parents did not return to pick them up for holidays, either because they were unable to care for them, or didn't know how. Once, she was left with four additional children and on Joy’s modest income, this proved “challenging”.

The next morning we took a boda boda (motorcycle transport /taxi) up to the school in Ishekye. There I was introduced to the headmaster, John, as well as the rest of the teachers, and shown the dorms where the students are housed.
A Silent Voices parents meeting was taking place during the day of my visit to the school. These meetings take place about six times a year and provide a venue where the parents can come together to learn sign language and share personal stories. Parents eagerly look forward to these meetings. They would like to meet more frequently, however the rampant poverty of the country makes it not feasible. Parents cannot afford to take time off work, or pay the childcare and transportation costs necessary for them to be able to travel to the meetings. There is an incentive offered to parents who attend all six meetings in the year (I will explain that later).

At the parents meeting, I also met Amanda Byaruhang, a widow with three children, one of whom is deaf. Amanda is another one of the four women who volunteered in the initial stages of Silent Voices. Her main role however is not as a teacher but as a coordinator for the parents meetings. Each Silent Voices parent group is currently represented by a teacher of the deaf and a parent of a deaf child.

The teacher’s main responsibility is to teach the parents sign language and to train them on how to coordinate and implement income-generating projects for the Silent Voices programs.

An example of one such project is the parent incentive I mentioned earlier. The incentive is a "One Person, One Pig" program. Each family of a deaf child who attends all six parent meetings during the year receives one baby pig. The number of piglets can also vary depending on the number of deaf children in the household. Once the family receives their piglet, it is their responsibility to care for and feed their animal. After the piglet has grown, they can then take it to market and sell it where part of the profit goes towards the purchase of a new piglet. With the money that is left, half is given back to Silent Voices, and the other half is kept for their household. Nathalie later told me that the startup funding for the project which was used to build the pig "house" and purchase the first piglet was donated by the Lions Club Bergen Student (LCBS) in Norway. To date most families have received one piglet and now the program is able to provide families a second pig.

Another way of earning income for the organization is an auction organized by Amanda and held at the end of the meeting. All parents who attend bring a small offering from their homes, perhaps some fruits or vegetables, which are then sold to those in attendance as well as to local villagers.

Amanda is also responsible for the successful implementation of deaf children participating in community-based vocational skills training. Children who finish primary education are placed in a local enterprise to learn alongside an established entrepreneur for one year. The cost for each student is two hundred dollars per year. Silent Voices pays for the training fees as well as the materials required.

After the meeting ended Joy told me of a funeral taking place across the street for someone who passed away in the village and that we should go and pay our respects. She and I, as well as all the students, parents and teachers went. I was hesitant at first about going but Joy explained to me that anytime a person passes away and there is a service, not only does the whole village attend but people from neighbouring villages come as well. As we arrived I could see what she meant. There were hundreds of people in attendance. Joy also told me a rather interesting fact. It is at these services that people take the opportunity to make general announcements. In many Third World countries there is very little technology. News and information are spread by word of mouth. Joy, Amanda, Nathalie and other Silent
Voices members use these opportunities to ask if anyone knows of any deaf children in their villages and ask parents to allow their deaf children to attend the schools. Slowly their hard work began to pay off. Villagers started approaching them after services to inform them of deaf children they knew. In their very first “test” year they received information about 52 deaf children. I left the service feeling extremely fortunate to have been able to experience such a unique cultural tradition.

At the end of the day I bid Joy a fond farewell and promised to keep in touch. A taxi came to fetch me and Amanda to take us to Nathalie’s home where we were both to stay the night. The next day we were to travel together to a school located high atop the mountains of a village called Butare for another parent’s meeting.

The driver of the taxi was a gentleman named Kansame. He had met Nathalie a few years after she had started working as a Special Needs Education Advisor for the local government of Bushenyi. He was witness to the “birth” of Silent Voices and the parents association that followed where he jumped on board to assist. He is not only a driver for Silent Voices but also helps with translations, works closely with the families and assists wherever else he is needed.

A few hours later we arrived at Nathalie’s warm and welcoming home. Nestled in the hills of the district of Bushenyi, it is a home of modern means, with a television and a shower, but also contains the necessities for living in an area where power comes and goes frequently. Her home was also filled with the sounds and toys of several children, three girls and two boys to be exact. Yes! Nathalie, the woman who is the brains and driving force behind Silent Voices is also a wife and a mother to five beautiful children!

We all had a lovely evening together, eating a delicious meal by candlelight, and then off to bed for our early start to school number two. Nathalie assured me I would have the weekend off so we would be able to have a more in-depth chat with her about the organization and her role.

“*He said some of the parents who attend the Silent Voices meetings at this second school live at the bottom of the mountain and must walk about four hours each way to participate.*”

The next morning Amanda, Kansame and I began our long but beautiful drive up the steep and winding mountain. The lush green mountainside was breathtaking; however, the steep, one-lane roads proved to be slightly unnerving. Along the way we noticed several people walking on the side of the road. This is by no means an uncommon sight on the roads of Africa; children would stop and wave to us as well, however, Kansame told me something that struck me and will continue stay with me. He said some of the parents who attend the Silent Voices meetings at this second school live at the bottom of the mountain and must walk about four hours each way to participate.
They would leave at 8:00am to arrive at the meeting by 12:00noon and then leave at 3:00pm to arrive home about 7:00pm making this a full day’s journey. We stopped to pick up a woman about halfway up the mountain on our way to the school. Kansame told me this woman had recently given birth to twins and could only leave them with a caregiver for a limited amount of time since both children were quite ill. I was stunned, especially when I arrived at the school and met the other parents. Some were grandparents who had taken on the role of parent for their deaf grandchildren. Some mothers were pregnant and some parents had shoes that were falling apart. Yet, what struck me most was how thrilled and excited they all were to be there! I sat in on the whole meeting and joined in the laughter as parents learned new signs and played games. Another unique aspect of this particular meeting was the presence of a young man in his early twenties who was deaf himself and learning to sign!

After the teaching and games concluded, the business meeting began. Families were asked to provide a progress report on their pigs. All families reported good progress and said the pigs were getting quite big. The auction of the food was the last event. We then all went outside so I could take a group photo. I promised to send all of them copies upon my return back home.

As I climbed into the taxi for my comfortable ride down the mountain, I was struck with pangs of guilt for all the parents and grandparents who now had a gruelling four-hour journey ahead of them. I decided right then and there that I wanted to change that.

On the way back to Nathalie’s home we stopped at Amanda’s house where I sadly bid her goodbye. My evening was then spent relaxing with Nathalie and her family and watching movies on the television.

“…an initiative that is changing the lives of so many deaf children in the villages of Uganda.”

The next day as Nathalie was making a cake for her friend, I sat down and began to quiz her. I wanted to learn not only about her, but how she spearheaded an initiative that is changing the lives of so many deaf children in the villages of Uganda.

Born and raised in Holland, Nathalie achieved her BA in Biology and Special Needs Education, focusing on learning difficulties and behavioural disorders. One of her very first jobs in this field was in a prison doing a pilot study for a rehabilitation program for inmates. She said it was this job which prepared her well, unexpectedly, for the tasks and challenges she encountered in Bushenyi, Uganda. Prison life came with a lot of rules, regulations and laws which she did not fully understand, yet had to accept. It also has its own culture where one has to adjust and learn how to fit in and cope. These are the same skills Nathalie realized were very much needed in shaping the Special Needs Education Program in Uganda when dealing with government bodies and their understandable, yet unchangeable, rules, as well as the Ugandan culture itself. After some years of “prison” life, Nathalie decided to fulfill her wish to spend some time overseas and applied for a job with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). After completing workshops, and at the age of 28, Nathalie accepted the Special Needs Education Advisor position in Uganda, a decision that unbeknownst to her would change her life, as well as the lives of many others.
Upon her arrival in Uganda, she was given limited resources. Nathalie was told to find special needs children and do what she felt was needed to assist them. In order to gain an understanding of the government’s educational services, she set out on a mountain bike to look at schools within the area. She later expanded her search by switching from her bike to a boda boda.

Speaking informally to people and interviewing educational stakeholders, Nathalie slowly realized that while the government’s “Universal Primary Education” program did in fact bring children with special needs into schools, the teachers and staff had no knowledge on how to assist them - so the children would just drop out.

In one village she happened upon a goat house and noticed it was the living quarters for two young children. In asking the parents why this was, she was told the children were deaf and referred to as “no-hope children”. Right then and there she decided to do what she could to change the fate of these deaf children. What she did not know at the time was just how many deaf children there really were out there.

She went ahead and set up a school-based pilot project. In an already existing school, a unit structure was created where a teaching team would work with deaf students, blind students and children with cognitive delays. They were often without what we would consider the necessary infrastructure of a classroom. Instead, classes met in the shade of trees, in corridors and in old stores. Initially the schools were skeptical of Nathalie’s program as deaf children had been admitted to the schools in past years but were not able to keep up and had to withdraw. Nathalie insisted that if all the students in the class were deaf they would stay. As it happened, the number of deaf children in all five pilot schools grew rapidly but the number of blind students and those with cognitive delays remained low.

Nathalie also had no knowledge of sign language or Deaf culture, which proved to be additional barriers in attaining her goal. She did not let this stop her and she applied for sign language classes being offered through the Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD). There, she met the president of the association, Ambrose Murangira, who taught her the skills she needed to pass on to the volunteer teachers in the pilot unit’s.

While initially the selected schools had no qualified teachers to work with the special needs students, Nathalie provided on-the-job training to whoever showed interest in developing their skills. Joy was one of these women. A good number of pioneer volunteer teachers received sponsorships and bursaries to attain official qualifications, all of which were secured by Nathalie. Today, all schools with such units have teachers who have earned Special Needs Education diplomas from Kyambogo University.

With the pilot classroom up and running, Nathalie focused on expanding the program. She was able to gather enough students and funding for five more units in five separate schools across different villages. Today there are fourteen government primary schools with a unit for the deaf in the Bushenyi district and a government secondary school that began to accept deaf students in 2009. One of the teachers of the deaf from the primary school was relocated to the secondary school where she receives support from Nathalie once a month.

At one point Nathalie laughed as she recalled being interviewed by representatives from Deaf Child Worldwide - a UK-based international development agency dedicated to enabling deaf children to overcome poverty and isolation (www.deafchildworldwide.info/). They were surprised to learn how much work Nathalie had done with Silent Voices given her lack of previous exposure to Deaf people and sign language. They now provide the secondary school students with the textbooks they require.
During her years of finding deaf children, setting up classrooms and recruiting teachers, Nathalie also met and fell in love with Gordon Arinda, born and raised in the district of Bushenyi, Uganda, where they now reside with their five beautiful children. Because she is now a full-time mother, she is unable to visit the schools as often as she would like. But by no means has she shed her responsibilities! She continues to fight for funding. Her ultimate goal is for all the Silent Voices groups to be self-sustaining. They are not there just yet so she continues to solicit funding and support for all the units that have opened.

Almost every day Nathalie is on her computer writing up proposals and sending them out around the world. The funding she receives covers the cost of meetings and transportation. Her own income is generated by working as a music teacher part-time at her children’s school. While she is fine with that, she knows with five children, she may not be able to continue for much longer on a part-time paycheque and her husband’s salary.

As Nathalie continued to speak casually of all that has been done to date, including the recent launch of vocational training programs for older deaf children and the opening of four more unit classrooms for deaf children in other villages, I sat in awe. This woman, wife and mother of five, without any knowledge of sign language or Deaf culture had done the impossible and had given these children hope for future and above all, education. I would be able to see firsthand the true benefits of all her hard work the following week when I would stay in the village of Kigarama with a teacher of the deaf and visit a school for a week to observe the deaf classrooms. I concluded my interrogation of Nathalie with my hand cramping and my head reeling.

As the relaxing weekend with Nathalie and her family came to an end I was sad to leave but felt extremely motivated and knew Nathalie was someone special. I knew that we would remain friends for many years to come.

On Monday morning I began the last part of my journey: an hour drive to the village of Kigarama, where I was to stay with a teacher of the deaf named Winnie and her family. She was another one of the original volunteer teachers during the initial stages of Silent Voices. Living with her and her five children ended up being an amazing adventure in itself, but going to the school every day was an eye opening and intense experience.

In this classroom there were about 30 children varying in age from about five to twenty three years. The most unique aspect about this school compared to others was that they had a teacher of the deaf who was actually deaf - one of only two in the district!

“*The most unique aspect about this school compared to others was that they had a teacher of the deaf who was actually deaf - one of only two in the district! “*
Sarah, who was born deaf, lost both her parents at a very young age. She was taken in by her uncle who already had eight other children of his own as well as two wives. Sarah, not being his biological daughter or that of his two wives, was taken on as a “house girl”, a slave. She was able to go to primary school through to level seven through donor’s funding but unfortunately had to return to being a slave. She was seen as a burden so her uncle refused to spend any money on “maintaining” her. His family, while well-educated and part of the middle class knew no sign language and showed no interest in learning. Sarah was lucky to secure her current position as a deaf teacher and she receives room and board in exchange for teaching through a very small amount of funding; some basics, such as soap, are provided as well. However that funding runs out at the end of the year and she is unsure what will happen to her next year. The organization also tries to avoid giving her money as payment because her uncle has contacted Nathalie and the organization several times to make allegations that Sarah is being used and to insist HE should be paid for her services. Sarah works mainly with the younger children and it was wonderful to see her interact with them. This is one of the main reasons Nathalie feels Sarah is better off in the school environment where at least she is able to be part of a deaf community and feels that she is being useful.

“These parents, who not long ago, would cast a deaf child aside because they did not know how to communicate with them, would now be eagerly anxious to participate in the sign language classes offered - always craving more!”

One thing that stood out to me in the deaf classrooms was the interactions of the students. When not focused on school work, their hands flew as they chatted away. This was a hugely successful product of what Nathalie’s hard work had done, even though she herself was unaware of it. The students were communicating with one another fluently!

My observations regarding the education that deaf children receive in these Ugandan schools I visited lead me to believe the quality of teaching and learning is still poor. The teachers have a limited knowledge of sign language and almost no proper education themselves on how to teach deaf children. This was clearly noticeable as the students struggled through assignments and tasks given to them. However, given the lives of deaf children before going to school, this is still a huge improvement. Nathalie is aware that it is not a perfect system and ideally would love to have more deaf teachers as well as hearing teachers who are not only fluent in sign, but also have an understanding of how to educate deaf children. Unfortunately, due to limited funding and resources, this is not possible just yet but she is doing the best she can. I believe she has made a huge impact on the lives of the deaf children of Uganda.

Another significant contribution Nathalie has made is successfully involving parents in the education of their deaf children. Early on as she was setting up the units in the schools, she noticed that while the deaf children thrived in the boarding schools and communicated freely with fellow classmates, they were once again living in isolation whilst being at home during breaks. Nathalie started doing some digging and came across a project to teach parents sign language, operated through Deaf Child Worldwide. She managed to secure a one year grant to set up classes for the parents. It was a shock for her to see the attitudes of the parents change so dramatically from skepticism to enthusiasm in one year! These parents, who not long ago, would cast a deaf child aside because they did not know how to communicate with them, would now be eagerly anxious to participate in the sign language classes offered- always craving more! From their enthusiasm and Nathalie’s assistance, a board was established consisting of parents and a teacher representative (to facilitate due to the lack of education of the parents). Ideally, Nathalie would prefer to have it run only by the parents. This would then allow them to make decisions regarding the quality of education for their
"My first goal is to raise enough money to buy a mini bus to provide transportation for the parents to attend the meetings... This will also help teachers to come together, share information and participate in professional development, perhaps improving their sign language skills."

deaf children, hold elections for board positions and overall be self-sustaining. While not quite there yet, the huge difference in the mindsets of the parents is stunning in itself. They now want to be actively involved in the education process of their deaf child!

I am not a teacher. I am an interpreter and occasionally work in schools. However, this experience was still phenomenal and beneficial for me. I want to add that I did this not under the auspices of any organization, but merely out of curiosity about what goes on outside the comforts of my country. I am so glad I did this trip and I would encourage others to do the same! I met the most amazing spirited children, welcoming teachers and communities and, above all, I met Nathalie Arinda, remarkable women of whom there are not enough glowing accolades to be said about her. She is a strong-willed woman who took on a seemingly daunting task and succeeded in changing the lives and mindsets of so many.

While I can never come close to doing what Nathalie has done, I would like to do what I can to help her and her organization. My first goal is to raise enough money to buy a mini bus to provide transportation for the parents to attend the meetings. It will not only cut down on their travel time but make it possible to have meetings more frequently. This will also help teachers to come together, share information and participate in professional development, perhaps improving their sign language skills. The bus could also assist parents in coming together for board meetings on a more frequent basis thus strengthening their relationships and in turn build a stronger organization. My research has concluded that the cost of a minibus is around $10,000 (including petrol for a few months). After that it is a small amount for upkeep and petrol, which I will continue to provide. In my opinion the cost is minimal when compared to the benefits reaped. If you would like to assist me in achieving my goal, please feel free to send me an email and I will let you know the best way to do so.

Thank you again for reading this lengthy article. There is so much more I saw and learned during my travels - I could take up another few pages but I will stop here. If you have any questions please don’t hesitate to contact Nathalie or myself. If you are interested in experiencing this amazing journey yourself, both Nathalie and I would be more than happy to assist you in making arrangements. She is always willing to have people come and visit and I know that I will be heading there again someday - hopefully soon.

Thank you for your time,
Farah Ladha
farah345@live.com

Nathalie Arinda
silent.voices.bushenyi@gmail.com
BOARD OF DIRECTOR’S NOMINATION FORM
For the 2012-2014 term

Election of officers will take place July 21, 2012 at the end of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Elected Board positions include:

- President
- First Vice President
- Second Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Director of Evaluations
- Member at Large (2)

Please fill out this form and fax, mail or e-mail to AVLIC’s Administrative Manager at the address below.

Note: For nominations, biographies and platforms to be included in the AGM package, this information must be received by April 27th. However, nominations will also be accepted until 9:00am on July 21, 2012 by contacting the Board and Committee Development Committee, Jocelyn Mark Blanchet at vicepresident@avlic.ca

Candidate information (please print):

NAME

ADDRESS         CITY

PROVINCE    POSTAL CODE   PHONE

F A X         E - M A I L

The above candidate is nominated for the following AVLIC Board positions, in order of preference:

1.
2.
3.

Biography: (Please attach a separate sheet. 200 words max.)

Election Platform: (Please attach a separate sheet. 200 words max.)

Nominated by:

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

________________________________________

SIGNATURE

Seconded by:

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

_________________________________________

SIGNATURE

All elected members are expected to attend the 2012 AGM on July 21, 2012 and the post-conference board meeting on July 22, 2012

Nomination forms can be mailed to: 110-39012 Discovery Way, Squamish BC V8B 0E5

or faxed to: 604-567-8502 (fax)
COMMITTEE COORDINATOR NOMINATION FORM
For the 2012-2014 term

Election of committee coordinators will take place July 21, 2012 at the end of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The elected committee coordinator position is:

• Dispute Resolution Process Committee Coordinator

Please fill out this form and fax, mail or e-mail to AVLIC’s Administrative Manager at the address below.

Note: For nominations, biographies and platforms to be included in the AGM package, this information must have been sent in by April 27th. However, nominations will also be accepted until 9:00am on July 21, 2012 by contacting the Board and Committee Development Committee, Jocelyn Mark Blanchet at vicepresident@avlic.ca

☐ Candidate information (please print):

NAME

ADDRESS         CITY

PROVINCE    POSTAL CODE   PHONE

FAX         E-MAIL

☐ Biography: (Please attach a separate sheet. 200 words max.)

☐ Election Platform: (Please attach a separate sheet. 200 words max.)

☐ Nominated by:

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

________________________________________
SIGNATURE

☐ Seconded by:

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

________________________________________
SIGNATURE

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Greetings fellow members,

As the Board prepares to write this report to depict the activities over the last couple of months, we feel pride in the accomplishments achieved by our volunteers, appreciative of everyone’s contributions, thankful for their valuable time and grateful for the integrity in which these tasks have been completed.

We would like to begin by welcoming you to a new membership year. For many of us, this year’s online renewal did not go as smoothly as we had predicted. The Board of Directors wants to extend our apologies to all those affected. The issues related to inadequacies with the website performance. This is the first renewal since the site was re-designed and it did not function as we hoped; however, we are diligently working on these problems and will have them rectified as soon as possible. If you are experiencing difficulties please contact our administrative manager at avlic@avlic.ca.

On a brighter note, our AVLIC 2012 Conference Planning Committee is working full throttle in preparing for what promises to be a fantastic event. Please check out their website for more information on the pre-conference workshops, the conference line-up and schedule, lodging information, local events and take a look at their sponsor/donations page. Several local and national organizations, as well as individuals, have been very generous with donations to help cover the expenses of this conference. The committee has done a remarkable job in all aspects of the planning stages and the Board looks forward to seeing you all in Calgary. Please check out more information submitted by the committee in this newsletter and online at: www.avlic2012.com.

Our Member Services Committee has been working hard to bring you more benefits for your membership dues. Visit the “Resources” link under the MEMBERS ONLY section of our website for a full listing. The latest additions include Errors and Omissions insurance and General Liability with Marsh Insurance. Other noteworthy deals are health benefits with Scully Insurance and discounts with Choice Hotels and Park N’ Fly. The Member Services Committee continues to work on other deals as well so look for more upcoming announcements.

The CES will offer the newly revised WTK this June. Registration deadline was April 1st; however, if you can find five colleagues who are interested you can have an opportunity to host a special offering. The same holds true for the CES Preparation workshops: locate six interested participants and the CES Committee will host a workshop in your area.

AVLIC’s strategic plan is at the forefront of all of our activities and there are a number of goals and objectives currently being executed. Some objectives that have had little activity require the hiring of a project manager to complete. Keep a watchful eye for more information regarding a request for proposals. You may be just the person we are looking for to lead one of our strategic planning projects. A full update on these activities will be in our AGM package.

The Board of Directors needs your energy, enthusiasm and interest in driving this organization forward. The benefits of volunteering at the national level are outstanding. Please consider nominating yourself or a colleague for a position on the national Board. Please review the nomination information found in this newsletter, and/or contact any Board member or committee coordinator for more information on a specific portfolio.

We would like to close with information about the upcoming AGM package. There is a lot of information to be reported on in terms of what has been happening over the last year and some exciting motions coming from members in the package. In addition, you can find a draft copy of the Interpreting Legal Discourse & Working in Legal Settings: An AVLIC Position Paper on the website to review prior to ratification in Calgary. If you are unable to attend the special topics sessions on Friday July 20 and the AGM on Saturday July 21, please fill out your proxy and submit it with your representative or forward it along to the administrative manager. More information on how to do this will be included the AGM package.

Happy spring to everyone and see you in Calgary.