



Canadian  
Association of the Deaf



Association  
des Sourds du Canada



## News Release

For Immediate Release  
September 21, 2015

### **International Week of the Deaf – With Sign Language Rights, Our Children Can! September 21 – 27, 2015**

The Canadian Association of the Deaf/Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC), the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD), Association québécoise des interprètes en langues des signes (AQILS) and the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) are jointly pleased to endorse activities promoting the **International Week of the Deaf, September 21 – 27, 2015**; in particular, activities planned across Canada that showcase the solidarity among Deaf people and their allies and draws attention of the general public to the achievements of Deaf people and the concerns of the Deaf community.

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) [<http://wfdeaf.org>], the organization that launched the first International Day of the Deaf in 1958, has identified this year's theme: **"With Sign Language Rights, Our Children Can!"** To quote the WFD's insights into this theme [<http://wfdeaf.org/news/international-week-of-the-deaf-2015>]:

**"With Sign Language Rights, Our Children Can!"** draws upon the principle of basic human rights in relation to (sign) language acquisition at birth. It is about recognizing deaf individuals as primary visual beings belonging to a linguistic minority (deaf community) and calls for sign language to be made available to deaf persons as a birthright. Article 24 Section 3b of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) obligates governments to facilitate the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community.

**"With Sign Language Rights, Our Children Can!"** recognizes sign language as a valid linguistic means of conveying thoughts, ideas and emotions. This fact has been accepted and enacted into Article 2 of the CRPD, which defines sign languages as equal to spoken languages. As such, acquiring sign language shall not be considered as the last resort, least desirable or temporary option for deaf children and consequently they must not be denied access to sign language from birth.

**"With Sign Language Rights, Our Children Can!"** stresses that the use of sign language does not hinder the learning of a spoken language and that literacy and language does not equal speech and communication. Language development must precede everything else, speech development can occur later. Conversely, early speech development alone will not guarantee language and literacy skills. The brain, without adequate stimulation during the critical learning years, ages 0-3, may atrophy as much as 30%. In fact, hearing babies whose

parents use sign language have a head start in communicating with their parents. Due to insufficient family and community support during this critical learning period, deaf children are needlessly found to be stalled in language acquisition when commencing formal schooling.

In order to respond to the 2015 International Week of the Deaf theme, the Canadian Association of the Deaf/Association des Sourds du Canada has identified five goals:

1. In compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the federal government must introduce an Act of Parliament recognizing, promoting, and protecting our human rights to Deaf people's first languages in Canada -- American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) -- and the linguistic identity of the Deaf community to integrate with both English and French societies.
2. All provincial and territorial governments, under their constitutional responsibility for education, employment, immigration services, court administrative services, health care and social programs, must provide ASL and LSQ so that Deaf people will have equal access to such services and programs.
3. All early intervention programs must include sign language on at least an equal basis with oral methods. This includes equal funding, equal support services, and equal opportunity for deaf infants and children to be taught ASL/LSQ as their first language. Research proves this is the essential and most effective route to Deaf literacy and language skills.
4. The provincial and territorial governments must provide sufficient and sustained funding in support of sign-based Deaf education, particularly the Deaf provincial schools. Sign-based education is the key to linguistic and cultural identity that gives Deaf individuals a strong personal base from which to achieve full citizenship, education, and employment. The unacceptable alternative is high rates of unemployment, educational failures, mental health issues, and addiction problems. In other words, governments should spend money on Deaf education now, instead of spending multi-millions of dollars later on the long-term poverty, unemployment, and social and health care expenses that are the end-product of their failure to adequately support the best Deaf education possible.
5. Federal and provincial/territorial governments must provide a legal structure to recognize and promote certified, qualified, and professionally-trained ASL-English interpreters, LSQ-French interpreters, Deaf interpreters and ASL-LSQ interpreters to ensure communication access between Deaf people and government programs and services.

Events across the country will promote Deaf culture and will encourage the promotion of the rights of Deaf people in Canada, in particular Deaf children and their birthright to acquire sign language. The Canadian Association of the Deaf/Association des Sourds du Canada, the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, Association québécoise des interprètes en langues des signes and the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada collectively encourage Deaf people, their allies and members of the public to attend events in and to work in solidarity to recognize that **"With Sign Language Rights, Our Children Can!"**

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**About the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf:**

The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) represents over 450,000 Canadians and serves many more with its programs, cultural activities and Deaf heritage resources. Incorporated in 1973 as a non-profit charitable organization funded through private donations,

the CCSD preserves, encourages and advances the cultural interests of Canada's Deaf population. Key areas of concentration are performing arts, language, literature, history, visual arts and heritage resources. CCSD encourages new and developing forms of creativity, research, participation and interests in all areas. It also promotes better understanding between Deaf and hearing adults and children as well as promoting literacy for Deaf children. For more information, visit [www.deafculturecentre.ca](http://www.deafculturecentre.ca)

**About the Canadian Association of the Deaf/Association des Sourds du Canada:**

The Canadian Association of the Deaf/Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1940 that provides consultation and information on Deaf interests, conducts research and collects data regarding Deaf issues in Canada. It protects and promotes the rights, needs, and concerns of Deaf people in Canada who use our official signed languages (American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ)). For more information, visit [www.cad.ca](http://www.cad.ca)

**About AQILS:**

AQILS (Québec Sign Language Interpreters Association) is a non-profit organization of sign language interpreting professionals in Québec. AQILS was founded earlier this year (2015). It is the association that holds a majority of French-LSQ interpreters. Its mission is to promote the profession of interpretation in sign languages. For its first year, AQILS has set itself the aim of laying the structural foundations necessary for the advancement of the profession. For more information, visit our temporary page on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/aqilsq](http://www.facebook.com/aqilsq)

**About AVLIC:**

The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) is a non-profit, professional association for interpreters whose working languages include a sign language. AVLIC was incorporated in 1979 and has eight Affiliate Chapters across the Canada. AVLIC is the only certifying body for ASL-English interpreters in Canada through the means of our Canadian Evaluation System. Among a variety of services, our members adhere to the AVLIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct to maintain quality and accountability to the field of interpreting. For more information, visit [www.avlic.ca](http://www.avlic.ca)