



Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept 19, 2016

International Week of the Deaf- With Sign Language, I am Equal September 19 – 25, 2016

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 19 – 25, 2016** for these events across Canada that will strive to promote the rights of Deaf people and highlight human rights issues on Sign languages and accessibility.

The International Week of the Deaf is an initiative of the World Federation of the Deaf, and it has been celebrated since 1958. More than 130 countries around the world will organize events, marches, debates, and campaigns to highlight the concerns of the Deaf community and draws the attention of the general public to the achievements of Deaf people. This year's theme is **"With Sign Language, I am Equal."**

The World Federation of the Deaf has identified key messages to raise awareness about the Deaf Community on different levels around the world including Birth Right; Deaf Identity; Accessibility; Equal Language; Equal Employment Opportunities; Bilingual Education; Equal Participation and Life Long Learning. These key messages reflect human rights for Deaf people as documented throughout the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which mentions Sign language seven times in five different articles of the Convention.

For a full account of the key messages from the World Federation of the Deaf, please visit: <https://wfdeaf.org/news/iwd-2016-will-take-place-theme-sign-language-equal-19-25-september>

In response to this year's theme, the Canadian Association of the Deaf-Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC) has identified Five Points that will promote basic human rights towards to ensure an inclusive and accessible Canada for all Deaf people. These goals are to advocate for:

- **Recognition Of Our National Sign Languages (ASL and LSQ):** the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) ensures the right to Sign language recognition in their Article 21. The federal government must introduce federal accessibility legislation that will allow the recognition, promotion, and protection of our human rights to Deaf people's first languages in Canada-- American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes quebecoise (LSQ). The recognition of ASL and LSQ will value the linguistic identity of the Deaf community as we integrate into both English and French societies.
- **Bilingual Education:** is the key to linguistic and cultural identity that provides Deaf and hard of hearing students with the opportunities to achieve full citizenship, education and employment. The provincial and territorial governments must ensure that Deaf children have access and the freedom to use our national Sign languages at Provincial Schools for the Deaf and in regular schools. This in turn will facilitate social and cognitive development with ASL and LSQ proficiency at an early age and also will lead to high levels of English/French literacy.



- **Equal Employment Opportunities:** Provincial and territorial governments, private and public sectors, profit and not-for-profit organizations must provide equal opportunities for Deaf people to participate fully in the labour force, including training opportunities. This requires the strengthening of employment equity legislation, more educational and informational campaigns to eliminate business concerns about the cost of accommodation, and more funding for Deaf community agencies and programs to enable them to sustainably employ, train, and promote Deaf workers.
- **Accessibility:** Deaf people must have equal access to services and programs. Governments must take real action to enforce the elimination of barriers and to promote accessibility, effective participation, quality of opportunity, and strong leadership in accessibility:
 - Federal jurisdiction- the Government of Canada’s own departments, public services, crown corporations, agencies and their services; banking and financial services; inter-provincial and international transportation; official languages; aboriginal; agriculture; copyright; census taking and statistics; national defence; immigration law; foreign affairs; telecommunications and broadcasting; citizenship; criminal law; private sectors; and profit and not-for-profit organizations; and
 - Provincial and territorial jurisdictions- the Provincial and Territorial Government’s own departments, crown corporations, agencies and their services such as regional health authorities; emergency management; court administrative services; public sectors (colleges; universities; school divisions; emergency services; stores, restaurants, hotels, bars, conference centres, and etc.); employment, education; immigration services; agriculture; municipalities; prisons; natural resources; transportation; health care; social programs; private sectors; and profit and not-for-profit organizations.
- **Sign Language Interpretation:** 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 provide communication between Deaf individuals and hearing persons through public and private sectors; and profit and not-for-profit organizations; education; employment; immigration services; court administrative services; health care; and social programs.

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) collectively encourage Deaf people, their allies and members of the public to attend events and to work in solidarity through Twitter campaign platform, in particular to promote visibility in Canada and around the world with the following hashtags: #AccessibleCanada; #ASLandLSQCanada; #InternationalWeekoftheDeaf; and #WithSignLanguageIamEqual to recognize that **“With Sign Language, I am Equal!”**



Canadian
Association of the Deaf



Association
des Sourds du Canada



CANADIAN
CULTURAL
SOCIETY
OF THE DEAF



Association québécoise
des interprètes en langues des signes



Association of
Visual Language Interpreters
of Canada

About CAD-ASC

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 issues; conduct research and collects data; and community action organization of the Deaf people in Canada. We promote and protect the rights, needs, and concerns of Deaf people who uses our official signed languages (American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise (LSQ)).

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About CCSD

The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) is a non-profit charitable organization aiming to preserve, encourage and advance the arts and culture of Canada's Deaf population of all ages. CCSD opened the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE that is located at the Distillery District in Toronto. It features an art gallery, teas and gift shop.

Visitors to the Centre learn about: Deaf leaders and Deaf people's contributions to society throughout history; Deaf cultural values including the importance of signed languages and Deaf arts; A cross-cultural perspective between Deaf and hearing people.

Today, the CCSD is alive and growing and serves many more with its programming, outreach, cultural activities, and award-winning Deaf heritage resources such as www.deafplanet.com, www.aslphabet.com and Canadian Dictionary of ASL.

CCSD's position is that with ASL/LSQ acquisition as their starting point, Deaf and hard of hearing babies, toddlers and children across Canada gain incalculable opportunities to be active participants in their society. With full language acquisition, they can be truly ALIVE in every sense of the word. The mandate of the Sign Language Rights for Deaf Children (SLRDC) - Le droit à la langue des signes pour les enfants sourds (DLSES) Coalition is to advocate as a community coalition for all Deaf children to have the human right to ASL/ LSQ at home, school and in their social environment as a foundation for life.

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About AQILS

AQILS (Association québécoise des interprètes en langues des signes) is a non-profit organization of sign language interpreting professionals in Quebec. AQILS was founded in 2015 and is the only association whose members are mostly French-LSQ interpreters. In addition to defending the interests of members, AQILS's mission is to promote the profession so that it may achieve full and complete recognition. For its first year, AQILS adopted its Code of ethics, of which members are honour-bound to adhere to. The website will be accessible to the public in the Fall of 2016. For more information, visit our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/aqilsq

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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.

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