Audism
by Gary Malkowski

Photo courtesy of the Ontario College of Teachers
Dear OAD members,

Happy New Year! This issue includes coverage from a special meeting for Deaf teachers held at the Ontario College of Teachers which was led by Gary Malkowski. Another article covers Take One, a new exhibition at the Deaf Culture Centre. George Brown College hosts a new afternoon session called Deaf Ontario - Yours to Discover to educate Deaf youth about their communities. Enjoy the newsletter and the new year! Lianne Valiquette - Editor
Executive Director

Meeting the Challenges of 2009
From the desk of the Executive Director

Happy New Year! This is a time to reflect back on the previous year and look ahead to the coming months. Likewise, reflecting on the OAD’s accomplishments and challenges of over the past year helps set the direction forward. The new year will bring us a new set of opportunities and challenges; we must do everything we can to maintain and build on our drive to take advantage of these opportunities and to meet these challenges.

Our wonderful team, consisting of staff, the board, and myself are enthusiastically looking forward to meeting the challenges of 2009 by undertaking exciting and rewarding projects:

- Complete website makeover (brand new website of the Ontario Association of the Deaf)
- Mass-email distribution system and information available in American Sign Language on the website
- Partnership with the Health Educators from Provincial, Separate and Public School Boards, and HIV/AIDS curriculum designed for Grade 6, 7 and 8 with four areas of focus:
  i. Affirm Standards (HIV/STI Transmission and Safety in Emergencies
  ii. Commit to Self (Non-risk Behaviours, Stages of HIV infection, Signs/Symptoms and Immune System)
  iii. Support Peers (Sensitive Issues, Effects of AIDS and Families and Communication Strategies with Parents)
  iv. Promote Health (Psychological, Social and Emotional Needs, Overcoming Stigma, Risky Behaviours, Community Responses)
- First-ever Deaf Exposition—which will include updated technologies and employment opportunities—at Mayfest, (Friday May 8, 2009)
- Advocate and lobby for appropriate changes for the future of Deaf Ontarians (Deaf children, Deaf youth, Deaf adults, Deaf seniors, unemployed Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Langues des signes québécoises (LSQ), Deaf Aboriginals, Deaf Person with HIV/AIDS).
- Continue to pursue and reach our goals developed in the Five Years Strategy plan. You can check out these goals on the website: www.deafontario.ca

I wish all of our OAD newsletter readers, their families and friends a happy, healthy, safe and prosperous new year.

Paul Smith

President

Warmest greetings and Happy 2009!

On behalf of the new board here at OAD, we send out our wishes for the new year. May it be prosperous!

Since the Annual General Meeting last October, we have met twice and are delighted to welcome three additional members to our table. We are proud to announce a full board for the upcoming 2008-2010 years. We are eager to roll up our sleeves and continue to work on OAD’s five year strategic plan. We are grateful for our staff, in maintaining the day to day operation of OAD. Our heartful thanks to the 2006-2008 board members for their dedication, commitment and hard work.

We wish you all the best.

Christine Ehrlich-Bradly

Members of the 2006 -2010 board of directors.

Wayne Nicholson - President
Susan DaDaft - Treasurer
Frank Folino - Secretary
Veronica Bickle - Director at Large
Sunshine Lezard - Director at Large

Members of the 2008 - 2010 board of directors are:

Christine Ehrlich-Bradly - President
Dean Walker - Vice President
John Mans - Treasurer
Vanita Dama - Secretary
Hernan Guillermo - Director at Large
Jackie Plant - Director at Large
Shelley Ryall - Director at Large
The Deaf Culture Centre
Spotlights the Accomplishments of Deaf Filmmakers

By Paul Smith

Cover art by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf

The Deaf Filmmakers Take One! film exhibition, a project of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, was kicked off at the Deaf Culture Centre on Friday December 12th, 2008.

I had the indescribable pleasure of viewing the exhibition which inspired me to fully appreciate and understand the reality of the filmmaking metamorphosis— from preserving sign language to showing entertainment. The exhibition was multi-faceted with an intriguing blend of signed language films, filmmaking artifacts, film memorabilia, and biography of the pioneers of filmmaking.

The exhibition offers a variety of films that are documentary; animation; eye music; experimental; short or feature.

Throughout the exhibit, we will explain and feature different films that reflect different purposes through time. It is hoped that by the end of the exhibit, visitors will understand why film with its many aspects of Deaf culture is valued highly among Deaf people and the richness it provides to the film scene in general.

EXHIBIT THEMES

A. Pioneers of Filmmaking

The exhibit highlights Deaf Film Pioneers, illustrating the history of film in the Deaf community starting in 1913. It shows the importance of film in preserving signed languages as well as for its entertainment value over time. We create an area that gives the appearance of an old movie theatre complete with original theatre chairs from that era, a projector screen, curtains, and movie ropes. The focus of the area is an original documentary created by the Centre explaining the history of Deaf film with a Canadian Deaf film expert narrating movie clips of old films that were vital to the history of film in the Deaf community.

This area also features artifacts from a film made in 1977 with explanations of the process filmmakers have gone through in
Deaf Teachers United

At the Ontario College of Teachers issues were raised regarding communication barriers. What rights do teachers have? What steps should teachers take to ensure better communication policies are in place for deaf children and youth?

It was a cold Saturday morning in November, when a room slowly filled with Deaf teachers from different corners of Ontario.

Teachers from various schools in Ontario walked in with their own concerns, their own battles to fight both inside the classroom and out.

Once we settled into our chairs, Gary Malkowski opened the session with introductions. Various presenters explained the rights of teachers and different procedures for filing a complaint against another teacher, against his or her board or against his or her’s respective union.

Many concerns were raised regarding job security, oppression and human rights issues. It was clear during that afternoon that we needed each other. We discussed the possibility of forming our own union, a union for Deaf Teachers in Ontario.

We hope to make these meetings regular. Keep your eye out for an article on this issue from Gary Malkowski. This day was a reminder that, together, we are stronger. United we can stand.
Deaf Ontario - Yours to Discover

Story and photos by Lianne Valiquette

ODA, OCSD and ODSA what? That’s the question many youth ask when such organizations are mentioned. Very few youth are aware of Deaf Ontario’s largest organizations. Nancy T. Blanchard, George Brown College (GBC) program director for Deaf and Deaf-Blind studies decided it was time to bring together youth from Toronto and introduce to them, organizations from the community.

On November 21st, 2008, both high school and college level students attended Deaf Ontario, where they watched presentations from Silent Voice, The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD), Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf (OCSD), Happy Hands Preschool Program at the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf (BRCD) and the Ontario Deaf Sports Association (ODSA).

Deaf artist, Leigh McNulty gave a presentation on De’IVA Art. And last but not least, GBC Deaf and Deaf-Blind program gave a detailed outline of their courses. The ASL Club of Toronto also gave a brief rundown on their club’s activities.

*Deaf Ontario- Yours to Discover* was a success and each student left with a better understanding of their Deaf Ontario.

“Knowledge, confidence and pride is what is happening here. They [students] experience loneliness, and through our course, they learn about empowerment and become independent through knowledge. They become agents of change” Says Nancy T. Blanchard. “It is also important to remember sports. Sports is necessary for growth. Sports prepare people to be ready for the outside world. Teambuilding, confidence, and overcoming challenges.”

Each student brought home something different. GBC student Peter Owusa was fascinated by Leigh McNulty’s presentation. “The De’IVA art really had an impact on me. It made me want to write a story, share my experiences.”

Students stayed after the presentations and took in the various displays set up around the room. We’ll see their faces in the near future, when they become involved in Ontario’s Deaf community.
We recognize ... 

1. Victoria Bispham
2. Karen Bol
3. Jennifer Chemerika
4. Gord DaDalt
5. Dana Dajani
6. Emma Dalley
7. Robert Denny
8. Shoshana Erlich
9. Vanessa Floros
10. Samuel Jones
11. Sonya Kaufman
12. Mallory Keller
13. Mitsy Kehler
14. Carol Lavoie
15. Stacey Ann Neil
16. Cheryl Osten
17. Jack Osten
18. Sally Palusci
19. Dave Patterson
20. Therangaine Persaud
21. Michelle Pett
22. Rali Rodriguez
23. Todd Ramsone
24. Julio Rodriguez
25. Shelley Ryall
26. Samir Siddiqui
27. Kristin Snoddon
28. Jan Strakhov
29. Jason Theriault
30. Krishna Thevarajah
31. Melanie Thivierge
32. Nick Watson
33. Wayne Watts
34. Jessica Wroe
The American Sign Language – English Interpreter Program at George Brown College was established in the Fall of 1997 and we accept 30 students each semester. This program will teach students how to work as ASL-English Interpreters for the Deaf and hearing people. The students will learn theory and practice interpreting both in the classroom and outside of the college.

The students will understand more about English, ASL, Deaf and hearing culture. They will also learn how to interpret between two languages. The students will learn in the classroom, lab and placements.

Did you know that the students must have very good receptive and expressive ASL skills to get in the program? All of our faculty use academic level ASL and English. There is Deaf and professional interpreter faculty. This program will graduate students to work at the entry level as a freelance or staff interpreter.

The program is located at George Brown College, St. James Campus at King and Jarvis.

The Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD), Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters (OASLI), members of the Deaf Community, George Brown College and the Minister of Education worked together to start this program. They are still involved by sitting on an advisory council.

The Program is currently undergoing a review by the Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities (MCTU) This occurs every five years. We will have a new program, new office and soon we will have a new lab!

This is just the beginning of a series of articles for the OAD Newsletter by the faculty at the ASL English Interpreter, ASL Deaf Studies and the ASL Literacy Instructor Programs. Stayed turned for more from the GBC corner.

Wayne Nicholson - Instructor
Deaf People

ACROSS

2 The author of Deafhood
4 The first OAD secretary
6 The actress played the deaf librarian on TV Show Sesame Street.
8 The first deaf teacher of Metro Toronto School for the Deaf
10 Who was the Deaf Torontarian who starred in "Crazy Moon" with Kiefer Sutherland?
13 A former Canadian Deaf politician
14 Name one of the filmmakers who presently works at the Silent Voice.
15 Who received the Premier's award for her excellence of leadership in 2008?
16 There was a tribute for the Father of Deaf Culture. Who was he?

DOWN

1 Who is the advocate of Deaf Outreach Program?
2 The running postman in Ottawa
3 Who was the president of Ontario Association of the Deaf for 18 years?
5 Who was the hearing pastor before Rev. Rumball took his place in 1956. He adopted two deaf children.
7 Ottawa is the first city in the world to recognize the achievements of deaf people by naming some residential streets in their honour. Name the long time Ottawa Deaf female leader.
8 Who set up the first ever Canadian Deaf Youth Leadership Camp in 1975?
9 The first OAD executive director
11 Who wrote Deaf Heritage in Canada?
12 Who played the scientist in the Deaf Planet?
Has opened a satellite office in **MUSKOKA**

*General Social Service Counselling to Deaf Seniors 55+
Interpreting will be offered through the Barrie office
We will be offering American Sign Language classes in the spring

Please contact us or forward our information to anyone that would benefit from our services.

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Voice: (705) 645-8882   TTY: (705) 645-6855
Fax: (705) 645-0182    Toll Free: 1-877-840-8882

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**ODC 2009 Calendars For Sale**

Want to start 2009 on the right “hand” by keeping track of your appointments while viewing beautiful digital art photography? Purchase a calendar from the Ottawa Deaf Centre! The 2009 calendar demonstrates Ottawa native Jennifer Stanhope exquisite work of fine detail photography. Each month you will be adorned by a beautiful themed image that captures an ASL sign.

$15 each calendar or $25 for 2 calendars, S&H 20% of the sub-total. Please visit www.ottawadeafcentre.org for more information.

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Visit us for Deaf resources. Located in our office at the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf
One of my earliest memories was from my days in a pre-school program for deaf and hard of hearing children. My teacher, a woman who later went on to win a number of awards for excellence in teaching, was focused on oral instruction and sign language was banned in the classroom. On one occasion I asked to go to the bathroom and was denied permission because I wasn’t able to ask clearly in spoken English.

When I peed on the floor out of desperation, I was forced to clean up my urine, wash my clothes, and was sent to my dormitory without an evening meal. What is at the heart of a teacher’s insistence that a child use a language that is neither natural nor accessible?

With my lack of speech intelligibility and residual hearing skills coupled with poor lip reading skills, I experienced low expectations and noticeably different treatment from teachers, counsellors, and even peers compared to deaf children who had mastered these skills. In my classrooms, I noticed that these classmates were given more attention, encouragements, supports, privileges, positive reinforcements and obtained more formal education while children like me did not. Discouraging me from using sign language in my early years, the lack of support and encouragement, and the deferential treatment of my more “accomplished” classmates are all examples of audism.

Audism

Unlike racism, sexism, and ageism, “audism” is an unfamiliar concept to many. Tom Humphries, an associate professor at the University of California, San Diego, originated
Audism

Humphries defined audism as “the notion that one is superior based on one’s ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears.” Although there is currently no unanimously accepted definition of audism, the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) has adopted a definition in our official position paper on discrimination and audism using Humphries definition and expanding it to include two additional definitions: “A system of advantage based on hearing ability” and “A metaphysical orientation that links human identity with speech.” Discrimination rooted in audism is systemic, subtly woven into every facet of our society – housing, education, employment, government services, and health care. The attitudinal barriers it engenders, the direct and indirect discrimination it fosters, and the impact on those who are Deaf or have a hearing loss can be devastating.

During my childhood, adolescence, and some of my adult years, I grew accustomed to the attitudes of those in authority who surrounded me. Among just some of the attitudes I encountered were:

- “Sign language is bad for deaf children to learn”
- “Sign language ruins a person’s chances at careers, friends, family, and being a responsible citizen.”
- “You can’t play sports at regular house leagues because you are deaf.”
- “You can’t get a summer job because you are deaf.”
- “You will not have a successful career because you are deaf and cannot speak.”
- “You can’t drive because you can’t hear.”
- “You can’t be served in the restaurant because you are deaf.”

Sadly, these types of attitudes persist today in one variation or another. It is still common practice, for example, for audiologists, speech-language pathologists, early intervention and early childhood education providers, educators of deaf children, boards and government ministries to discourage deaf children from learning and using their natural and accessible language – sign language. In fact, many parents of deaf children who are making decisions around their child’s education are still not given balanced information about the benefits of sign language.

This restriction of the use of sign language coupled with a fundamental belief that a deaf child should learn to use residual hearing or the hearing that is a result of a cochlear implant and learn to speak is the most blatant form of audism. Sadly, when spoken language, both expressive and receptive, is not accessible, precious time is wasted. The child is labelled a spoken language “failure” and the window of opportunity to acquire language quickly closes.

Unfortunately, these spoken language deficiencies can be identified as a learning disability. In some cases there is no cognitive disability; in others, learning disabilities are compounded by language deficiencies. In both instances, it is too late for the language deficit to be repaired and this can have enormous associated costs in terms of special education requirements, and long-term mental health issues, among others.

A great number of professionals – audiologists, interpreters, educators, speech-language pathologists, and medical practitioners – have enormous amounts of power and influence. How that influence is exercised over the lives of people who are Deaf, and Deaf children and their parents is important and the information they disseminate needs to comprise the facts fully and be in the best interests of the individual.

The Saskatchewan Ruling

In a landmark Saskatchewan provincial court decision in August 2005, the presiding judge wrote in his ruling that “…physicians and medical personnel, audiologists, educators, children protection workers and others are undoubtedly caring and capable professionals… It was clear that, throughout, as they should, these people acted in strict accordance with the policies, directives and mandates of the governmental or other bodies for which they work. Unfortunately, the best efforts of these fine people have failed to avert a terrible disaster in the life of this little deaf boy.”

At issue in the court was the guiding philosophy of the Saskatchewan Pediatrics Auditory Rehabilitation Centre (SPARC), the publicly funded pre-school program offered to deaf children in the province. SPARC adhered to a restrictive “auditory-verbal” approach to education for deaf children which focuses only on restoration and remediation of hearing and speech. The judge ruled that this approach fell short in the case of one deaf boy and American Sign Language (ASL) must be offered to Deaf children as a communication option in the early years. It was a powerful message about the importance of sign
language and a challenge to what was essentially an audist assumption: deaf children will only succeed the more they resemble someone who hears.

The results of denying children language in the years when language development is most critical is that deaf and hard of hearing children routinely fall behind educationally, socially, and psychologically. As adults, they often do not live up to their employment potential and become unnecessary burdens on the health and social welfare systems where they encounter serious attitudinal barriers.

Legal Citations Supporting Sign Language Rights
• Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982
• Supreme Court of Canada Eldridge Decision, 1997
• Federal Court of Canada's Canadian Association of the Deaf Decision, 2006
• Ontario Human Rights Code, 1990
• Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
• Education Act: ASL and LSQ Regulations, July 2007

Some of the solutions to these problems are neither complicated nor expensive. The solutions represent best practices and have demonstrated and positive outcomes. The solutions also represent the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

One of the sectors in which the effects of audism are most acutely felt is employment. The underemployment of persons with disabilities is an undisputed truth with the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities estimated to be five times that of people without disabilities. The 2001 Statistics Canada Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) reported that almost 50% of people with disabilities were unemployed and that percentage is now estimated to be over 55%. For women with disabilities the rate is almost 75%.

In Ontario alone, up to 85% of deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Ontarians are un- or under-employed. Only 20.6% of Deaf Canadians are fully employed (compared with 61% of all Canadians) and 37.5% are unemployed (compared to 8% of all Canadians).

Statistics from the United States are instructive as well. When it was introduced into law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was touted as a groundbreaking piece of legislation in the area of employment. The ADA seeks to create unbiased hiring practices by making the hiring process transparent to job seekers and requiring employers to clearly outline duties of the offered position. The ADA also clearly defines a qualified candidate with disabilities as one that meets all the skills and experience requirements of the position and is able to perform the essential duties of the position, even if the job seeker requires accommodation. The ADA goes further to include the final qualifier: “Requiring the ability to perform ‘essential functions’ assures that an individual with a disability will not be considered unqualified simply because of inability to perform marginal or incidental job functions.”

Despite the restrictions and requirements of the act, 3.7% of all meritorious ADA employment cases heard by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) between July 26, 1992 and September 30, 2005 were related to a “hearing impairment” making it one of the top 10 conditions cited.

In more extreme forms, “like racism or sexism, audism judges, labels, and limits individuals on the basis of whether a person hears and speaks.” (Humphries and Alcorn 1995; 85). Discriminatory practices rooted in audism that create unfair limits and barriers to employment for people who are culturally Deaf or have a hearing loss are often presented as concerns for safety (It isn’t a safe environment for someone with hearing loss), being unaware of accommodations (I can’t promote you to supervisor because of your hearing loss; how will you communicate with your team?” or perceived undue financial hardship in providing accommodations. In reality, employees with a hearing loss have an above average safety record. Few jobs require “hearing” to function safely; driving is a visual skill; many noisy environments require hearing protection that limits all employees’ hearing and emphasis is placed on being visually aware. In terms of accommodation, information about
available technology including TTYs, telephone visual signalling or amplifiers, as well as other accessibility services including interpreting, captioning, and relay services, are readily available and the employees themselves are the best resources as to what they will need in order to effectively and successfully meet the requirements of their position.

Audism is also exemplified in a situation where one deaf or hard of hearing individual is offered a position or promotion, over an otherwise more qualified deaf or hard of hearing individual, on the basis how “hearing-like” the individual looks, acts and/or functions. Selecting a hearing person over an otherwise more qualified deaf or hard of hearing person, or denying a deaf person their rights solely because of a hearing loss are more explicit and discernible examples of discrimination. However, audism, as in the first example, often appears in more subtle forms, though the results are equally devastating for the individual and society as a whole.

Audism can also find expression in surprising and unexpected ways. Incidences of discriminatory, audist, and paternalistic missteps are not uncommon, for instances, in communications facilitated by a sign language interpreter. Interpreters are the human engines in the language and communication process and bridge the language gap between Deaf people who use American Sign Language (ASL), and people who use spoken English. Professional ASL/English interpreters are knowledgeable in the language and culture of both Deaf and hearing people and are bound by their professional Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Professional Conduct as set out by the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC). Despite these guidelines most interpreters have played a part in, or have witnessed audist incidents before, during, or after interpreting.

Some interpreters privy to audists’ behaviours do not convey the information or interpret it appropriately or accurately and the Deaf consumers are left unaware of the audism that was present in the discourse. Only a very small number of interpreters interpret clearly and accurately in these often times difficult and uncomfortable situations.

Dr. Genie Gertz’s article, “Dysconscious Audism: A Theoretical Proposition” published in Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking (Dirksen and Bauman, 2008) described the marked difference between “unconscious” and “dysconscious” with regard to audism. “Unconscious” implies that the person is completely unaware of his or her audist beliefs and actions; whereas dysconscious implies that the person does have an inkling of his or her consciousness but does not yet realize it is impaired.

Working together we can continue to develop public education to challenge the unconscious and the dysconscious. Audism and ableism both, although new terminology, are old attitudes and ones that can begin to be pulled from the fabric of our society – pulled in the same way as we have racism and sexism. It was not long ago when it was hard to imagine a time when women like Kim Campbell, Marilyn Churley, and Francis Lankin would be crashing through the glass ceiling of the male-dominated Canadian political machine.

Here is our opportunity, working together as professionals, human rights organizations, ombudsman organizations, and in partnership with groups like CHS, the Canadian Association of the Deaf, and the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, to better understand, indentify, and, ultimately, eradicate incidences of ableism and audism.

I am a true believer when it comes to the vision articulated by CHS and unveiled last year. The vision reads:

A society where all people are respected; have full access to communication; and are able to participate without social, economic, or emotional barriers.

I along with hundreds of dedicated partners both in Canada and abroad are working to realize that society. I am confident that as public awareness broadens, as education increases, and as understanding deepens, we will achieve that vision.

You have the opportunity to join us.


The spelling of Deaf with a capital “D” refers to someone who identifies with Deaf culture and who uses ASL as their primary mode of communication. It is not a definition based on audiometric hearing loss (Marshall Chasin, editor-in-chief).