

“Silent No Longer”



Waving signs of protest in front of the old Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf building (slated for demolition), Vancouver, B.C. (1978)

The B.C. Deaf Advocate/Photo credit: Deni Eagland, Vancouver Sun (Vancouver, B.C.)

The legal and human rights of deaf Canadians often have been ignored or overlooked by lawmakers who understood little or nothing about deaf people. As pointed out by Donald John MacKillop (b. Nov. 9, 1916; d. Dec. 31, 1982), a deaf Nova Scotian who was then president (1940-1954) of the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf: “Deafness itself is not the real ‘handicap’ of all deaf persons. Their real handicap is the attitude and prejudice of certain types of people who are in a position to exercise some authority.”¹ In some cases, laws regulating what deaf individuals were permitted or forbidden to do continued on the books for years, until the Deaf community began to protest and lobby lawmakers for change. For example, as recently as the late 1980s, deaf people in some provinces

were not permitted to serve on juries. It took a lawsuit to change this statute. The right of a deaf defendant to have a qualified sign language interpreter in the courtroom is also a fairly recent legal achievement. Deaf people have had to protest in the media or through the courts for the right to apply for certain jobs, receive certain kinds of training, have interpreters provided during medical emergencies, have captioned programs on television, or even keep their schools open. In the 1940s, for example, the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville and the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg were closed and turned over to war efforts. The Deaf community had to petition the provincial governments repeatedly and hold many meetings before these schools were re-opened.

Antiquated Laws

Sometimes deaf people were considered mentally deficient by law:

Offence Against Deaf Females

In 1886, a Canadian law made it a criminal offence for a man to have non-marital sexual intercourse with certain mentally disabled females. The conditions of deafness and muteness were added to the list of mental disabilities in 1892. This law remained in effect until the Criminal Code was revised and radically reworded in 1954, at which time the reference to “deaf and dumb” women as part of the “mentally disabled” category was finally omitted.² ■

The presence of a deaf person in court often led lawmakers to devise elaborate procedures for establishing the guilt or innocence of the deaf defendant, as illustrated in the following story.

Death Penalty in New Brunswick

In early 1894, in the County of York, Edward M. Wheary of Keswick, a “coloured deaf-mute” who had attended the Fredericton Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in the 1880s, was convicted of murdering his brother’s wife in Fredericton. Wheary was tried under a new procedure in Saint John, in which four separate juries were sworn in. The first jury had the task of determining whether “the prisoner is a mute by pretence or by the visitation of God.”³ The second jury determined whether or not Wheary was capable of pleading to the charges. The third jury deliberated on Wheary’s mental state — insane or sane. And, after the third jury determined Wheary was sane, the fourth tried him on the charges as they would any other defendant, “except that the evidence [was] interpreted to the prisoner.”⁴ Although Wheary denied the charge in city court, with Albert F. Woodbridge (principal of the Fredericton Institution) interpreting, the fourth jury found him guilty, and he was sentenced by Judge Baker to be hanged on April 20. ■

In some cases, privileges, such as exemptions from paying certain taxes, were granted and then taken away. Sometimes additional taxes were added.

You Can Be Taxed for Being Deaf??

In 1909, “the St. John [N.B.] authorities decided to tax deaf-mutes in the city. Many city deaf people are blaming the St. John Deaf-Mute Association for the cause of the tax on them and some of them have severed from the club. Is the tax on the city deaf justifiable?”⁵ ■

Deaf Drivers

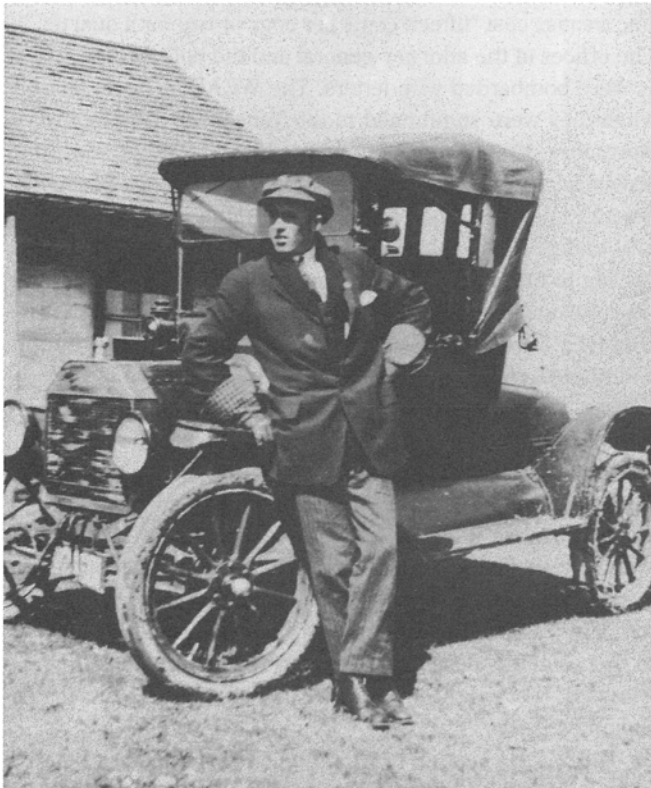
One example of the determination of deaf Canadians to secure their rights and make the laws more equitable can be seen in the case of deaf drivers, who were often denied a driver’s licence solely *because* they were deaf. Shortly after the automobile was first introduced to Canada in 1904, hundreds of people bought their own cars and learned to drive. At that time, no one — including deaf persons — was restricted from owning or driving a motor vehicle. As the number of automobiles increased, however, so did accidents and highway fatalities. In the 1920s, each province began to introduce laws to regulate the operation of motor vehicles. Drivers with physical handicaps were generally banned from operating any type of automobile. Deaf people had to fight — sometimes for years — to protect or reinstate their driving privileges, even though the safety records of deaf drivers in North America were well documented.

At its June 1923 meeting in Belleville, Ont., the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf (CAID) adopted a resolution against any provincial (Canadian) or state (United States) restriction in issuing motor vehicle licences that was based solely upon deafness. In 1948, an article entitled “World’s Safest Drivers” appeared in the *Ford Times*, another boost for deaf drivers. And articles written in the 1960s by Sherman G. Finesilver, a Colorado judge, brought national attention to the safe driving records of deaf people.

Drivers in the Western Provinces: By all accounts, the first deaf person to own a motor vehicle in the province of Saskatchewan was James Bain (b. Jan. 2, 1891; d. Oct. 11, 1977). When driver’s licences became mandatory in later years, it is reported that he was also the first deaf person to acquire one. Bain moved to Canada with his hearing Scottish parents in 1904 when he was a young boy. His formal education was received at the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Winnipeg (1904-1910). Following graduation, he settled in Dysart, Sask. where he later purchased a 1913 Ford Roadster.

In 1925, Bain is believed to be the first deaf person ever to motor across the prairies and through the Rockies, when he drove to Victoria, B.C. and back. The purpose of his trip was to see Jane Campbell (b. July 23, 1894; d. Nov. 10, 1964), one of British Columbia’s first deaf pupils to attend the Manitoba Institution (1899-1909). While out west, Bain proposed to

Campbell. A few months later, he returned with his possessions to settle in Victoria. The couple was married on December 27, 1926.



James Bain and his 1913 Ford Roadster
Courtesy of Diana (née Bain) Dewar (Vancouver, B.C.)

In the early 1900s, deaf people in British Columbia enjoyed the same driving privileges as hearing people. At that time, driver's licences were not compulsory, and anyone could operate an automobile. Discrimination against deaf drivers did not exist. Restrictions regarding the operation of motor vehicles began to appear in February 1925, however, when the province issued its first licences. It soon became increasingly difficult for deaf people to apply for and receive these mandatory permits. Then, an unfortunate accident in 1927 started a four-year journey over rough roads for deaf drivers in that province. In the early summer of 1927, Thomas Edgar Noble (b. Oct. 10, 1892; d. Jan. 6, 1953) of Vancouver, a graduate of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1900-1909) and one of the few deaf World War I veterans, requested the aid of the Vancouver Association of the Deaf (VAD) to support his application for a driving permit. This organization then approached the local police and provincial officials, who finally approved Noble's application. Noble got his licence on August 15, 1927. That same evening, he proudly took his wife and a friend (J. Lyons) for a drive in downtown Vancouver. There he had the misfortune of driving through an intersection at Lakewood Drive and Hastings Street and knocking down a motorcycle policeman. The officer suffered a sprained ankle and a slight concussion. When he questioned the driver, the officer was surprised to discover that the

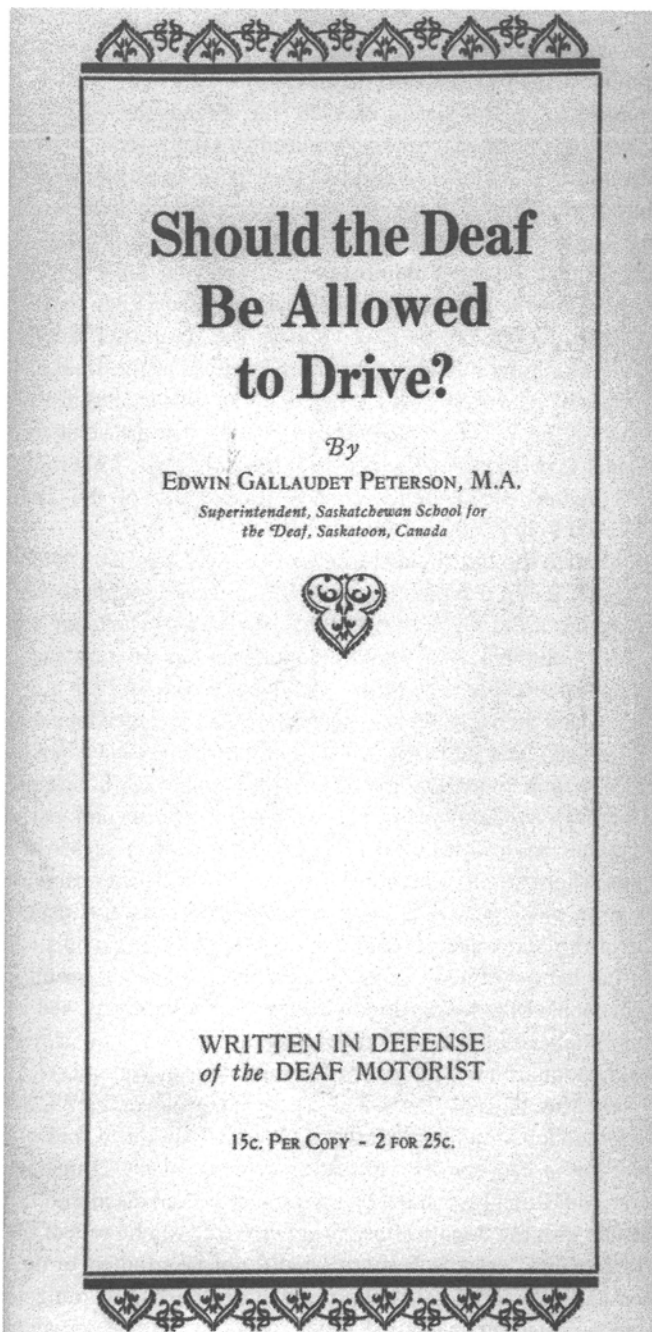
entire party was deaf. This accident caused a change in the thinking of Chief J.H. McMullin (the British Columbia police commissioner) toward deaf drivers.⁶

Starting in the spring of 1928, the already-licensed deaf drivers of the province were required to take a strict driving test. Many of them failed and had their permits revoked when they were required to "be able to hear or take note of the warning signals."⁷ Evidently, the police commissioner decided to ban all deaf British Columbians from applying for a driver's licence. For the next two years, George Paterson Riley (b. July 31, 1895; d. Sept. 30, 1975) of Victoria, B.C. (a former student at the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Winnipeg [1901-1909]), fought unsuccessfully on behalf of the VAD to remove the regulation that discriminated against deaf drivers in the province. In early 1931, VAD members invited the Western Canada Association of the Deaf (WCAD) to intervene on their behalf.

Despite the ban, Robert Choate Batho (b. May 24, 1894; d. Aug. 12, 1977), a profoundly deaf Vancouverite and first vice-president of the WCAD (1929-1932), decided to challenge the British Columbia police commissioner's ruling.⁸ He purchased an automobile secretly, practised driving in the city for a few weeks, and then applied for a licence. Batho was given four separate tests. The first test involved sitting in a moving police patrol wagon and telling the officer "whether or not he felt the vibratory sensation of a sounding siren."⁹ In the second test, a mechanic rode with Batho while he drove over "a prescribed route where he was unknowingly pursued by a prowler car with its siren wide open."¹⁰ In the third and fourth tests, the inspector of the Vancouver Traffic Department rode in Batho's car during heavy Saturday noon traffic and the following Monday afternoon's rush hour. Although Batho successfully passed all four examinations, he was still denied a licence by the provincial headquarters of the police commissioner of Victoria.

On May 15, 1931, David Peikoff, the chairman of the WCAD Automobile Committee, wrote to Chief McMullin to find out why Batho had not been granted a driving permit. Four days later, McMullin responded by saying that he had discussed the matter with the deputy attorney-general and that he was of the opinion that "driver's licences should not be granted to deaf persons ... I cannot help believing that deafness must mitigate very seriously against safe driving ... To permit a deaf person to drive a car is to disregard one of the purposes of requiring a horn upon a car."¹¹ Sensing discrimination, Peikoff angrily wrote back to Chief McMullin and appealed to him to reconsider his unjust policy. The chief responded, "While I have every sympathy with deaf people, I am sorry I cannot see my way to changing my decision."¹²

There followed an exchange of letters between the WCAD and the police commissioner, but Batho — unemployed and eager to leave Vancouver in search of a job — decided not to wait for the outcome of the controversy. He packed his family into an old 1926 Chevrolet and drove all the way to Toronto (without a licence) by way of Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit. Shortly after arriving at his destination, Batho was successful in obtaining a driver's licence in the province of Ontario. He also wrote a strong letter to the British Columbia police



A 1931 pamphlet printed in Vancouver, B.C.

Courtesy of Western Canada Association of the Deaf

commissioner describing how a deaf man had made the entire trip without one bad incident.

Unhappy with the police commissioner's second response, the WCAD Automobile Committee and the VAD launched a full campaign against the province's regulations. They visited the offices of influential citizens, as well as the British Columbia Automobile Club, the British Columbia Safety League, and the British Columbia Insurance Underwriter's Association. Officials of these organizations were asked to write letters to the attorney-general of the provincial government. The WCAD hired D.S. Wallbridge, a hearing lawyer, to prosecute their case. They also printed and circulated a treatise, *Should the*

Deaf Be Allowed to Drive?, which was written in 1931 by Edwin Gallaudet Peterson (b. Dec. 10, 1905; d. May 1, 1991), the hearing son of deaf parents and superintendent of the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Saskatoon (1931-1937). The treatise cost "fifteen cents per copy or two for a quarter."¹³ The offices of the attorney-general and the police commissioner were bombarded with letters. The WCAD's efforts paid off when they were summoned to the Vancouver court house on November 30, 1931 to meet with Chief McMullin and other provincial officials. There were some sharp clashes during the meeting regarding the province's refusal to issue driving permits to deaf applicants. Chief McMullin continued to stubbornly cling to his opinion that "because deaf individuals could not hear warning signals they were a menace on the highways."¹⁴ However, after the WCAD argued every point raised by him and quoted endlessly from the pamphlet, *Should the Deaf Be Allowed to Drive?*, he was eventually convinced that his theories about deaf drivers might be mistaken. The next day, December 1, 1931, Chief McMullin wrote to the lawyer who represented the WCAD. In his letter, he agreed to lift the ban on deaf drivers under the following conditions: (1) that the WCAD would provide him with a reference confirming the driver's suitability, (2) that each applicant pass a driving skills test, and (3) that outside view mirrors or reflectors be attached to their automobiles. The fight was over. Deaf people joyfully regained their right to operate motor vehicles in British Columbia.

The WCAD kept an eye on the driving issues in Manitoba as well. In 1940, Charles William White (b. Sept. 19, 1893; d. Jan. 4, 1967), a former student at the Manitoba Institution (1904-1908) and then president of the WCAD, received a letter from W. Trevor Davies, assistant chief inspector in charge of accident prevention for the provincial government. Davies wrote that there was no indication that a deaf person had been involved in any serious driving accidents since 1935, when records began being kept. He further stated that he believed that

*deaf mutes in Manitoba have created for themselves quite a safety record in driving due to the fact that they have driven their vehicles with due regard for disabilities they possess and have conducted their driving in such a manner as to observe all the rules of safety and to counteract any disadvantage which their deafness may expose them to.... I believe the time will come when drivers with their full faculties will be compelled to drive cars with the same measure of caution as is now exercised by deaf mute drivers.*¹⁵

As recently as the 1980s, changes were being made to restrictions on deaf drivers in Manitoba. Until 1983, Manitoba Vehicle Branch regulations included a restriction requiring deaf drivers to have a right-hand mirror on their cars. This rule was indicated on their drivers' licence as restriction "9." The Manitoba Coordinating Council for the Hearing Impaired was successful in having the restriction abolished so that deaf drivers would not be penalized if they borrowed or rented cars that did not have the right-hand mirrors. However, it was up to

the drivers to request that the restriction be removed when they had their drivers' licences renewed.¹⁶

Restrictions in the Atlantic Provinces: Three of the four Atlantic provinces had driving restrictions for deaf persons prior to the late 1950s. It was legal for a deaf person to operate a motor vehicle in New Brunswick, but illegal in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. (However, *The OAD News* warned its readers that the New Brunswick Motor Vehicles Laws contained a clause that could adversely affect deaf drivers' rights. "This fact was brought to the surface at Moncton, N.B., when a complaint was laid against a certain deafie who was not considered safe to be in charge of a car. The provincial government has plans for compulsory insurance and as quite a few of the deaf have cars that have seen better days, the writer is wondering where they will stand in the matter.")¹⁷ Nova Scotia allowed deaf persons to drive their own automobiles under one condition set by the registrar of motor vehicles in 1948 — they had to be accompanied at all times by a hearing passenger who could warn the deaf driver of emergency vehicles such as ambulances, fire engines, and police cruisers. The Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf (ECAD) staged a campaign against the Nova Scotia government to have this restriction removed. Led by its president, Donald John MacKillop, the ECAD Automobile Committee enlisted the aid of William H. Brown, a hearing member of the legislative assembly for Yarmouth. In 1952, Brown brought up a bill that would amend the Motor Vehicle Act to allow deaf persons to obtain regular licences with no strings attached. This bill was hotly debated in the legislature. It was later channelled to a committee caucus, where it was defeated by a vote of 12 to eight. Deaf Nova

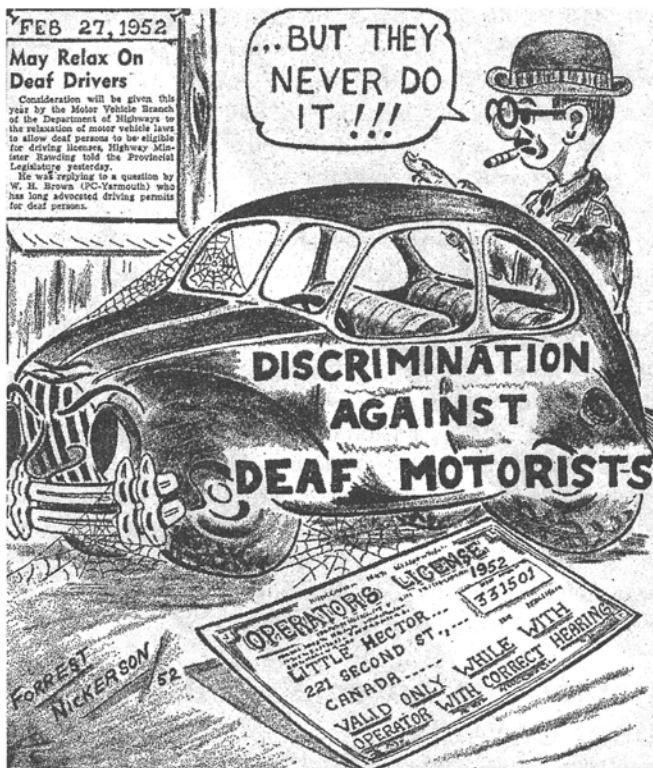
Scotians were upset about this decision and started another vigorous campaign.

MacKillop felt that the first campaign had failed due to the "adamant, negative stand of one man, the registrar of motor vehicles ... who has based his objections mainly on the contention that deaf people might not be able to detect the approach of an ambulance in time to pull to the curb or shoulder of the road to let it pass, as required by the Motor Vehicle Act."¹⁸

The ECAD Automobile Committee also received support from the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD). A report containing relevant facts about deaf drivers in other provinces of Canada and in the United States was prepared by CAD president Robert Elwood McBrien (b. Nov. 23, 1900; d. July 20, 1970) of Peterborough, Ont., a deaf engineer. In 1953, this report was read in the Nova Scotia legislature by Brown. It sparked a lively debate, and the issue was sidetracked to a legislative committee. The bill was defeated for the second time by a vote of nine to five. The ECAD persisted in their deaf driver campaign until the new provincial minister of highways and public works began to study the case. In the fall of 1954, Brown rose once more in the legislature and asked again, "Will steps be taken at this session to remove the restriction requiring deaf drivers to have a consort in their cars when driving?"¹⁹ The highways minister replied that it had already been done. Immediately, there was applause from both sides of the House. "Victory!" Brown sighed, as he sat down. In a letter to the ECAD, the highways minister wrote that "the regulations are being changed which will permit deaf drivers the same freedom as hearing persons in the securing of operator's licences."²⁰ Deaf people were very jubilant that the six-year struggle was over.

Until 1919, no one (hearing or deaf) was allowed to drive an automobile on Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province. When this ban was removed in 1919, the new motor vehicle laws stated that deaf residents were still forbidden to drive cars. However, Robert Elder Sowerby (b. Nov. 11, 1894; d. June 22, 1971) of Moncton, N.B., then board director of the Canadian Association of the Deaf, reported that "although the Motor Vehicle Laws in P.E.I. say the deaf cannot drive cars, it is not being enforced. NO deaf person has ever been refused a permit."²¹ He also reported that a motor vehicle officer had indicated that "as the population was largely rural he could see no reason why a deaf person should not be allowed to drive and would issue permits until instructed to do otherwise."²²

In 1959, Newfoundland became the last of Canada's 10 provinces to begin issuing driver's licences to deaf persons. Wilfred Hammond Taylor (b. Jan. 24, 1926) of St. John's, a former student at the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S. (1942-1945), was the first deaf person to legally obtain a driving permit. (According to some unwritten accounts, a few deaf Newfoundlanders before Taylor had been given permits illegally to operate automobiles or heavy-duty vehicles at logging camps.) On his behalf, Taylor's friend, Walter Davis, a hearing gentleman from the St. John's Rotary Club, challenged the provincial decision that denied driver's licences to deaf persons. Davis hired James Higgins, a hearing lawyer, to investi-



A 1952 advertisement
 The Deaf Herald/Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf

gate the situation. In due time, Taylor was allowed to be tested by the department of highways. After passing with flying colours, he was granted Driver's Licence No. 61317 on January 13, 1959. He immediately bought a four-door 1952 Pontiac sedan.

Québec: In the mid-1940s, Québec's deaf drivers could apply for licences, but were required to undergo a special driving exam, which cost \$3.00. The examiner had the right to "impose certain conditions, such as a special mirror to be affixed to the vehicle, automobile signals," or restrictions on the locations and radius where the deaf driver could operate the car.²³

Ontario: Deaf people in this province began driving automobiles shortly before 1910. Motor vehicle restrictions were non-existent until the issuance of licences became mandatory around 1927. According to a 1911 article in *The Gospel Light*, the first deaf Ontarian to own and operate a car was Andrew Noyes (b. Sept. 18, 1851; d. Jan. 28, 1940) of Denfield. He could run "it himself as well as any professional taxicab man.... He is the first deaf man we have heard of so well abreast with the times."²⁴ "The runner-up to the pioneer Noyes" was Oliver Nahrgang (b. Apr. 11, 1866; d. Dec. 2, 1930) of New Hamburg, who worked for the post office delivering mail on a rural route until his death in 1930.²⁵ The third licensed Ontario driver (who was still driving at the age of 82 in 1949) was William Patrick Quinlan (b. Dec. 24, 1867; d. July 12, 1960) of Stratford. All three were former students at the Ontario Institution for the



The Oliver Nahrgang family pose with their early convertible Model T Ford (circa 1915)

Courtesy of Helen I. (née Nahrgang) Foster (Dividing Creek, N.J.)

Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1871-1877, 1874-1881, and 1880-1886 respectively).

There was no Ontario statute prohibiting deaf people from applying for a driver's licence. However, during its 20th Biennial Convention (June 30-July 4, 1928) in Toronto, the Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD) formed a Committee on Automobile Legislation in Relation to Deaf Car Owners (also known as Automobile Owners' Protective Committee), with Howard Joshua Lloyd as chairman. Its purpose was to act as a watchdog to defend driving privileges for deaf Ontarians should the need arise.

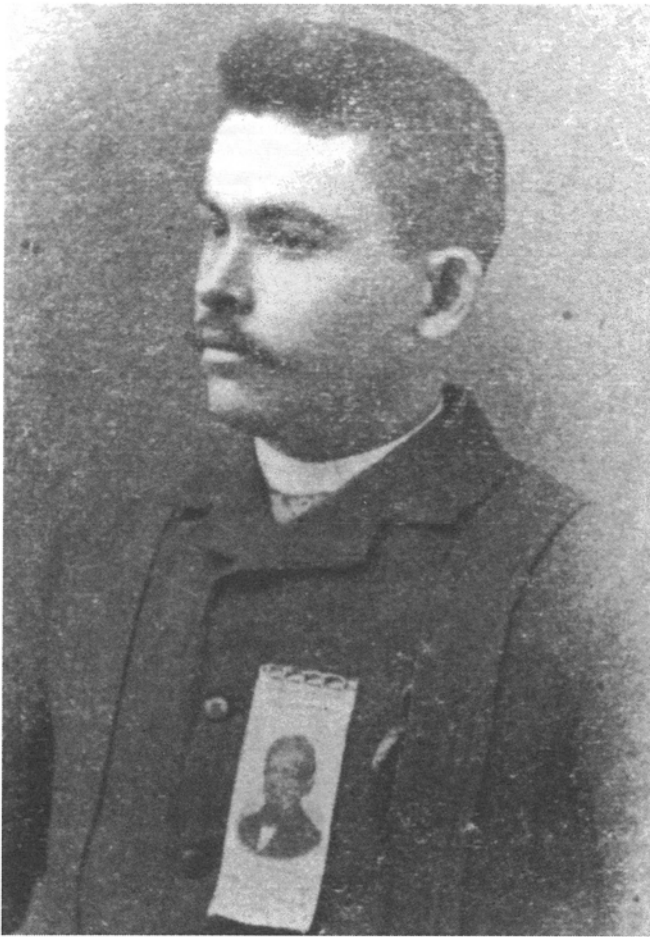
In 1930, J.P. Bickell, provincial registrar of motor vehicles, reported that 137 deaf drivers were licensed that year. He went on to add that "we have not experienced any difficulty with deaf and dumb drivers licensed in this province."²⁶ In 1939, according to an official of the Ontario Department of Highways, accident records "indicated deaf people were more alert than those who possessed all their faculties."²⁷ To make sure that this record remained good, deaf leaders urged the Deaf community to be especially responsible drivers. At the September 1942 biennial convention of the Ontario Association of the Deaf, Howard Lloyd noted: "When a deaf driver is in an accident, the authorities are liable to come to the conclusion [that] all deaf drivers are incapable of driving safely. Drive carefully."²⁸

For many years, deaf Ontarians were able to obtain automobile insurance without difficulty, although they often had to go through relatives and friends. Some deaf people were approved by local agents, but were later rejected by the company's head offices as possible risks to safe driving. In early 1947, automobile insurance coverage for previously approved deaf drivers was suddenly cancelled without warning and for no apparent reason. There were indications that the firms may have jumped to conclusions about the abilities of deaf people behind the wheel after a deaf driver crashed into a tree and died. Later that year, agent R.W. "Bud" Green of the Western Assurance Company in Toronto was able to obtain "Standard Rates for all Deaf Drivers," regardless of age or experience, providing that they were recommended by the OAD executive committee or the Canadian Association of the Deaf.²⁹ Joseph Nathan Rosnick (b. Dec. 12, 1901; d. Sept. 13, 1981) of Toronto was the first deaf man insured through this arrangement.³⁰ (By early 1951, 74 deaf drivers had obtained insurance from Green.)³¹ For their own protection, these organizations started keeping statistics on the safety record of deaf drivers. After a precedent was set in 1962 by the Ontario Motor League Provincial Association, who deleted the words "totally deaf" from its exclusion policy, other insurance companies began to underwrite coverage for deaf drivers as well.

One might assume that, having won the right to drive and be insured, deaf Canadians would no longer need to be vigilant about protecting these rights. However, news such as that reported in the January 5, 1990 *Niagara Falls Review* (Niagara Falls, Ont.) shows that unpleasant surprises for deaf drivers may lurk around "the bend in the road" at any time. In March 1988, Dino Beltrame, a deaf resident of Niagara Falls who had been driving for 40 years without a single accident, suddenly was notified that his automobile insurance policy was being cancelled "because he was deaf."³² After finding another company to insure him, Beltrame took his first insurance company to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which ruled in his favour and ordered the company to reimburse him "for lost wages, expenses, and general damage."³³

Homemade Automobile Built by a Deaf Canadian

In the spring of 1902, Jean Batiste Arsidas Benoit (b. Aug. 23, 1866; d. Unknown), a deaf French-Canadian who had



Jean Batiste Arsidas Benoit (circa 1890)
Representative Deaf Persons/Gallaudet University Archives

moved to the United States, successfully constructed the first horseless carriage ever to transverse the roads of Swift County, near Benson, Minn. His automobile received favourable notice in local newspapers. He was also the first deaf person in the state of Minnesota to own and operate a car.

Born in Canada and deafened at 16 years of age, Benoit moved with his parents to Massachusetts in 1885. A year later, the family travelled to Minnesota and settled in Benson. In March 1887, Benoit entered the Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault for two years, to learn English as well as the photographer's trade, which he later took up when his father set him up in a shop in a small Minnesota town. Unfortunately, fire later destroyed his photography shop.

On August 20, 1893, Benoit married a hearing woman who could speak and write both French and English. Two years later, he opened a business for himself in Benson. There he manufactured and sold bicycles (some for as much as \$75), and repaired practically anything, including firearms and sewing machines. Some time around February 1901, he started building his automobile in his spare time.

Benoit's homemade vehicle was completed in April 1902. Most of the parts were made of wood and cast into iron by a factory in Minneapolis. Operating on a five- or six-horse-power engine with a single cylinder and a six-gallon gasoline tank, the



J.B.A. Benoit and family in his home-made automobile (1902)
The Silent Worker/Gallaudet University Archives

two-seater could run "as fast as twenty miles an hour or as slow as four."³⁴ At the 4th of July celebration that year, more than 5,000 people witnesses Minnesota's first auto race, between the "Benson" by Benoit and an Oldsmobile owned by A.C. Rosetter. Although "both machines were somewhat temperamental, and considerable coaxing was necessary to get them on the race track," Benoit's "gasoline buggy" easily won in this best-two-out-of-three contest.³⁵ Later, Benoit had to change with the changing times. Shortly after Henry Ford revolutionized the automobile industry with mass production of cars, Benoit converted his bicycle shop into an auto repair shop and garage. Despite his years living in the United States, it is reported that he remained a French-Canadian at heart.

Deaf Truckers

By the late 1950s, deaf Canadians had won the right to apply and test for licences to operate automobiles. But as late as the 1980s in some provinces, it was still illegal for them to drive commercial vehicles, such as large trucks, or buses and other vehicles that carried a number of passengers. In Ontario in 1975, for example, regulations were being discussed that would require commercial vehicle drivers to "be able to hear a forced whisper at less than five feet in the best ear."³⁶ Deaf organizations protested the proposed law.

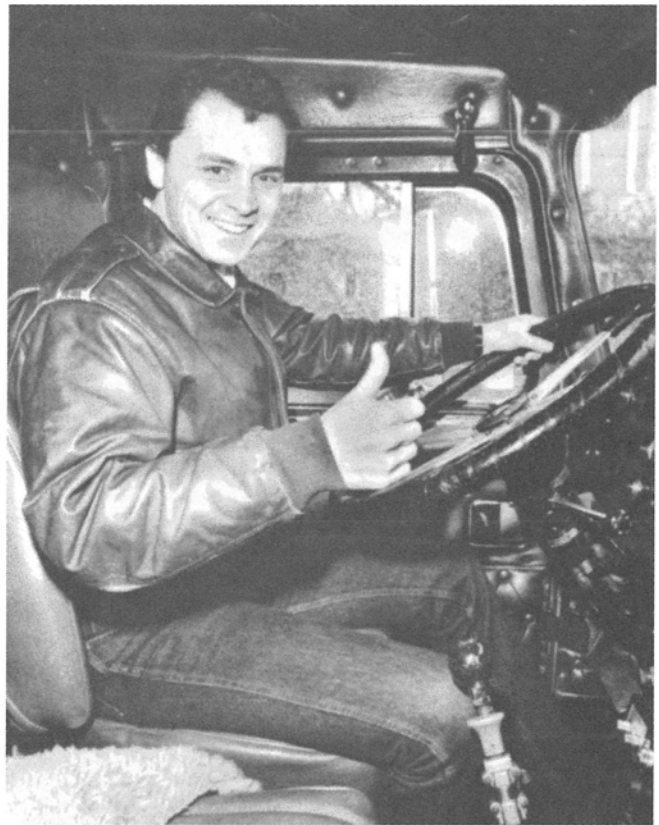
In 1976, Kenny Arthur Pearce (b. July 28, 1951) of Edmonton, Alta., a former student at the Alberta School for the Deaf in Edmonton (1956-1966), decided to upgrade his Class 3 truck driver's licence to a Class 1, which would permit him to operate a semi-tractor trailer truck. Pearce had been working as a truck driver for Pearce Transport Ltd., a successful Edmonton company owned and operated by his hearing father. He had driven smaller trucks (up to 4,536 kg) for several years without an accident, but despite this excellent driving record, he was turned down when he applied for his Class 1 licence.

Provincial legislation stated that deaf drivers were not permitted to obtain such licences, although other provinces — such as Ontario and Newfoundland — and 26 American states did license deaf truckers to operate the big tractor-trailer rigs. In the fall of 1976, Pearce appealed to the Motor Vehicles Branch of the Alberta government to reconsider his application. That same year, the Alberta Coordinating Council on Deafness also went to bat for deaf drivers. As a result, deaf Albertans finally were able to apply for Class 1 licences, but were still not permitted to operate buses, taxis, or ambulances.

On February 27, 1978, two other deaf Edmontonians graduated from a truck driving trade school and received a “certificate of competence in Class 1 driving.” John Paul Douzich (b. Mar. 12, 1952) and Wayne Douglas Monahan (b. Dec. 6, 1953) were former students at the Alberta School (1957-1970 and 1959-1971 respectively). They both attended Select Professional Operators Training Ltd., a newly formed trade school in Edmonton. After the school checked with the provincial government about its requirements regarding deaf truck drivers, the two deaf applicants were accepted into the training program. For nine days, Douzich and Monahan attended classroom lectures. Then, they received 64 hours of practical training on the road. In both situations, the men were provided with sign language interpreters, and both successfully graduated from the program. In 1993, Monahan completed another course from C.C.A. Truck Driver Training Ltd. of Calgary and received his certification to operate the longer, double-trailer rigs.

Blaine McGowan Newman (b. May 12, 1949), originally from Eureka, Calif., was the first deaf person in British Columbia to receive a licence to drive a heavy commercial truck. However, he had to battle the laws for more than five years to accomplish this feat. Newman, who lost his hearing at the age of three from a high fever, graduated from the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley in 1969. In 1973, he and his hearing wife moved to Victoria, B.C. For the next four years, he attended Victoria’s Camosun College part-time, taking courses in autobody repair. Newman later decided he wanted to drive a truck, like his hearing brother. But when he applied for a commercial licence, he found that laws in both British Columbia and Alberta stated that “a totally deaf person should not operate a passenger-carrying vehicle,” a category that includes commercial trucks.³⁷ After his application was rejected, Newman consulted both a lawyer and ombudsman. The ombudsman’s office investigated the driving records of deaf drivers in Canada and the United States and found that there were no documented safety reasons to prevent deaf people from obtaining licences to drive commercial vehicles.

Three years after Newman began his campaign for the right to drive trucks, the policy was finally changed by the provincial head of the motor vehicles department. This move permitted Newman to enrol in a training course for his trucker’s licence. With the help of a job placement counsellor at the Vancouver Island branch of the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH), he arranged for a leave of absence from his job at an autobody shop and enrolled in the Saferway Driving School. He was accompanied by an interpreter from the WIDHH, who signed classroom and on-site instructions from the teacher. During the next two years, Newman took both the-



“Thumbs up!” for trucker Newman

World Around You/Used with permission of the Gallaudet University Pre-College Programs

ory classes, exams and a driving test. He finally received his Class 1 licence on December 24, 1988. This allowed him to drive vehicles weighing over 4,000 kg, but he was not permitted to transport dangerous goods or drive passenger-carrying vehicles, such as taxis or buses. The dangerous goods restriction was reversed in 1990.

In Saskatoon, Sask., Phillip Lee DeBusschere (b. May 7, 1955) fought for the right to drive large (Class 1) commercial trucks as well. Deafened as an infant from spinal meningitis, he attended the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Saskatoon (1960-1973). DeBusschere got his driver’s licence at the age of 16, and drove gravel trucks for his father’s business. In 1982, he applied for a licence to drive the larger trucks, but his application was turned down by the Saskatchewan Highway Traffic Board, whose members felt that deaf truck drivers would be a safety hazard. He then complained to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission that the Traffic Board was discriminating against him and other deaf drivers who might want to drive big trucks. The Human Rights Commission investigated and reported that there was no evidence to support the claim that deaf drivers were more hazardous than hearing drivers. After six years of fighting, DeBusschere won the right for all deaf people in the province to apply for licences to operate heavy commercial trucks.

Late-deafened Canadian truckers did not escape the injustice of outmoded views regarding deaf drivers either. In the mid-1980s, Ed Erickson, a truck driver in British Columbia, lost

his job because he wore a hearing aid. Erickson had been a licensed driver of heavy trucks for more than 25 years. He had a British Columbia heavy-transport licence and had met all the hearing level standards required by the province. In 1979, as his hearing deteriorated, Erickson began wearing a hearing aid. Two years later, in September 1981, he was hired by Canadian Pacific Express and Transport, Ltd., but fired two months later because of the aid. His employer argued that Erickson's reliance on such a device made him a safety risk. Erickson hired a lawyer and, with the help of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, sought to have the firing overturned. According to his lawyer and the Commission, Erickson's was the first case involving gradual hearing loss in a federal jurisdiction in Canada. Further details on the outcome of this case were unavailable at the time of *Deaf Heritage in Canada* publication.

Deaf Rights in Employment

Trucking is not the only profession that has excluded deaf Canadians. In 1981, the Canadian Human Rights Commission was consulted regarding the right of a deaf person to be a letter carrier with the postal service.³⁸ Two Saskatchewan post office employees wanted to become letter carriers, but the post office said "no way." They argued that a "deaf letter carrier would not have the 'ability to communicate'... a passer-by asking directions could not be helped by a deaf carrier and ... the pitter, patter and growls of an angry dog might go unnoticed."³⁹ The Human Rights Commission convinced the postal service that communication could also include writing notes, and the postal service was ordered to no longer discriminate against deaf people applying for the position of letter carrier. Other provinces had already come to this conclusion, as evidenced by the successful careers of Robert Elder Sowerby of Moncton, N.B., and Paul Joseph Landry of Ottawa, Ont.⁴⁰

In an attempt to become Canada's first deaf registered nursing assistant, Barbara Sophie LeDrew (b. Dec. 3, 1965) raised the issue of fair testing to a national level. Born profoundly deaf to deaf parents, LeDrew attended the Newfoundland School for the Deaf in St. John's (1971-1985). She then enrolled in the nursing assistant program at the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Trades and Technology, where she graduated in January 1987 with a certificate of vocational education (nursing assistants).

Upon completing the program, each student must successfully write the Canadian Nursing Assistant Testing Service (CNATS) examination to become a Registered Nursing Assistant. This is where LeDrew's problems began. The director of testing services at the Canadian Nurses Association in Ottawa permitted only partial interpreting during the test, which was held in March 1987. Although some extra time was given in which to write the exam, the interpreter was allowed only to sign comparative words, phrases, or sentences that LeDrew did not understand in written form. The interpreter was directed not to change the English idioms or to restructure the sentences into American Sign Language (ASL) — which left the interpreter with very little interpreting to do. As a result, LeDrew did not pass the examination.

She applied to Ottawa for permission to receive more complete interpreting services at the next CNATS exam, scheduled for June 1987. Her appeal was denied. She then withdrew her name from the exam list until the interpreting issue could be resolved. During the summer of 1987, she worked as a nursing assistant at the Children's Rehabilitation Centre in Pleasantville, Nfld. She also began a campaign for improved interpreting at her next exam. With the aid of the Newfoundland Co-ordinating Council on Deafness, she tried to explain the difference between English and ASL to the Canadian Nurses Association. She also pointed out that without proper interpreting, the examination was actually testing her English language ability rather than her medical knowledge.



Barbara S. LeDrew at graduation (1987)

Courtesy of Barbara S. LeDrew (St. John's, Nfld.)

Concerned that the issue might have implications in terms of a national policy, the Council on Nursing Assistants of the Canadian Nurses Association decided to postpone LeDrew's case until a meeting with its committee on testing could be held. When the committee met in November 1987, the Council decided that LeDrew would have to retake the examination with no time extension and no interpreter present at all. She then took her case to the Newfoundland Human Rights Commission. Because the exam followed national, rather than provincial guidelines, however, the Newfoundland Human Rights Commission decided that her complaint was with the National Association Testing Service (located in Ontario). Her

case was transferred to the Ontario Human Rights Commission in December 1987. In May 1988, the case was transferred back to Newfoundland after the Ontario Human Rights Commission determined that the complaint did not rest with the national organization after all. LeDrew was then advised to take her case directly to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland in an action under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, because she had no funds left to continue the legal battle, she did not pursue this direction. In October 1988, she retook the CNATS examination, without time extensions or interpreters present, and again failed. This left only one more opportunity for her to take the test within the three-year deadline. By the time jurisdictional issues were discussed before an ad hoc commission of inquiry appointed under the Newfoundland *Human Rights Code*, LeDrew's deadline for re-testing had passed. To take the test again, she would have to return to school for a refresher course. She chose not to pursue the case any further.

This legal battle has had one positive outcome. In December 1990, LeDrew was informed that an amendment to the *Human Rights Code* had passed third reading, putting complaints such as hers within the jurisdiction of the Newfoundland Human Rights Commission. Although this action came too late to help her, LeDrew is pleased with the outcome. "It had been a long battle which will hopefully result in the opportunity for other deaf students to write examinations with the assistance of an interpreter. Even though I did not carry through with a career as a Nursing Assistant, I feel that my efforts were not in vain and others can benefit from my struggle."⁴¹ She has since completed a computer studies program at George Brown College in Toronto and has been employed as a bulk cashier at the Bank of Nova Scotia in St. John's, Nfld. since 1992. As she explains, "I am enjoying my present career in banking since it affords me the opportunity of dealing with customers and staff. My immediate aspiration is to become a teller with the bank and then hopefully move further up the ladder to success."⁴²

Legal Cases and the Issues of Communication Access

The following four legal cases illustrate some of the frustrations that deaf Canadians have faced in dealing with a society that sometimes overlooks or ignores the needs and concerns of deaf individuals. In 1977, a court case involving a congenitally deaf man with minimal language skills (the communication ability "of a 4¹/₂ year old child") drew the public's attention to the issue of those deaf people whose inability to follow complicated courtroom proceedings — even through a sign language interpreter — complicates their receiving a fair trial.⁴³ The case involved 21-year-old David Adamson of Vancouver, B.C., a former student at the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf who had been "shunted from foster home to foster home."⁴⁴ He was charged with manslaughter in the Skid Row stabbing of a 49-year-old hearing man. If the court determined that he was unfit to stand trial because he could not understand the proceedings, then Adamson would be considered insane and by law would have to be sent to a mental hos-

pital. One of the psychologists testifying on Adamson's behalf stated that "it's not a question of intelligence, but ability to understand and communicate.... Adamson is sane.... But with no language, he can't get through to us and we can't get through to him. And, under the law, that makes him insane."⁴⁵ In Adamson's case, the jury found him fit to stand trial, then found him guilty and sentenced him to seven years in prison. The subsequent media attention called into question whether or not he had understood what had occurred during his trial.

In the case of *Dodd vs. Murphy*, a deaf woman suddenly found herself the focus of issues concerning human rights and equality under the law. This case became one of the Ontario Deaf community's most publicized events during the summer of 1989. On June 30, 1989, Ontario courts issued an injunction to block a Toronto deaf woman from having an abortion. The injunction was initiated by her ex-boyfriend. She was served with papers, but did not contest the injunction or appear in court when requested. She later stated that she did not fully understand the written order requesting her presence in court on July 4, 1989, nor did she have legal counsel or an interpreter present when she was served the papers.

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) intervened on behalf of the woman, whom they considered to be "a deaf person whose legal rights have been infringed."⁴⁶ In a press release dated July 7, Denis Morrice, hearing executive director of the CHS, was quoted as saying: "While we appreciate the significance of other issues in this case, we believe that there was an inexcusable disregard for [her] rights and the rights of all disabled people."⁴⁷ Later that day, at their headquarters on Spadina Road in Toronto, the CHS joined together with the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD), the Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD), the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN), and Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped (ARCH) to hold a press conference. They argued that the court had failed to take into consideration such issues as the level of a deaf person's reading skills and amount of knowledge about courtroom procedures. They also pointed out that the court official served the papers without having an American Sign Language interpreter present, thus limiting the woman's opportunity to ask for clarification of the document. The CAD demanded that any proceeding against any deaf citizen be delayed until the following criteria were met: (1) the deaf person has been provided with an interpreter; (2) the deaf person truly and fully comprehends the situation and proceedings against him/her; and (3) the deaf person has been provided with a lawyer able to communicate clearly and effectively with him/her, on a one-to-one basis or through an interpreter. The press conference was carried on all television stations in the Toronto area, including the French CBC and multicultural Channel 47.

In her statement through her lawyer, the plaintiff said that the injunction was delivered to her on Friday, June 30, and she was ordered to appear in court on Tuesday, July 4. Because the papers were served just prior to a long holiday weekend, it was almost impossible to find an interpreter, especially on such short notice. She did appear in Ontario Supreme Court on Monday, July 10, to appeal the injunction decision. The court

agreed that several legal procedures had been violated, including not providing enough time for her to prepare for the original injunction hearing. The following day, she won her appeal. Following the Supreme Court's decision, the CAD issued a statement, in which they urged that:

all branches of the Canadian Bar Association, all Law Societies, and any and all legal institutions take immediate steps to enshrine in their rules and regulations specific guarantees of the right to judicial equality for deaf people.

*Such rights should include: (1) the right to be served any and all court documents in the company of a certified sign language interpreter or other mode of communication preferred by the client; (2) the right to the services of a certified interpreter and/or assistive listening devices at any and all court and/or legal procedures, the client having the right to choose his/her own interpreter or devices; and (3) the right to postpone legal proceedings until the deaf person clearly and demonstrably comprehends the significance of the proceedings and is able to fully participate in them.*⁴⁸

The statement also pointed out that these demands were compatible with existing legislation. "Under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, deaf people are guaranteed the right of equal access to judicial procedure; however, [this case] has clearly proven that the practical implementation of this right needs to be specifically detailed."⁴⁹ This case illustrates the frustration and difficulties that deaf people experience in fully participating in society. As Denis Morrice put it, "There is no justice for those who cannot participate in the legal system, or even find their way in. Ability to use and understand the system is the gateway to full participation in society."⁵⁰

Another legal case points out the need for more certified interpreters and their presence during medical emergencies. In a suit naming the B.C. Medical Services Commission (the agency responsible for administering health care for provincial residents), a deaf couple from British Columbia sued the provincial government for not paying the costs of medical interpreters for deaf patients. John and Linda Warren are the parents of twin girls. When his wife went into premature labour, John accompanied her into the delivery room. But there was no ASL interpreter present. Doctors and nurses were too busy to write notes to John, and their surgical masks prevented him from getting any information through lipreading. So the parents were helpless during the risky birth of their daughters. At one point before birth, the heartbeat of one of the twins started to slow down. Concern was evident on the faces and in the actions of the delivery room staff, but neither John nor Linda could find out what was wrong, or what the medical personnel wanted Linda to do. The couple endured a frantic few minutes before John got the message to tell his wife to "hurry up and push harder."⁵¹

When the Warrens filed suit on November 21, 1990, they contended that both the "federal and provincial medicare systems discriminate against deaf people because they refuse medical insurance benefits to cover sign language interpreters."⁵² The suit was prepared with the assistance of the Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, a non-profit group.

Pointing out that the provincial government pays for the training and wages of courtroom interpreters, John Warren indicated that it should also provide interpreters "to accommodate deaf people undergoing medical treatment."⁵³ Even after their daughters were born, the Warrens continued to be frustrated by the lack of accessible communication with hospital staff. The two girls, 10 weeks premature, stayed in the hospital more than a month following their births. Their parents visited daily, but could get only the barest information from the nurses' notes. Finally, the couple hired a freelance interpreter and were able at last to get detailed information on their babies' conditions. They also continued their lawsuit, which went to the B.C. Court of Appeals in February 1995.⁵⁴

One newspaper article summed up the underlying issues this way:

*Lawyers for the Community Legal Assistance Society claim the government's policy [not covering the cost of a sign language interpreter for deaf patients] violates the Charter's guarantees of equality under the law, regardless of physical disability.... The deaf aren't denied medical services, but professional interpreters ... aren't provided for by medical insurance.... If no volunteer [interpreter] is available, the deaf risk not understanding their own treatment, or misunderstanding a doctor's instructions....*⁵⁵

And yet another example of the frustrations deaf people have experienced in communication access involves jury trials. Deaf people have had to openly protest to gain the right to serve on a jury. In 1988, Ken Loehr of North Delta, B.C., received a call to jury duty for a criminal trial. He was pleased to have an opportunity to perform this service for his community. However, when he arrived in court, he was informed that his "inability to hear caused him to be disqualified from jury service."⁵⁶ Loehr felt he had a right as a Canadian citizen to serve on a jury, so he took his case to the Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, who filed suit in the British Columbia Supreme Court. The case sought "a declaration that the discriminating sections of the legislation [forbidding deaf people to serve on juries] contravene the Charter of Rights and Freedoms" and that "the provincial and federal governments be required to supply interpreters when deaf persons participate as jurors in jury trials."⁵⁷ Loehr's hearing lawyer, Peter Carver, noted that the case was "significant because being able to serve on a jury is one of the rights of citizenship, similar to voting, standing for election — everything we assume is our right and responsibility as a Canadian."⁵⁸ Attorney-general Bud Smith decided to amend the British Columbia Jury Act to allow deaf and blind people to sit on juries and promised to introduce legislative amendments at the next session of the legislature. Following this announcement, the Community Legal Assistance Society decided to withdraw its case from the trial schedule. Smith announced through the media that he felt the "current law is contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. New legislation will provide interpreters for deaf jurors as is currently done for deaf witnesses. It is outrageous to arbitrarily exclude any individual because of a hearing or visual impairment."⁵⁹

In 1991 in Calgary, Alta., Karyn Goldstein was also turned

down for jury duty because she was deaf. She was told that “the presence of her sign-language interpreter could pose ‘technical’ problems because there would be a 13th person sitting with the jury.”⁶⁰ She contacted the Alberta Human Rights Commission to see if they could assist her in overturning the objections of the court. However, when the representatives of the Human Rights Commission investigated the case, they concluded that the Calgary court system had operated within its legal and technical rights. Goldstein and her family moved from Calgary soon after that, and she did not pursue the matter any further.

Rallies, Public Protests, and Demonstrations on Educational Issues

In recent years, deaf people as a group have begun to stand up for their rights and make their wishes and needs known in a variety of ways. Some of these demonstrations have been more public than others. Described below are some of the more significant 20th-century rallies and their outcomes.

1950 in Ontario: One of the demonstrations for deaf rights came when the Ontario Royal Commission on Education issued a report in 1950. The Commission’s work had begun in April 1945; they had received 258 briefs and 44 memoranda.⁶¹ Part of the report discussed the education of deaf students. The commission recommended that deaf children be educated in local community day programs instead of residential schools, so they could remain in the home; furthermore, they should be integrated with hearing children as much as possible. The report also urged that only the pure oral method be used in educational settings. The commission further advised against hiring deaf teachers, because their presence could hinder the acquisition of language by the oral method. All of these recommendations were strongly opposed by the Deaf community.

One member of the Deaf community who responded to this report was David Peikoff, then secretary of the Canadian Association of the Deaf.⁶² He charged that “the findings flew in the teeth of the evidence and are regarded by virtually all the adult deaf in the Dominion as tragic.”⁶³ In the same article, Peikoff claimed that the Commission erred in four ways: by “(1) recommending education by predominantly oral means; (2) urging mushroom expansion of day schools in which pupils would gather in small classes and live at their homes; (3) over-estimating and over-emphasizing the value of pre-school training of very small children; and (4) refusing to approve the hiring of deaf teachers for deaf children.”⁶⁴ Finally, Peikoff charged the Commission with listening only to oralists:

The oralist extremists close their eyes to the fact that huge numbers of deaf children cannot master speech with oral instruction and nothing else.... On the other hand, they ignore the proven fact that under the combined system, deaf students can master subjects requiring the utmost precision, such as calculus.

The rigid oralist approach is narrow and aimed at the production

*of speech above all else. The combined system enables a deaf person to become a well-integrated, happy individual.*⁶⁵

Peikoff scathingly denounced the Commission for its recommendation that deaf adults not be hired to teach deaf children.

Deaf teachers have proven over and over again their importance in this complex field of education. Deaf students need sympathy and understanding and the deaf teacher provides both. He has been through the mill and surmounted the obstacles of language and speech. Hence he is better able than anyone else to help others do the same thing.

*But what does the Commission, taking the word of hearing theorists, urge? Doing away with them on the grounds that they will retard language development! The fact is that their ability to impart mastery of language is their greatest asset! The Commission has its facts exactly backward.*⁶⁶

Despite the outcry from the Deaf community, oralism continued to be the only sanctioned approach to communication in Canadian classrooms until the 1970s, when more protests occurred, some led by deaf students themselves.

1973 in Saskatchewan: In early April 1973, seniors at the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf (later known as the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf) in Saskatoon walked out of classes to protest the school’s communication policy. At that time, oralism predominated in most Canadian schools for deaf students, and the school in Saskatoon was no exception. Some of the students had visited the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg and had seen the philosophy of total communication in operation there. After returning from their trip, the students demanded that the Saskatchewan School stop their non-signing policy in the classroom and institute “total communication, including the use of sign language and finger-spelling in addition to oral methods of lip reading used at present.”⁶⁷ The students also complained that they could not communicate with the staff in the dormitories or infirmary, because the use of signs was prohibited.

The students picketed in front of the school for two days, and threatened to stay out of classes until the school changed its policies. They finally agreed to return to class while their demands were being considered by the Saskatchewan Department of Education. Seven weeks later, the department announced that the philosophy of total communication would be instituted at the Saskatchewan School, beginning the next September. The students had won.

1976-1978 in British Columbia: Parents, deaf children, and deaf adults in the Vancouver area protested in a variety of ways following an announcement by the provincial Ministry of Education recommending decentralization of educational programs for deaf students. Decentralization would mean that many, if not all, of the children attending the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver would be removed from the residential school and integrated into local school programs with hearing students who could not communicate with

them. Advocates for the Deaf community complained that the ministry had made its decision without consulting the parents of these children, deaf adults, and experts in the field of deaf education. A group of concerned deaf and hearing citizens started a newspaper, called *The B.C. Deaf Advocate*, to keep interested readers up-to-date on the issues. On July 16, 1976, approximately 160 deaf adults, who were in Vancouver attending the 18th Triennial Convention of the Western Canada Association of the Deaf, travelled to Victoria and picketed the legislative building. They expressed their displeasure at the proposed decentralization. By August, a total of 27 organizations had voiced their opposition to the government's plans, including the Western Institute for the Deaf, the Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf, the Vancouver Catholic Deaf Association, the Federation of Silent Sports of Canada, and the Council of Organizations Serving the Hearing Impaired of British Columbia (COSHI-BC). In November 1976, the COSHI-BC sponsored a workshop to bring together parents, teachers, deaf adults, deaf children, and representatives from the school board. The three-day workshop finally allowed the public a chance to give its input and share information. Another forum was held on January 22, 1977, attended by more than 200 people. Members of the Deaf community and parents of Jericho Hill students were still openly protesting the government's decentralization plan in June 1978. They were also opposed to the announcement that the school for the blind on the Jericho Hill campus would close and be replaced by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, a police training academy. The protesters were partially successful — the Jericho Hill Provincial School remained open for deaf students, but the blind students were decentralized and their facilities taken over by the Justice Institute.

The 1980s — A Decade of Human Rights Movements for Deaf Canadians

The 1980s turned out to be a decade of human rights movements for deaf people in Canada. Between 1985 and 1990, concerned members of the Deaf community and hearing supporters rallied around several issues related to the education of deaf students.

In 1985, the Ontario government implemented Bill 82, which supported the integration (mainstreaming) of all handicapped students into public schools. The Deaf community had not been consulted when this bill was being drafted, and they were outraged when they learned of the legislation. Following the implementation of mainstreaming in Canadian schools, the enrollment at the residential institutions began to decline. Members of the Deaf community began to discuss ways of convincing the Legislature to recognize American Sign Language (ASL) as the language of classroom instruction for deaf students. In May 1988, the Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD) used the political system to its advantage. Disturbed by the condition of education for the deaf children of the province, the OAD submitted a brief to Queen's Park on May 4, 1988. The

brief's preamble asserted that deaf people were "seeking the right to exist as a full and distinct culture within the cultural mosaic of Canada ... seeking the right to use our language and preserve our culture."⁶⁸ The brief then explained the OAD's stand on ASL, and requested that the government "formally recognize American Sign Language as the language of the deaf in the province."⁶⁹ The group further urged that ASL be used as "the primary language of instruction in programs and schools for the Deaf," that the schools hire more deaf staff, and that the government establish a community-based school board, with a membership of 51 percent deaf, 49 percent hearing.⁷⁰ The closing section of the Ontario Association of the Deaf's brief made a powerful statement:

*We can be "silent" no longer. The time is right for us to move forward toward self-determination, toward equal participation, and community pride. History has closed many doors on us — doors that represent isolation and oppression. In partnership with you ... let us together open these doors and allow deaf people to be heard in society, to allow them to contribute their vision, their dreams to this community of communities which is Canada.*⁷¹

In the meeting of the legislature on May 5, 1988, Richard Johnston, Ontario's New Democratic Party MPP (Member of Provincial Parliament) for Scarborough, introduced a private member's bill. The bill would require the Ministry of Education to conduct a six-month study on the needs of deaf students in the province. Gary Malkowski, chairman of the education task force of the OAD, presented a statement in support of the bill and emphasized that most deaf people in the province supported a bilingual educational system that would allow deaf children to learn basic skills in both American Sign Language and English. He also indicated that the "Deaf President Now" movement in March 1988 at Gallaudet University had inspired deaf people in Ontario to take more visible action on their own behalf. In response, the Ontario government passed a resolution that established three committees to investigate the educational systems used with its deaf citizens. One of these, an internal committee, consisted of specialists in the field of education who were serving on school boards in Ontario. An external committee was also formed, composed of education specialists from outside the province. And an advisory committee was charged with monitoring the work of the internal and external committees. The advisory committee was composed primarily of local residents, parents of deaf children, and representatives from such diverse organizations as the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Deaf Children's Society of Ontario, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children, and the Ontario Association of the Deaf. The internal and external committees were told to examine such issues as the most appropriate method for teaching deaf children, the small numbers of deaf people working in the educational system, and the lack of services for francophone deaf students in Ontario. The review by the Ministry of Education was scheduled to be completed by November. However, it was not released until December 20, 1989, more than a year later.

In September 1988, the OAD passed a resolution at its 48th biennial general meeting that contained a six-point policy:

(1) To recognize ASL and LSQ [Langue des Signes Québécoise] as languages of the Deaf community; (2) to use English and ASL or French and LSQ as the languages in instruction programs for deaf pupils and students; (3) to establish an exemplary training program for teachers of the deaf to prepare them for bilingual (ASL/English or LSQ/French) and bicultural education programs; (4) to develop provincial ASL/LSQ curriculum (preschool through Grade 13) with the guidance of experts recommended by the Deaf community; (5) that all local and provincial advisory councils on deaf education be composed of a majority of deaf individuals; and (6) to actively recruit and promote accessibility to deaf individuals in the fields of education, counseling, administration, and all human services provided to the Deaf community setting the goals for increasing the numbers of deaf professionals.⁷²

Meanwhile, deaf Canadians in other provinces were also busy standing up for their rights. Deaf Maritimers were also inspired by the “Deaf President Now” movement at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. In Nova Scotia, many of the 33 deaf students who attended the vocational training program at the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped (APRCHH) in Amherst went on strike on January 25, 1989. They complained that (1) the teachers lacked fluency in sign language, (2) the school employed too few deaf teachers in the program, (3) there was no professional interpreter at the school, and (4) the training programs were not preparing them to compete with hearing people in the job market. The students were joined in their protest by 15 deaf people from the Halifax area, some of them former students of the school. Other student complaints centred on the lack of TTYs at the school and the absence of flashing lights in the washrooms to alert students to fire alarms.

The students returned to class the next day after being assured that their complaints were being treated seriously by the school administrators. Meanwhile, the Coordinating Council on Deafness of Nova Scotia demanded an independent inquiry into the province’s educational programs for deaf students. The director of the APRCHH stated that there was no need for such an inquiry and defended the school’s use of Signed English. She stated that “all teachers are expected to be competent in Signed English; however, the degree of competency depends on the course they are instructing.”⁷³ As might be expected, the students disagreed with this assessment. The dialogue continued between students, administrators of the APRCHH, and the ministers of education throughout the month of February. The government called for more input from deaf consumers, a move that was met with cautious optimism by the Deaf community. On February 28, Deaf community representatives met with the deputy minister of education for Nova Scotia, who promised better representation of deaf people on the board of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA), as well as on various advisory committees. In June 1989, James Keir McLean (b. Apr. 27, 1933; d. Jan. 17, 1992) of Halifax became the first deaf representative to serve on the APSEA board of directors.⁷⁴

Deaf people in the prairie provinces were also active. In

December 1988, deaf Manitobans successfully lobbied their provincial government to recognize American Sign Language as the official language of the Manitoba Deaf community. Meanwhile, in Saskatchewan, another protest involving the school in Saskatoon occurred in the early spring of 1989, when recommendations were made to close the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf. With the decline in enrolment (from one hundred in 1982 to 58 in 1989), the provincial government felt that special and mainstream classes would be sufficient to meet the needs of deaf children. A committee was set up to study to examine the issues. Even before the committee report became public, about one hundred protesters flocked to the legislature to show their displeasure with the rumoured recommendation to close the school.

As soon as the report was released, it came under immediate criticism. Some of the school’s parents, students, teachers, and members of the Deaf community so vehemently disagreed with the report that they eventually took their complaints to court in 1991. A member of the A.G. Bell Association for the Deaf endorsed the suggestions in the report, but at the same time criticized the committee for not involving parents of deaf children enough in the decision-making process. A spokesperson for the Coalition on Deaf Education said that the report lacked in-depth analysis of the educational needs of deaf children and pointed out that one-half of the committee (two of the four committee members) disagreed with many of the recommendations. The Saskatchewan Deaf Association also questioned the quality of the review and demanded “that a deaf education review committee with greater representation of deaf people be formed; that the task force’s recommendations be put on hold, and that there be more research into deaf education.”⁷⁵ The Canadian Association of the Deaf expressed its concern as well and stated that

It is vital that deaf students receive a quality education, not only in order to improve their chances of obtaining satisfying employment but also because the schools for the deaf are the crucibles of deaf culture and hence of the deaf person’s own self-perception. The closure of a deaf school such as the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf is not only a blow to quality education for the deaf, it is also an act of destruction against a unique and precious culture.⁷⁶

The two dissenters on the committee — Patricia Trofimenkoff (a hard-of-hearing teacher and a member of the local Deaf community) and William Lockert (principal of the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School) — issued a minority opinion that emphasized the need for the school to remain open. They stated that ASL should be included in the curriculum and that the government should provide money so deaf students could attend out-of-province colleges. Trofimenkoff also complained that “the decision [to close the school] was already made before we started. They seemed like they listened, but nothing was ever done.”⁷⁷

A few months later, members of the Saskatchewan Deaf community was again up in arms when they learned that one of the “experts” used by the task force as an authority on the edu-



Some of the supporters of the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf in Saskatoon brave cold weather to get their point across (1989)

Photo credit: Saskatoon Star-Phoenix photo (Saskatoon, Sask.)

education of deaf children had plagiarized information from another report. Because some of the material used to support the government's decision to close the school had been copied from a United States report, the Deaf community called for total withdrawal of the recommendations. The provincial edu-

cation official who had plagiarized from the U.S. report was disciplined by the Saskatchewan Department of Education, but the demands of the Deaf community were ignored.⁷⁸

On May 12, 1989 (National Deaf Education Day), the Saskatchewan dispute took to the streets when about 40 people formed a picket line in front of the Saskatoon office of Premier Grant Devine. They demanded that the school remain open, pointing out that regular schools lacked qualified staff to work with deaf students and could not provide the unique atmosphere found at a residential school. The demonstrators asked that the province suspend its plans to close the school over a three-year period while an educational review committee examined the problem further.

In other cities across Canada, more than 2,000 deaf protesters were taking to the streets on May 12th as well, gathering in front of legislative buildings to demand improvements to deaf education. The "National Deaf Education Day" rallies had four main goals: to persuade the provincial governments (1) to reconsider closing schools for deaf students; (2) to integrate sign language into the instructional setting; (3) to hire more deaf teachers; and (4) to have decision-making boards be composed primarily of deaf people. In Vancouver, about 200 people met at Robson Square to watch presentations about the educational system in British Columbia, where there had been



Supporters of improved education for deaf students rallied in Halifax, N.S. (1989)

Photo credit: Anita Martinez (Halifax, N.S.)

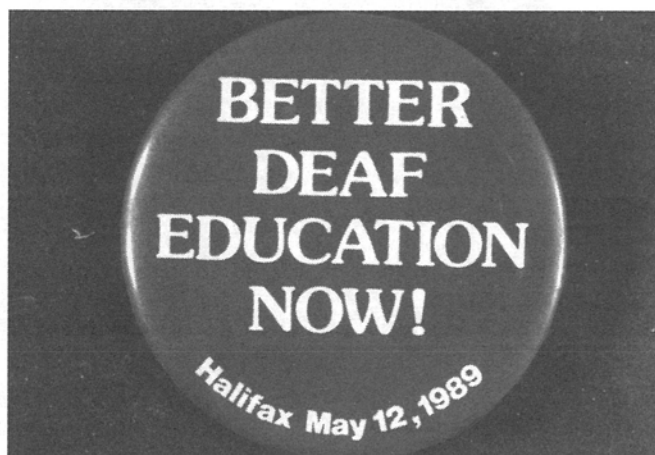
discussion of closing the Jericho Hill Provincial School facility and moving it to a new (hearing) school in a more centrally located part of the Greater Vancouver area. Deaf citizens of Alberta held two rallies, one in Edmonton where one hundred people marched to the provincial legislature, and the other in Calgary, where 75 people rallied at city hall, the Calgary school board office, and the federal government building. Deaf Albertans were rallying to have ASL recognized as the language of deaf people. The Alberta School for the Deaf was not in jeopardy of being closed at that time; in fact, its deaf principal, Joseph McLaughlin, was providing strong leadership on behalf of the deaf students.

In Winnipeg, deaf protesters marched and met with the media. The Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf agreed to set up a deaf education movement committee to work with the provincial department of education. (Deaf Manitobans had already won one victory — on December 6, 1988, ASL was recognized as the official language of deaf people in the province.) In Halifax, about one hundred people marched to the legislative assembly in support of quality education for deaf students.

Ontario's rallies occurred in Thunder Bay, London, Belleville, and Toronto, co-ordinated by the Deaf Ontario Now Committee. The demonstrations were attended by both deaf adults and deaf students from the local schools. Representatives of the Deaf community in Québec joined the Ontario rallies to show their support.

Ontario again became the focal point of protest in the fall of 1989. In September, the Ontario Association of the Deaf reworded its 1988 six-point policy statement into a five-point statement (which was approved by the membership on October 22, 1989):

(1) to press the Ministry of Education to accept recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Deaf Education Review; (2) to recognize and accept ASL/LSQ as one of the languages of instruction in deaf education; (3) to hire more deaf professionals, teachers of deaf and administrators in deaf educational settings; (4) to press the Ministry of Education to hire a deaf director of deaf education; and (5) to ensure that deaf schools remain open.⁷⁹



Button from the 1989 "National Deaf Education Day" rally in Nova Scotia

Photo credit: Chun Louie and Joan K. Schlub, Gallaudet University Photo Services



"Deaf Ontario Now" button designed for marchers in Ontario's rallies

Photo credit: Chun Louie and Joan K. Schlub, Gallaudet University Photo Services

On Friday, October 13, Canadian students at Gallaudet University marched to the Canadian embassy in Washington, D.C. in support of the "Deaf Ontario Now" fight. More protests were held in Ontario on October 21, 1989 to support the recommendations of the Ministry of Education's external committee. Rallies were held in London, Belleville, Kingston, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, and Toronto. On December 14, 1989, 50 protesters from the OAD occupied the office of the Minister of Education demanding the release of the report on the education of the deaf. The protesters were concerned that the ministry would continue to delay releasing the study, which was now more than a year overdue. A written promise to release the document (now called *The Deaf Education Review Report*) was received from the Minister of Education as a result of this demonstration, and on December 20, 1989 the ministry kept its word. The report strongly recommended the recognition of ASL/LSQ as languages of instruction. The ministry's recommendations also supported increasing the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing teachers in the school system. The importance of this last point was graphically brought home by a protest on February 23, 1990 at the Robarts School for the Deaf in London, Ont., where demonstrators urged the school to hire more deaf teachers and use ASL as the language of instruction. People came from Toronto, Belleville, Kitchener, Guelph, and Niagara Falls to support the London protestors. Despite the cold winds, low temperatures, and snow, about 50 individuals braved the elements to attend the three-hour rally.⁸⁰

Release of *The Deaf Education Review Report* did not stop the efforts of the Ontario Deaf community and its supporters, however. Formal legislation was also in the works on behalf of deaf people. On March 22, 1990, MPP Johnston introduced Bill 112 in the Ontario Legislature at Queen's Park (provincial government). This bill called for the recognition and acceptance of ASL (and Langue des Signes Québécoise [LSQ] in French-using schools) as a language of instruction and heritage in Ontario schools. Further, the bill required Ontario schools to designate ASL/LSQ as recognized languages. By May 1990, the bill still

had not become law, although it had gone through a second reading and was waiting for a third reading. The Ontario Association of the Deaf, together with other local deaf organizations, organized a rally on May 4, 1990 in support of the bill. Rallies were also called in Windsor, London, Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and Belleville. Canadian students at Gallaudet University gathered in support of what was being called the "National Deaf Education Movement," and organized a solidarity protest at the Canadian embassy in Washington, D.C. The Canadian Club at Gallaudet advertised the event as "Deaf Ontario Now Returns!"

The demonstrations in Ontario focused on three basic demands: (1) make ASL/LSQ the language of instruction in the schools; (2) hire more deaf teachers and deaf administrators in the province's educational programs; and (3) keep the three provincial schools at London, Milton, and Belleville open. On June 10, 1990, about 22 protestors assembled at the kickoff event for National Access Awareness Week, carrying signs in support of Bill 112. Later, CBC television presented a 30-minute special on the problems of illiteracy among deaf and learning disabled people. The show, called *Between the Lines*, included scenes of the lobbying efforts by the Deaf community on behalf of Bill 112.

Despite these efforts, Minister of Education Sean Conway failed to support Bill 112, much to the great dismay of the Ontario Deaf community. On June 14, deaf parents and children protested at the office of Ontario Premier David Peterson. In Kitchener, Milton, St. Catharines, and Toronto, deaf people

also assembled to protest the government's lack of support for Bill 112.

Ontario was not the only province where the Deaf community was becoming more visible in their demands. In April 1991, Saskatchewan protesters took their complaints to the Court of Queen's Bench Chambers to start legal action against the provincial department of education, claiming that government leaders were not offering deaf children suitable opportunities for accessible education. The protesters were upset about the impending closing of the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School in Saskatoon. The executive members of the Association of Canadian Educators of the Hearing Impaired (ACEHI) pointed out that other provinces (such as Ontario and Alberta) had faced similar situations of declining enrollment at their provincial schools, but had "more effectively evaluated the needs of their deaf students and have made creative and innovative changes in structure to balance the program needs of deaf students with the fiscal realities of operation" without closing the schools.⁸¹ This time, efforts to keep the school open were in vain, however. The R.J.D. Williams Provincial School closed its doors at the end of June 1991.

On June 7, 1991, deaf Nova Scotians rallied to protest the government's rejection of a proposal that would provide funds for a service agency for deaf and hard-of-hearing people living in the Cape Breton area. About 50 deaf people picketed city hall and then marched to the legislative building. Vince McLean, Liberal leader, moved to provide financial support for services



Ontarians rally at Queen's Park in Toronto to support the use of ASL in schools
 Photo credit: M. Sharon Fineberg (Toronto, Ont.)

in Cape Breton. Alexa McDonough, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), made a similar motion, but both motions were shelved. While McLean spoke, deaf protesters in the gallery waved handkerchiefs printed with the letters, "S-U-P-P-O-R-T D-E-A-F C-B," and signed "We want interpreters now," which their interpreters voiced. At a press conference following the demonstration, McDonough and representatives of deaf consumer groups in the province expressed their concerns about the lack of interpreters, the closing of the interpreter training program at St. Mary's University in Halifax, and the lack of counselling services for the deaf residents of Nova Scotia.

Meanwhile, on the west coast, the Deaf community was losing the battle to keep the Jericho Hill Provincial School open. In March 1992, the Burnaby, B.C. school district assumed responsibility for the Vancouver school. The buildings were to be closed and the students integrated into new elementary and secondary school buildings being built in Burnaby. On March 14, 20 students from Jericho Hill demonstrated outside the Burnaby school district offices, demanding changes at their school. They complained that the teachers could not sign clearly. They also expressed concerns about what they saw as negative effects of integration. The student demands included hiring deaf teachers to a ratio of 51 percent deaf and 49 percent hearing, and hiring a deaf person as the principal. Only 3 to 4 percent of the staff at that time were deaf, compared to 60 percent of the teachers at the Alberta School for the Deaf in Edmonton. The students stressed that having deaf teachers would significantly improve classroom communication and lead to improved quality of the education they were receiving. They also demanded that changes to the operation of the school curriculum be in place by the time they were absorbed into the Burnaby school system in 1993.

Results of These Protests: The deaf citizens of Canada know what it means to "win some, lose some." Not all of their rallies, lobbying, and political action bore fruit. On the positive side, the efforts of deaf Ontarians convinced the Ministry of Education to hire a number of deaf teachers between 1990 and 1994. Twenty were placed in the Ernest C. Drury School in Milton, nine in the Robarts School in London, and three in the Sir James Whitney School in Belleville. A teacher training program was established at York University in Toronto in 1991; nine deaf, one hard-of-hearing, and 11 hearing students completed the 1991-1992 program. A deaf person was hired to serve as program director for the implementation of a bilingual/bicultural educational environment at all three provincial schools. The Ernest C. Drury School started a pilot bilingual/bicultural program in the fall of 1990, and the other two schools began planning for similar programs. The Ministry of Education also announced its commitment to recognizing ASL as a language of instruction. Unfortunately, with the 1990 election, Bill 112 died in the Ontario legislature. It was later replaced by Bill 4. In 1993, Bill 4 — which authorized ASL and LSQ as official languages of instruction in the classroom — passed its third and final reading (on July 21st), received Royal Assent on July 29th, and became part of the Ontario Education Act.

In other parts of Canada, results were not as positive. The

school for francophone deaf female students in Québec was closed in 1975; the school for francophone deaf males was closed three years later. In 1991, the Saskatchewan Deaf community lost its fight to keep the R.J.D. Williams Provincial School for the Deaf in Saskatoon from closing. The Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver was taken over by the Burnaby School Board and the students moved to new classrooms in two hearing school complexes. By the end of 1994, the only provincially run schools specifically for deaf students were: *Ontario* — The Sir James Whitney School, Belleville; the Ernest C. Drury School, Milton; The Robarts School, London; *Nova Scotia* — The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority - Resource Centre for the Hearing Impaired, Amherst (which was later closed and the students transferred to Halifax to share the facilities of the Sir Frederick Fraser School for the Blind); *Newfoundland* — The Newfoundland School for the Deaf, St. John's; *Manitoba* — The Manitoba School for the Deaf, Winnipeg; and *Alberta* — The Alberta School for the Deaf, Edmonton (which ceased to be a provincially operated school when it became an alternative program administered by the Edmonton Public Schools Board in September 1995). (The Mackay Center for Deaf Children, Montréal, Québec is non-provincial and privately funded.)

Students Protest Street Sign

An example of students assuming an active role in their own empowerment occurred at the Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf in Amherst, N.S. in 1973.

Town officials had erected a sign near the school to alert drivers to the presence of deaf children. However, students found the wording and appearance of the sign demeaning. As Alan Williams (one of the students) put it, the sign "warned the people to think we are wild animals. It makes the drivers [think] that we are going to attack cars and drivers. I disliked that sign Danger Deaf Children, because it makes me embarrassed [sic]."⁸² The students expressed their opinions at meetings with school officials and through a letter to the editor of the *Amherst Daily News*, written by Arlene Burris, president of the student association. The following excerpts from her letter illustrate the students' concerns:

We appreciate the fact that the town of Amherst wants people to be careful while driving past the school for the deaf.... A sign of Danger generally indicates something dangerous and perhaps vicious, something to avoid rather than just be careful around. We the students of I.S.D. find the sign "Danger Deaf Children" insensitive and degrading. We would prefer a sign which would more kindly indicate that drivers should drive carefully.⁸³

The town listened to the students' suggestions, and a new, more appropriate sign was erected.

Problems Involving Voting Rights

Another area in which the rights and freedoms of deaf people can be overlooked involves the act of voting. As was point-



The sign that the students disliked (the word "Danger" was painted bright red)

The New Scotian/Courtesy of Elizabeth Doull (Halifax, N.S.)



Students approved the wording on this new sign

The New Scotian/Courtesy of Elizabeth Doull (Halifax, N.S.)

ed out in 1990 by James Roots, executive director of the Canadian Association of the Deaf, "virtually every step of the [electoral] process involves difficulties for the deaf citizen."⁸⁴ In Canada, federal enumerators go house to house registering voters. But if a deaf person fails to detect their knock at the door (or can't understand the legal language of the information slip left behind by the enumerator), it becomes difficult to be placed on voters' lists. Even after being registered, deaf people have difficulty "getting information in campaigns because polit-

ical parties frequently don't use captions on TV ads or provide sign language interpreters at candidates' debates and public meetings."⁸⁵ It appears that in addition to the issues of drivers' licences and education, it is time for deaf people to become more involved in the political arena, whether as candidates or as voters. Reforms in the electoral systems that will increase its accessibility for the deaf voter are overdue and may need to become yet another focus of protest by the Canadian Deaf community.

A Few Things More ...



Close-up view of Samuel T. Greene's tombstone with fingerspelled surname
 Courtesy of Anne E. McKercher (Milton, Ont.)/Photo Credit: Hau-Sun ("Sunny") Ho (Mississauga, Ont.)

This chapter contains miscellaneous entries on monuments, visits, honours, statistics, and displays of affection and pride by deaf Canadians and their hearing friends and families.

Tombstones

On October 31, 1882, teachers, school officials, pupils, and the Deaf community gathered in Section "M" of the Belleville Cemetery, located 1.6 kilometres west of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. They had assembled to witness the unveiling of a monument to the memory of John Barrett McGann (b. Dec. 25, 1810; d. Jan. 22, 1880), the hearing man who pioneered the teaching of deaf students in Ontario in 1858.¹ The monument, a circular column of white marble standing on a square pedestal, has McGann's surname engraved in fingerspelling. The inscription reads: "Sacred to the Memory of John B. McGann, Pioneer of Deaf-Mute Education in Canada.

Died January 22nd, 1880 In His 69th Year. Erected by the Deaf and Dumb of Ontario, Canada."

Located in Section "P" of the Belleville Cemetery, not far from McGann's gravesite, is another distinctive tombstone engraved with the manual alphabet. In the fall of 1890, a fine monument of Scotch granite was erected to the memory of Samuel Thomas Greene (b. June 11, 1843; d. Feb. 17, 1890), a deaf teacher at the Ontario Institution for 20 years (1870-1890) and co-founder of the Ontario Deaf-Mute Association (in 1886).² Like McGann's, Greene's surname is also fingerspelled on his marker. The inscription reads: "In Memory of Samuel Thomas Greene, B.A., Died February 17, 1890, Aged 45 [sic] years 8 Mo. & 6 Days ... Erected by His Mute and Hearing Friends." (Actually, Greene would have been 46 years old at the time. According to admission records at his schools in Hartford, Conn. and Washington, D.C. as well as his birth certificate and historical society records on his wife's family, he was born on June 11, 1843, not 1844 as many have believed.)



McGann's tombstone

Courtesy of Anne E. McKercher (Milton, Ont.)/Photo Credit: Hau-Sun ("Sunny") Ho (Mississauga, Ont.)



Greene's tombstone

Courtesy of Anne E. McKercher (Milton, Ont.)/Photo Credit: Hau-Sun ("Sunny") Ho (Mississauga, Ont.)



Close-up view of McGann's surname in the manual alphabet

Courtesy of Anne E. McKercher (Milton, Ont.)/Photo Credit: Hau-Sun ("Sunny") Ho (Mississauga, Ont.)

A more recent gravestone that uses the manual alphabet can be found in St. Anthony Cemetery in Edmonton, Alta.³ The flat, black granite stone marks the grave of Edward Petrone (b. Jan. 27, 1918; d. Dec. 27, 1991), who attended the Manitoba School

for the Deaf in Winnipeg (1931-1940). He is the late husband of the former Rosalie Bodrug (b. Dec. 14, 1919), an alumna of the Manitoba School (1931-1940) and the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Saskatoon (1940-1941). They had two deaf children — Angela Jean (née Petrone) Stratiy, currently chair of the Interpreter Training Program at Grant MacEwan Community College in Edmonton, and Robert Edward Petrone, teacher at the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton, Ont. since 1990.

In 1885, the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets (Catholic Institution for Deaf and Dumb Males) in Montréal, Québec, purchased a burial plot in Section "S" on the slopes of Mont-Royal. This plot at Cimetière Notre-Dame des Neiges was originally reserved for students who were orphans or who came from poor families unable to afford the cost of transporting the body back home. Later, staff and alumni were also given permission to be buried in the school's plot. A total of 16 students, alumni, and staff between the ages of 12 and 86 were interred there between 1885 and 1928. The first was Émilien Comeau (aged 15), who died on December 28, 1885 and was buried on the 2nd of January 1886. The last was Camille Vanier (aged 46), who died in the spring of 1928. In 1928, the cemetery



Edward Petrone’s modern grave marker with the manual alphabet

Courtesy of Angela J. (née Petrone) Straty (Edmonton, Alta.)

was moved further up the mountain, which at one time dominated Montréal’s landscape. After six moves, beginning in 1942, the Notre-Dame des Neiges cemetery finally settled at its present location on Mont-Royal, surrounded by the University of Montréal, St. Justine Hospital, the area of Outremont, and the Mont-Royal Cemetery. The students’ caskets were also moved and re-buried in Section “O” (plot #201). Today, this plot



Monument marking the plot for the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes

Photo Credit: Deborah Ross (Montréal, Québec)

— a large, vast area on the top of the mountain — is marked by a tall monument of red Balmoral granite, costing \$849.20 when it was erected. The monument, which includes the inscription “Institution des Sourds-Muets” on its base, faces the calvary of Mont-Royal.

Of the 50 recorded names of those buried there between 1885 and 1968, only 35 are inscribed on the face of the granite monument; another six are inscribed on the lower right side of the base, with the last added in 1950. The graves themselves do not have individual markers. On January 17, 1969, the administrative board of the school stopped allocating funds for the upkeep of the monument. However, because the plot had been donated to the Institution as a charitable contribution by the parish of Notre-Dame in 1928, the board was forbidden by law to change ownership of the plot or to hire another group to assume this responsibility. Today, the site is included in the general maintenance of the vast cemetery.

Located in the same Montréal cemetery is a plot for students and staff of the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes (Catholic Institution for Deaf and Dumb Females). Section “G-4-0006,” a large, flat area in the centre of the vast graveyard, is reserved for graduates and female employees of the school, some of whom spent their remaining years on a “deaf floor” at Manoir Cartierville, a nearby nursing home. According to the cemetery registers, a total of 257 people are buried in Section “G”. The area is easy to find, as it bears a large marble monument in the shape of a cross, with the inscription: “Sourdes-Muettes”. Rows of plain, small white tombstones or flat grave markers surround the cross, each bearing the deceased’s name, followed on some by the abbreviation “S.M.” (Sourde-Muette), and the date of death. Most omit the birthdate. Although the number of burials at the site has been reported to be well over 200, only approximately 100 graves have tombstones or markers. The cost for markers was the responsibility of the deceased’s family, and some parents may not have been able to afford a gravestone. To the right of Section “G-4-0006” is a plot for blind students from the Institution des Aveugles Nazareth, with the graves arranged in a similar fashion.

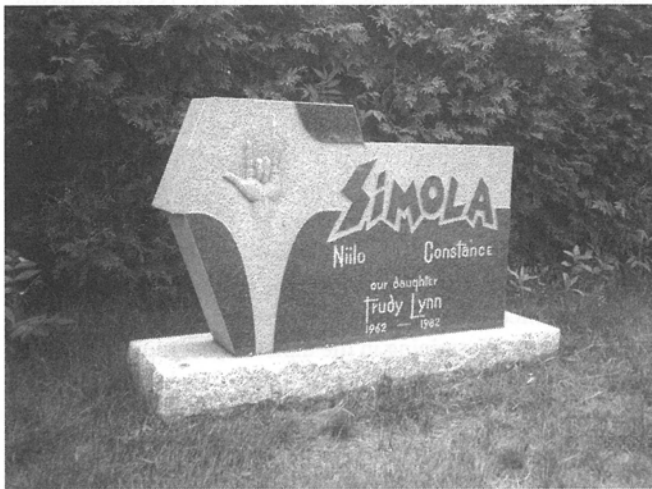


Québec’s commemorative monument to teachers and deaf male students, 1885-1950

Photo Credit: Deborah Ross (Montréal, Québec)

The earliest burial in the plot for the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes dates back to 1874 (Ellen McClushey, April 23); the two most recent occurred on March 9, 1991 (Pauline Roy) and February 28, 1992 (Florida Duquette [b. Nov. 3, 1902; d. Feb. 27, 1992]). Neither of these graves has a marker. The plot also includes the remains of Georgiana Lavellée, the second student enrolled at the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes, as well as Ludivine Lachance and Virginia Blais, the first two deaf-blind students to be admitted.

In the Foley Memorial Cemetery, some nine kilometres south of Parry Sound, Ont., stands a tombstone eloquent in its simplicity, bearing an “I Love You” inscription in sign language. It was erected in memory of a young born-deaf woman, Trudy Lynn Simola (b. Dec. 16, 1962; d. Dec. 4, 1982), who had attended the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville (1967-1982). Simola’s life ended in the early morning hours of Saturday, December 4, 1982 (12 days short of her 20th birthday) in a three-car collision on Bladensburg Road in Cottage City, Md., just over the Washington, D.C. line. At that time, she was enrolled as a preparatory student at Gallaudet College. Three college friends and a Canadian visitor sustained injuries in the accident. The Sir James Whitney School established the Trudy Simola Memorial Award in her memory. The annual winner — a senior who has best displayed the qualities of honesty, kindness, determination, and self-discipline while a student — is chosen by the entire senior class. Simola’s hearing parents, Niilo and Constance Simola, requested the “I Love You” symbol on the tombstone as a memorial to their deaf daughter.



A Parry Sound, Ont. tombstone inscribed with the “I Love You” sign

Courtesy of Denis and Lori Bergeron (Thunder Bay, Ont.)

University Degrees

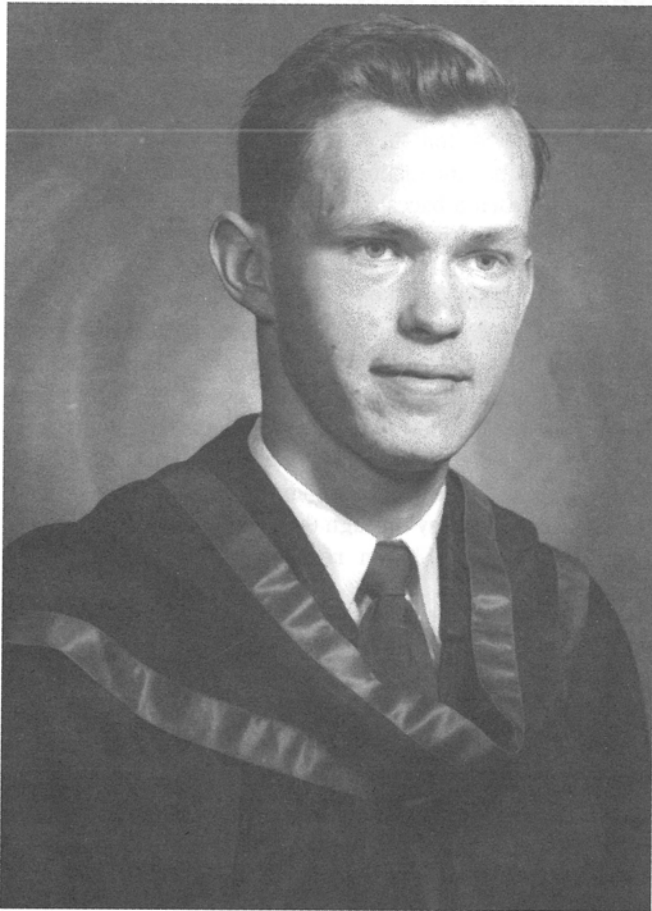
Although it would be very difficult indeed to track down *every* deaf Canadian who has ever received a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree from a North American university (other than Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.), the following persons are included as outstanding representatives of the achievements of deaf scholars as they pursue post-secondary education.

Some of the First Baccalaureate Degrees from Canadian Institutions

John Tyler Shilton (b. Aug. 28, 1884; d. Nov. 1, 1950) of Toronto, Ont. has the distinction of being the first known deaf Canadian to earn a baccalaureate degree from a hearing university. He studied political science at Victoria College (1904-1909), a part of the University of Toronto. The *Deaf-Mutes’ Journal* of 1909 praised Shilton for his accomplishment, noting that “this is the first case on record where a deaf man has ever completed the full regular university course leading to that degree.”⁴ Shilton described his experience at the University of Toronto as “the loneliest of his life.”⁵ In those days, there were no interpreters in the classrooms or at workshops. He was left on his own and coped by plunging into and relying on textbooks to make his way through the college. After four difficult years (1904-1909), Shilton received his bachelor of arts degree.⁶

The next two deaf Canadians to successfully receive bachelor’s degrees from the University of Toronto were Robert Elwood McBrien of Peterborough, Ont. and Victor Shanks of Toronto. They were the first deaf students to receive degrees in engineering from the school. Their careers are detailed in Chapter 9: OCCUPATIONS. McBrien (b. Nov. 23, 1900; d. July 20, 1970) developed an early interest in mechanical engineering from “watching sparks fly from his father’s anvil.”⁷ This led him to study at the University of Toronto (1921-1925) toward a bachelor of applied science degree (B.A.Sc.) in mechanical engineering. Shanks (b. June 14, 1910; d. June 23, 1995) became the second deaf person to earn such a degree from the same university. His major was electrical engineering, with a specialty in hydraulics. When he applied for admission in 1931, the dean of the school of engineering reacted to the idea of a deaf person succeeding in that field with one word — “Impossible!”⁸ Finally, Shanks was allowed to enroll for a one-semester trial period. A month later, his accomplishments in the classroom changed the dean’s earlier assumptions about a deaf person’s capabilities. Shanks received his B.A.Sc. degree on May 22, 1935.

In 1952, Queen’s University in Kingston, Ont., conferred a bachelor of arts degree on its first deaf student, James Edward Atkinson (b. Dec. 22, 1926; d. Mar. 19, 1992), whose hearing father was at one time magistrate of Kemptville, Ont. Atkinson was born deaf and received his early education at the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Mass. (1929-1943). While he was enrolled there, his family moved to Brockville, Ont. (in 1930), and Atkinson later completed his secondary education at the Brockville Collegiate Institute (1943-1948). He learned sign language in 1947 from Carman Evans Quinn (b. Feb. 18, 1910; d. Mar. 27, 1959), a local deaf barber on Perth Street who had attended the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1916-1927).⁹ In 1948, Atkinson decided to enter Queen’s University instead of Gallaudet College. His decision was due partly to the success of Donald James Kidd at a hearing university (Kidd, a deaf man, was a doctoral student at the University of Toronto, 1946-1951), and partly because a local post-secondary program was much less expensive than one in



James Edward Atkinson, B.A.

Courtesy of James E. Atkinson (Nepean, Ont.)

another country. He majored in chemistry, biology, and German, and received his B.A. degree in 1952. For the next 38 years (1953-1991), he was employed with the Federal Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources in Ottawa, Ont., starting as an assistant technician in the radioactivity division. By the time he retired, he was working in the division of liquid chemical analysis in metals and special analysis in Canmet (Canadian Metallurgy branch).

On September 22, 1963, Atkinson married the former Gloria L. Byskov. For many years, he held various positions in the following organizations: the Ottawa-Hull Association of the Deaf (now the National Capital Association of the Deaf), the Canadian Association of the Deaf, the Ontario Association of the Deaf, the Ottawa Mission to the Deaf, and the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf (Ottawa Division No. 157). He also assisted in editing *The OAD News* (1955-1962).

Master's Degrees

The first deaf Canadian to receive a master's degree in theological studies was Peter John Virtue (b. Jan. 20, 1949). Virtue attended the Western Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Oregon (1982-1984), at that time the only North American institution to offer an inter-denominational program for deaf people. Virtue, the school's first deaf graduate, received his degree on May 17, 1984.¹⁰

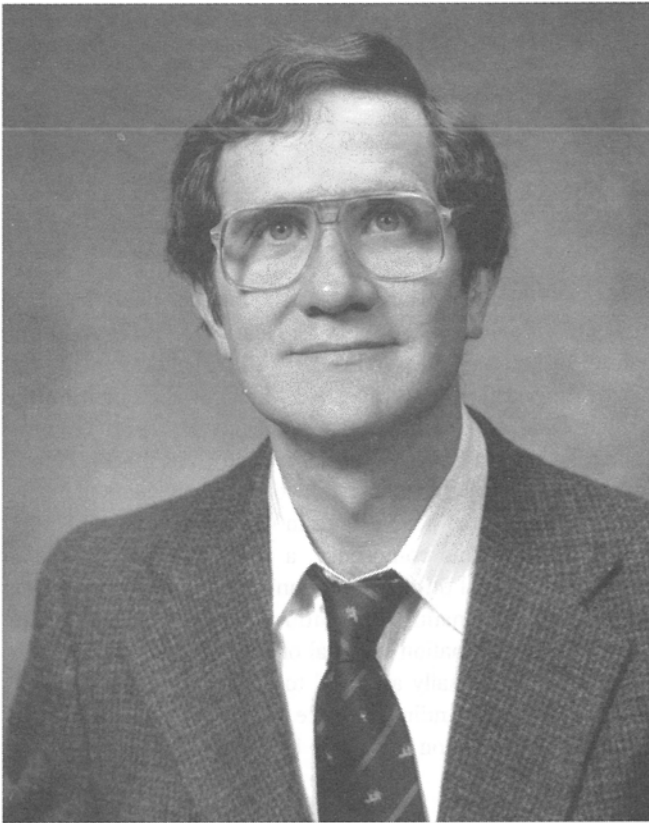
Possibly the first deaf Canadian to receive a master's of business administration (M.B.A.) was Edward Marshall Wick (b. Mar. 4, 1939), who received his degree from the University of Toronto in 1964. His area of concentration was labour law.¹¹ A more recent deaf M.B.A. recipient (with honours) is Roy Amirputra, who, in 1991, received his degree from York University in Toronto, Ont. Amirputra, a native of Jakarta, Indonesia, lost his hearing following an overdose of antibiotics at the age of three. Through intense speech training, he learned English while his family lived in Singapore and Australia, and is fluent in Indonesian, Malaysian, and English. He came to Canada in 1983 and studied at the University of British Columbia. He began his graduate studies at York University in 1988, and struggled through his courses depending primarily on independent reading and occasional notes from classmates. Amirputra is now an advocate of increased support services for deaf and hard-of-hearing university students (including computerized notetaking, real time captioning, additional interpreters, captioned videotapes of lectures, TTYs, audio loops, and FM systems).

Earned Doctoral Degrees

By all accounts, the earliest known deaf person to earn a doctoral degree in Canada was Donald James Kidd (b. June 9, 1922; d. Sept. 10, 1966) of MacKenzie Island, Ont. His proud moment occurred during the colourful convocation day exercises at the University of Toronto on June 8, 1951, when he received his doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) degree.¹² Dr. Kidd's other accomplishments are included in Chapter 9: OCCUPATIONS.

Another deaf Canadian to earn a doctoral degree (Ed.D.) in Canada was David Alan Stewart (b. Apr. 10, 1954). He has been profoundly deaf since infancy. Stewart's early education was received in his hometown of Vancouver, B.C. at Laura Secord Elementary School (1959-1966) and Vancouver Technical Secondary School (1966-1972). He went on to Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C., where he graduated with a bachelor of science degree in biological science (1972-1976). Following a year's training in the diploma program for teachers of the deaf at the University of British Columbia, Stewart taught at Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver (1978-1982). He was also an instructor of sign language at Vancouver Community College (1980-1984). Later, he earned a master of arts degree (1981-1982) and doctor of education degree (1982-1985) from the University of British Columbia. For a year (1985-1986) he was assistant professor at Southern University in Baton Rouge, La. Today, Dr. Stewart is associate professor in the Teachers of the Hearing Impaired Preparation Program at Michigan State University in East Lansing, a position he has held since 1986. From May through August 1993, he was the holder of the David Peikoff Chair of Deafness Studies at the University of Alberta.¹³

Possibly the first deaf Canadian to receive a doctoral degree from a university in the United States was Edward Marshall Wick, who received his Juris Doctor degree in 1982 from George Washington University, Washington, D.C., with a concentration on commercial law.¹⁴



David Alan Stewart, Ed.D.

Courtesy of David A. Stewart (East Lansing, Mich.)



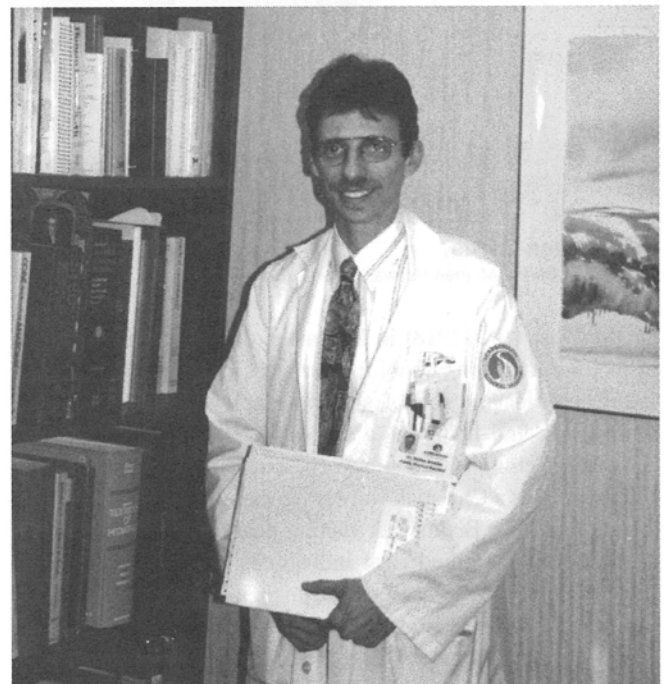
David George Mason, Ph.D.

Courtesy of David G. Mason (Edmonton, Alta.)

The first deaf Canadian to graduate from a provincial school for deaf students and later earn a doctoral degree from a Canadian university is David George Mason (b. Sept. 4, 1938), who received his Ph.D. from the University of Alberta in 1990. His dissertation was entitled *Acquisition and Use of Visual/Gestural and Aural/Oral Bilingualism: A Phenomenological Study on Bilingualism and Deafness*. Mason was born in Lloydminster, Sask. and became deaf at the age of three from spinal meningitis. He attended the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal (1945-1955), travelling for three days by train in September and June to and from the school and his home, which was then in Alberta. His other degrees were from Gallaudet College (B.A., 1963) and Western Maryland College in Westminster (M.Ed., 1980). He taught at the Alberta School for the Deaf in Edmonton for 28 years (1963-1991). Dr. Mason is now assistant professor in the teacher training program ("Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students"), Faculty of Education, York University, in Toronto.

Doctor of Chiropractic and Doctor of Medicine

Hartley Brian Bressler (b. Jan. 2, 1957) is Canada's first and so far only born-deaf doctor, and only one of five people in the country who possess both chiropractic and medical degrees (the others are hearing). He attended the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in Toronto (1980-1984) and graduated with a Doctor of Chiropractic (D.C.) degree. In 1990, he enrolled in McMaster University's M.D. program (in Hamilton, Ont.) and completed medical school in 1993. He is currently interning in a family medicine residency program in Toronto, Ont. More about Dr. Bressler's accomplishments can be found in Chapter 9: OCCUPATIONS.



Hartley B. Bressler, D.C. and M.D.

Photo Credit: Dorothy L. Smith (Burlington, Ont.)

Honourary Degrees

Several deaf Canadians have received honorary degrees from Gallaudet University; they are listed in Chapter 2: THE AMERICAN SCENE, "Gallaudet University (Honourary Degrees)."

The first deaf woman (and possibly only deaf individual in Canada) known to have received an honorary doctoral degree from a Canadian university is Bertha Mae (née Hayward) Curtis (b. Sept. 21, 1910) of Saint John, N.B. She received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, N.S. in recognition of her many years of Christian work among deaf people in New Brunswick. Born in North View, N.B., Curtis became deaf at the age of two from "a fall off the table."¹⁵ She attended the New Brunswick School



Bertha Mae Curtis

Courtesy of Bertha M. (née Hayward) Curtis (Saint John, N.B.)

for the Deaf (1916-1918) in Lancaster (now part of the city of Saint John) and the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S. (1919-1925). After leaving school, she was employed as a housemaid, seamstress, and finally as a sorter for Neilson's Company, a chocolate factory where she worked until her retirement. She volunteered as a Christian worker for many years, and travelled throughout New Brunswick visiting deaf families and locating previously unidentified deaf individuals. She also conducted Bible readings for deaf people once a month at Wesleyan Church in Moncton. Shortly after her retirement in 1975, she began her second career as a full-time parish worker for the Ecumenical Ministry of the Deaf. Widely credited with being the initiator and driving force behind the establishment of a

Christian ministry to the New Brunswick Deaf community, Curtis was described as "a living example of ecumenical outreach."¹⁶

Honours

British Medal of Honour

David Peikoff (b. Mar. 21, 1900; d. Jan. 28, 1995), an alumnus of the Manitoba School for the Deaf (1906-1917) and graduate of Gallaudet College (B.A., 1924-1929), became the first North American ever to receive a Medal of Honour from the British Deaf and Dumb Association. At its 1971 Triennial Congress, held in Bournemouth, England (June 19-26), Peikoff was recognized by the Association for his many years of invaluable service to deaf people both in Canada and in the United States. (During this conference, a resolution was passed to change the official title of the organization to the British Deaf Association, eliminating the outmoded word "dumb.") The British Deaf Association's Medal of Honour, which originated in 1952, is traditionally awarded to deaf and hearing persons who render outstanding service to the Association itself. However, an exception was made in Peikoff's case.¹⁷



Peikoff's Medal of Honour (front)

Courtesy of Gallaudet University Alumni Association



Peikoff's Medal of Honour (back)

Courtesy of Gallaudet University Alumni Association

Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship

Each year since 1973, the provincial government of Ontario has recognized and awarded a Medal for Good Citizenship to residents “who through extraordinary effort, imagination and personal sacrifice have contributed significantly to the common good.”¹⁸ Two deaf Ontarians are known to be among those who have received this award. On June 29, 1984, Apolonia “Pola” (née Prus) Hickman (b. Aug. 22, 1917) of Breslau, Ont., was honoured at Queen’s Park (Ontario Provincial Legislative Building) in Toronto by the Hon. John Black Aird, then Lieutenant Governor of Ontario (1980-1985). Hickman was born in Warsaw, Poland, and came to Canada with her hearing mother and two hearing sisters in April 1927. Her hearing father, who had arrived a year earlier, had found work in a button factory in Kitchener, Ont. Deafened at five years of age from scarlet fever, she first attended Warsaw’s Institut Dia Gluchoniemych i Ociemniowych (Institution for the Deaf and the Blind) for two years (1925-1927), and then the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1927-1933). On May 20, 1944, she and Frank Isadore Hickman (b. Nov. 6, 1914; d. Mar. 11, 1982) of Kitchener, Ont., were wed. Her late husband was a native of Chatham, Ont. and an alumnus of the Michigan School for the Deaf in Flint. Hickman, who was fluent in Polish, often volunteered to interpret for deaf immigrants, and has been active in the International Catholic Deaf Association (ICDA) since 1949. She was honoured again in 1988 when the



Pola Hickman

Courtesy of Pola Hickman (Breslau, Ont.)

Zonta Club of Kitchener-Waterloo named her a “woman of achievement”; her most recent honour came from the ICDA, which presented her with the 1994 ICDA-Canada Marcel Warnier Award for Outstanding Member of the Year.

The other deaf winner of the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship was Kathryn Woodcock, who won the award in 1993.¹⁹

Order of Ontario

Each year since 1987, the province of Ontario has awarded its Order of Ontario medal “to recognize those people who have rendered service of the greatest distinction and of singular excellence in any field benefitting society in Ontario and elsewhere.”²⁰ Of the 144 individuals receiving such a medal between 1987 and 1993, the first (and so far the only) deaf recipient known to be so honoured was Dorothy Ellen (née Ouellette) Beam (b. Mar. 3, 1918) of Pickering, Ont. Unfortunately, she was scheduled to be out of the country on the date of the formal investiture (April 18, 1989). A few weeks later, on May 29th, a private ceremony and luncheon was held for her at Queen’s Park, where she received “a ribboned Trillium medal (heavy and rather large, beautiful too), a smaller replica of the medal to wear at less formal affairs, and a bar pin which is recognized by other Fellows of this Order.”²¹ Like the other honourees, she is entitled to place the letters “O.Ont.” after her name.

Born profoundly deaf in Ottawa, Ont., Beam first attended



Dorothy Ellen Beam, O.Ont.

Courtesy of Dorothy E. Beam (Pickering, Ont.)/Photo Credit: Alldyn Clark (Bracebridge, Ont.)

public schools in her hometown and at the age of 12 enrolled in a special class for deaf children within the Ottawa school system. She later attended the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1932-1935), where she took academic classes on the high school level plus a year of special training in business administration. She has described her time at the school in Belleville as “my happiest years, learning the beautiful sign language, communicating well with my peers and teachers,” but it was also there that she became aware of communication barriers and how they affected a deaf child’s education.²² This realization led to her lobbying for improvements in the educational system for Canada’s deaf children, a life-long interest (she has also fought for better employment opportunities for deaf people and for their right to sign language interpreters). After completing her education, she tried unsuccessfully to find a job in her hometown. In 1937, she moved to Toronto, where she worked for J.B. Fraser Executive Consultant as a typist and office clerk (1937-1940) and later for Canadian General Electric in the typing pool (1940-1942). During the Second World War, she was employed by the Massey Harris Aircraft Company (1942-1945). After the war, she left the work force on a full-time basis to devote her time to raising her three hearing children. While her hearing husband, Harold, was stationed with the Royal Canadian Air Force in Trenton, Ont., she took a clerical job in the National Defence (Air) Repair Depot. In 1969, Beam joined the Toronto District Office of Revenue Canada, Taxation Unit as a pricing clerk and continued working there until her retirement in 1983.

It would be impossible to list all of Beam’s exemplary contributions to the Deaf community in Ontario and the rest of Canada. She had been president of the Ontario Association of the Deaf (1975-1980) and editor of *The OAD News* (1978-1981). For many years at various times, she served as a board member of such organizations as the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped (Toronto), the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf (Toronto), the Canadian Association of the Deaf, the Canadian Co-ordinating Council on Deafness, the Canadian Hearing Society (Toronto), and the Ontario Mission of the Deaf. In addition to receiving the 1989 Order of Ontario insignia, Beam had won other awards, most notably from the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (Hall of Fame, 1978), the Canadian Association of the Deaf (Deaf Citizen of the Year, 1982), the Ontario Association of the Deaf (Appreciation Award, 1982), and the Quota International, Inc. (Deaf Woman of the Year Award, 1982). At the latter presentation, she was described as “a born teacher and a person skilled in liaison activities. She has shown vigour, perseverance, and persistence in her lifelong struggle against discrimination in the employment of deaf persons, qualities which she attributes to her deep religious faith.”²³

Canadian Recipients of the Quota International’s “Deaf Woman of the Year” Award

Quota International, Inc., a business and professional women’s service club established in 1919, began its annual Deaf Woman of the Year Award program in 1978 to recognize “outstanding contribution and personal achievement in the world of business, profession or the arts.”²⁴ As of 1993, this organization has recognized and honoured three Canadians and 13 Americans, whose names are permanently engraved on a plaque displayed at the Quota World Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The first Canadian and second person to receive the Deaf Woman of the Year Award was Angela Jean Petrone (now Stratiy) (b. Dec. 14, 1947) of Winnipeg, Man. She won the award in 1979. Stratiy comes from a Deaf family of four.²⁵ She attended the Isbister School in Winnipeg (1953-1955), the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Saskatoon (1955-1965), Gallaudet College (B.A., 1970), and Western Maryland College (M.Ed., 1976). She was a teacher at the North Dakota School for the Deaf in Devils Lake (1970-1972) and the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg (1972-1986). Since her move to Edmonton, Alta. in 1986, she has been employed at Grant MacEwan Community College in the Interpreter Training



Angela J. Petrone (now Stratiy)

Cultural Horizons of the Deaf in Canada/Photo reproduction credit: Burlington Camera Ltd. (Burlington, Ont.)



Paula C. Hardy in 1985

Communication/Photo reproduction credit: Burlington Camera Ltd. (Burlington, Ont.)

Program as an instructional assistant and ASL instructor (1986-1989), acting chair (1989-1990), and chair (1991 to present). In 1987, the International Biographical Centre of Cambridge, England, added her name to its reference publication, where she was listed as a recipient of the World's Who's Who of

Women for Distinguished Achievement. Her varied and vast accomplishments within the Deaf community of Canada are chiefly through her involvement with the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf and the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (since its inception in 1970).

The next Canadian and fifth winner was Dorothy Ellen Beam in 1982. Information about her background and dedicated work can be found elsewhere in this chapter. In 1985, Paula Clyde (née Montgomery) Hardy (b. Apr. 11, 1932) of Woodbridge, Ont., became the third Canadian and eighth recipient of the award. She is a native of Linden, N.J., and attended the Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick (1937-1945) and the South Carolina School for the Deaf in Cedar Springs (1945-1951). In 1960, she married a deaf man, James Malcolm Hardy (b. Jan. 4, 1934) of Toronto, who received his education at the Clinton Street Public School oral classes (1942-1951) and Central Technical School (1951-1953), both in Toronto. With her husband, Hardy has dedicated her life to missionary work (e.g., the Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf in Knockpatrick, Manchester, Jamaica, West Indies [1957-1969]; the Evangelical Church of the Deaf in Toronto; and the Ontario Camp of the Deaf in Parry Sound, operated by the Ontario Mission of the Deaf).

Ottawa Park Named for Deaf Man

In September 1993, Paul Joseph Landry (b. Mar. 24, 1954) of Ottawa, Ont., was honoured by members of his community when the city named a park for him. A born-deaf champion runner who had competed in five consecutive World Summer Games for the Deaf (1973, 1977, 1981, 1985, and 1989), Landry often ran through the neighbourhood while training for his middle- and long-distance races. He holds a number of records



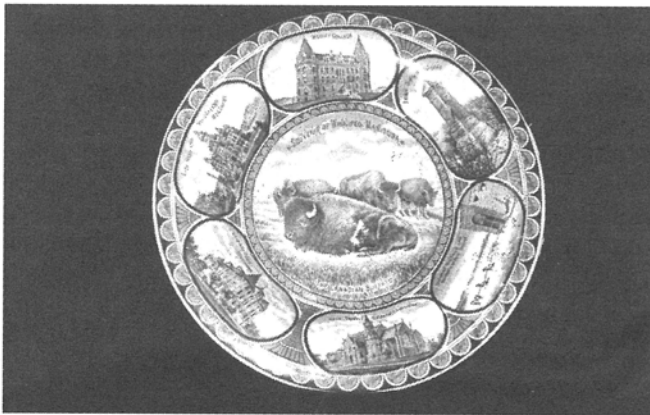
Paul Landry and the park named in his honour

Courtesy of Pauline and Paul Landry (Ottawa, Ont.)

among deaf athletes, including the Canadian record for the 800-metre, 1500-metre, 3000-metre, and 5000-metre races. A dedicated athlete, Landry tries to run between 10 to 20 kilometres daily after he finishes his work as a letter carrier. The heavily used park with its children's playground and basketball court is located in the Hunt Club area of Ottawa on Uplands Drive.²⁶

A Rare Commemorative Plate

Violet Rose (née Hawkins) Brooker (b. Sept. 29, 1905; d. Aug. 29, 1992) of Vancouver, B.C., attended the Manitoba School for the Deaf (1912-1914 and 1916-1921) and the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Regina (1915-1916).²⁷ As an adult, she became interested in collecting commemorative plates, and eventually acquired 180 such items. One day in the 1950s, she was shopping in an antique outlet and happened on a plate that had special significance for her. The blue and white design contained a central picture of five bison (representing the province of Manitoba). Surrounding the bison were six small pictures of landmark buildings or monuments found in the city of Winnipeg. One of these was the "Deaf and Dumb Institute" on Sherbrook Street and Portage Avenue, the forerunner of the school Brooker had attended. She immediately



Photograph of entire plate

Courtesy of Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf/Photo credit: Dennis J. Zimmer (Winnipeg, Man.)



Close-up showing the "Deaf and Dumb Institute"

Courtesy of Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf/Photo credit: Dennis J. Zimmer (Winnipeg, Man.)

purchased the plate and added it to her collection. Then, in July 1988, she brought it with her when she attended a two-day reunion of former students, staff, and friends of the Manitoba School for the Deaf, who were celebrating the 100th anniversary of deaf education in the province. At the evening banquet on the 15th, Brooker surprised everyone when she donated the rare plate to the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf, where it can be seen today displayed in a protective glass case at Deaf Centre Manitoba on Pembina Highway.

Statistics and Deaf Canadians

Over the years, statistics on deaf people as individuals or as a group have been gathered both informally and formally, and used for a variety of purposes — some negative (such as A.G. Bell's use of statistics on deaf births to back up his claims about the dangers of deaf marriages) and others positive. Numbers often played a significant role in convincing religious or government officials that schools for deaf students were needed in their area. For example, Father Charles-Irénée Lagorce, director (1848-1856) of the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets (Catholic Institution for Deaf and Dumb Males) in Montréal, Québec, reported in 1855 that there were "1,400 deaf-mutes — 850 males and 450 females [sic]" in the province.²⁸ Prior to the opening of the Protestant Institution for Deaf-Mutes in Montréal in 1870, Thomas Widd (its deaf founder and first principal) estimated that there were about 200 protestant deaf people in the province of Québec, approximately 75 of whom were of school age, enough to justify opening a school for them.²⁹ John Barrett McGann, the pioneer of deaf education in Ontario, used similar kinds of statistics to convince the provincial legislature to support a school for deaf children. And other provincial legislatures have also requested statistics on the number of deaf school-aged children before they would allocate funds for their education. Once schools were in place, sometimes the administrators would use statistics to try to gain support for enlarging the school or increasing the enrolment. In a letter to *Le Bienfaiteur des Sourds-Muets et Des Aveugles* (a Paris, France publication), the Rev. Alfred Bélanger, then director of the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets, reported that the "census taken in 1891 fixes the number of deaf-mutes in the province of Québec at 2108 of whom 1074 are males."³⁰ Bélanger speculated that at least 407 males of the province were above age nine (the age of admission to the school) and still uneducated (potential students, in other words), but the school was unable to accommodate such a large number of applicants.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, publications from schools for the deaf sometimes included statistics about former students, such as how many had jobs in specific career areas, how many owned homes or automobiles, and so on. Such statistics were used to point out the success of the school's educational and vocational training programs, and to demonstrate to the hearing public that deaf people could be contributing members to society rather than drains on the public coffers. These statistics were gathered in informal ways, through "word of hand," friendly gossip, or letters written by former students to the schools' superin-

tendents. Some examples of these figures can be found in the chapter on occupations.

Despite government's apparent love for generating statistics, Canadian politicians have never had an easy time in officially determining the number and characteristics of deaf people in the country. National census forms have not always included questions that could identify deaf family members or elicit specific information about them. Often the questions lumped different "disability" groups together. Census-takers, upon encountering a deaf family, were often at a loss how to communicate with them. And sometimes deaf people have been reluctant to be counted in these national surveys because the purpose of such questions was not clear to them.

The first official census in Canada was conducted in 1666. The population of the country (then called New France and consisting primarily of today's province of Québec) was 3,215.³¹ (The next year, census takers turned their attention from people to agriculture, and counted all the cattle, sheep, and acres of farmland being cultivated.) By the second census, in 1673, the human population had risen to 6,705. The first census of the Dominion of Canada occurred in 1871, one year following Confederation. By this time, the number of people living in a given area determined how many representatives that area could send to the federal House of Commons, so the decennial censuses took on added significance.

The first time a question about deafness appeared in a regular census was 1784. Unfortunately, the census-takers that year lumped deaf and blind people together in their calculations, so the resulting figures offered little insight into the actual number of deaf Canadians. Every 10 years between 1851 and 1951, specific census questions were designed to elicit information about deaf people. From 1851 to 1891, only the total number of deaf males and females in each enumeration district were published. Then, beginning with the 1891 census, individuals were asked to provide information in addition to their gender and whether or not they were deaf (questions included their age, country of birth, ethnic origin, marital status, ability to read and write, and occupation). Another change occurred in 1901, when the Canadian government dropped the questions regarding marital status and literacy. (It is interesting to note that in 1891, the census form listed 18 different choices for ethnic origin, while the 1901 form provided only six choices — English, Irish, Scotch, French, German, and "various." Choices in 1901 for country of birth were even more limited — "Canada," "United Kingdom," and "other countries.") In 1911, the government again widened the scope of data collected on deaf Canadians by asking for age at which they became deaf, and once again adding a question on marital status. The choices for ethnic origin and country of birth were increased in 1911 as well.

Between 1921 and 1951, a distinction was made between deaf and deaf-blind, with the data on the two groups categorized separately. During this time, the Canadian government occasionally consulted with deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, groups, and professionals working with them, for advice on the type of information they felt would be important to obtain. The questions that began to appear on the census forms around this time, however, seem to be related to areas that were of more interest to service

providers and government officials than to deaf people themselves. The 1921 census added the category "literate/illiterate," with literacy defined as the ability to read and write, or read only. With this census, it became possible to cross-reference responses, so researchers could now speculate on correlations between categories (such as responses to the questions "age at onset of deafness" and "literate/illiterate"). With this cross-referencing, it became possible for researchers (almost exclusively hearing) to use the figures to "support" (accurately or erroneously) a variety of theories about deaf people.

The 1931 census generated a considerable amount of new information about deaf Canadians. In addition to previous questions, this census asked about the year of immigration to Canada, religious affiliation, number of months attending school, level of income, and cause of deafness. The question about literacy was dropped. By 1941, people were asked to indicate their official language (English or French) and their relationship to the head of household.

Beginning in 1951, more than 30 years passed without the census containing any questions related to deafness. Then in 1983-1984, the first Canadian Health and Disability Survey was conducted. As its name implies, this survey collects information on people with a disability. In addition to questions regarding age and gender, the survey also asks about limitations imposed by the physical condition. Unfortunately, the resulting reports often combined disabilities, so statistics on deaf individuals are difficult to sort out. Results of the surveys have been used to indicate the number of deaf people who were employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force; receiving a disability income; requiring personal amplification systems; requiring TTYs; knowing how to lipread; and using sign language. One of the problems with the Canadian Health and Disability Survey is its reliability. There is considerable reluctance on the part of some deaf people to be included in the survey at all. Deaf adults who consider themselves a part of a linguistic and cultural group often resent being classified and surveyed as members of a disability group. Thus, the resulting statistics generated by this survey may actually under-report or misrepresent the true picture of the Canadian deaf population.

From time to time, deaf organizations have tried to modify the health survey and census questions to more truly reflect cultural and linguistics aspects of their lives. For example, the Canadian Association of the Deaf tried to convince Statistics Canada to change the wording on the 1991 census to read "What language do you *use*" rather than "What language do you *speak*." Their request was ignored, and the census continues to ask deaf people if they "speak" American Sign Language.

In 1987, McGill University in Montréal published its *Study of Deaf Children in Canada*, an extensive demographic research project (based on similar studies conducted by Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.).³² The project was conducted over a 10-year period, and the findings on the 8,000 deaf children surveyed continue to be of particular interest to educators of deaf students and to service providers. Data on deaf Native Canadians in the North (e.g., Inuits) collected during this study were published in a separate report.

Royal Visits

Over the years, Canadians have been honoured by visits from the British royal family. On some of these official visits, deaf school children have had the opportunity to see and chat with royalty. In 1860, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), became the first to officially visit Canada, then called British North America. Seven years later, he made a brief stop at the Hamilton Institution (Ont.) for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, then located in Dundurn Castle, Hamilton, Ont.

The next major royal tour was made in 1901, when the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (later King George V and Queen Mary) made their first transcontinental visit of Canada. Leaving historic old Québec (City) on September 16, they travelled westward by train all the way to Victoria, B.C., and then back eastward to St. John's, Nfld., where they departed for England on October 21. Every village, town, and city along their route greeted the royal pair during their transcontinental stopovers. On October 15, some 250 deaf children from the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville were scheduled to sing "God Save the King" in sign language for the royal pair as they arrived at the city train station. But when the children arrived, the space reserved for them was filled with a crowd anxiously awaiting the arrival of the royal train, and it was impossible for the pupils to have free use of their hands. So the plan to perform the National Anthem in sign language had to be abandoned. Two deaf pupils, however, had the honour of presenting an address to the Duke and Duchess during their brief visit to the city. Delivered in sign language by Frederick William Terrell, deaf son of deaf parents (William John Terrell and Mary [née Fairley] Terrell), and interpreted orally by Violet Gray, born-deaf daughter of hearing parents, it read:

Your Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of York.

May it please Your Royal Highnesses:

The deaf children of Canada loved your good grandmother, Queen Victoria — they love your father and mother, our King and Queen — and they love you.

May you have a long and happy life.

For the deaf children of Ontario.³³

The Duke and Duchess, who were very impressed by the statement, shook hands with the two students, thanked them for the address, and expressed regret that the large crowds had prevented the presentation of the National Anthem in sign language.

Deaf children from the Institution of the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax, N.S. also had an opportunity to witness the royal procession on October 19 that same year. They lined up along Gerrish and Lockman Streets behind telephone poles decorated with small coloured flags. The Duke and the Duchess, in an

open carriage, stopped in front of them for a very brief period. The pupils then signed and shouted "Hip! Hip! Hurrah!," and waved small Union Jack flags.

On June 14, 1914, the Ontario School for the Deaf at Belleville was visited by the Duke of Connaught, son of the late Queen Victoria and brother of King Edward VII. He was accompanied by the Duchess of Connaught and Princess Patricia. Deaf children lined both sides of the school roadway and waved small Union Jack flags as the Duke and his entourage appeared. A reception took place in front of the new Girls' Residence, which the royal troupe then inspected. The oral group with their hearing teacher, Catherine Ford, recited in unison "God Save the King," while the manual group signed it under the direction of Ada Mary James (b. Mar. 10, 1870; d. Mar. 9, 1965), a deaf teacher. The royal visit to the school lasted about an hour.

In May and June 1939, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth became the first reigning monarchs to visit Canada. Their transcontinental tour was intended to solidify support for Britain on the eve of the Second World War. During a 10-minute stop in Belleville on the evening of May 21, some 250 deaf children from the Ontario School for the Deaf cheered the royal couple as they appeared on the observation platform of the train. Later, all the school children in the province, including



Deaf children awaiting the arrival of the royal train in Belleville, Ont. (1939). From left to right, the two students holding the sign are Stephen Graziano and Arthur B. Hazlitt.

The Canadian/Photo reproduction credit: Burlington Camera Ltd. (Burlington, Ont.)

those at the Ontario School, received commemorative bronze medallions courtesy of the Ontario Department of Education.

Eight days later, on May 29, the royal pair visited Vancouver, B.C. Eighty-five deaf pupils and staff lined the roadway in front of the British Columbia School for the Deaf and the Blind to greet the arrival of the royal procession as it turned off Imperial Street onto Fourth Avenue. Even two students who could not attend because of illness were able to witness the event from second-floor windows of the school.

On June 15, a touching incident took place in front of the School for the Deaf on Gottingen Street in Halifax. Among the deaf pupils gathered to witness the royal procession, nine-year-old Helen Amelia Bryson of Dartmouth, N.S., stood holding a small bouquet of lily-of-the-valley to give to the Queen.³⁴ Bryson had been selected for this honour because it was her birthday that day. When King George VI and Queen Elizabeth saw the little deaf girl holding the flowers, they immediately ordered the royal car to stop. The King himself opened the right-hand door of the car to allow Bryson inside so she could give the flowers to the Queen, who was seated on his left. Four days later, the Halifax School received a letter from the Queen, thanking the pupils for the bouquet of flowers.

Princess Elizabeth (now Queen Elizabeth II) and Prince Philip (the Duke of Edinburgh), toured Canada from October 8 to November 12, 1951. On November 8, a rainy day in Halifax, the royal couple was motoring along Gottingen Street. When the royal limousine with its transparent roof stopped in front of the School for the Deaf, eight-year-old Joan Gordon Drysdale (b. May 18, 1943) of Halifax, the deaf daughter of deaf parents,



Joan G. Drysdale nervously waiting for the arrival of the royal couple (1951)

Courtesy of Edmund and Gladys Duffy (Halifax, N.S.)



Princess Elizabeth receiving bouquet from Joan G. Drysdale (1951)

Courtesy of Edmund and Gladys Duffy (Halifax, N.S.)

approached Princess Elizabeth and presented her with a bouquet. The Drysdale family had attended the Halifax School for two generations (Joan from 1950-1961, and her parents, Arthur Gordon Drysdale [b. Sept. 3, 1900; d. Feb. 4, 1943] and Margaret Rose [née Hull] Drysdale [b. Dec. 20, 1914], from 1906-1916 and 1923-1933 respectively.)

In the fall of 1969, Prince Philip visited the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver, B.C. and presented seven students with bronze medallions and certificates they had won under the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Introduced into Canada in 1963 and into Jericho Hill Provincial School in November 1968, this program of activities was designed to encourage young people between the ages of 14 and 20 to make the best possible use of their leisure time in areas of physical fitness, hobbies and projects, and hiking activities.

On June 17, 1982, the Kiwanis Centre of the Deaf (KCD – now the Deaf Centre Manitoba) in Winnipeg, Man., was visited by Princess Anne, the only daughter of England's present queen, Elizabeth II, and the Duke of Edinburgh (Prince Philip). She signed the guest book, viewed special devices for deaf people, and took with her three presents — a souvenir plate and two "I Love You" pins for her children.

On June 9, 1988, Prince Edward, the fourth child (third son) of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, toured the new \$12-million complex of the Newfoundland School for the Deaf on Topsail Road in St. John's. His morning visit included a drama presentation by the students, classroom observations, the unveiling of a plaque commemorating his visit, and even a hearing test. At the end of the tour, the student council presented the prince with a framed picture as a memento of his visit.



Princess Anne visiting the KCD (1982)
 Courtesy of Rick Zimmer (Winnipeg, Man.)/Photo Credit: Dennis J. Zimmer (Winnipeg, Man.)
 Left to right: William H. Smith (deaf resident at KCD), Princess Anne, Rev. Allen Simms (hearing executive director at KCD)
 Back to camera: Bonnie Dubiensi (interpreter)



Courtesy of Janice Hooey (Barrie, Ont.)



Courtesy of Bruce A. Koskie (Winnipeg, Man.)

“On The Road Again ...”

Deaf people have found unique ways of expressing pride in their heritage. Of these different “signs of the times,” one of the most visible, at least to other drivers, can be found on the rear of automobiles. Shown below are a few of these “deaf pride” licence plates seen on Canadian highways (two belong to hearing people who support Deaf culture).



Courtesy of Susan E. (née Farr) Whyte (St. Catharines, Ont.)



Courtesy of Giulio (“Julio”) F. Schincariol (Weston, Ont.)



Courtesy of Gail Brunson (London, Ont.)



Courtesy of Tarcisio Filippelli (Winnipeg, Man.)



Courtesy of Roger Chan (Vancouver, B.C.)



Courtesy of Russ Ward (Whistler, B.C.)



Courtesy of Kenneth Pihl and Rosanne Dong (Vancouver, B.C.)



Courtesy of Selma Doucet (Cape Breton, N.S.) / Photo Credit: Elizabeth Doull (Halifax, N.S.)



Courtesy of Debbie Lancaster (Guelph, Ont.)



Courtesy of Robert Arnold (Vancouver, B.C.)



Courtesy of Peter Haskins (Stony Plain, Alta.)

The Last Word

This book has detailed the history of the Deaf community in Canada and has illustrated some of the diversity of activities, events, and interests that deaf Canadians have experienced in their lives. *Deaf Heritage in Canada* ends with this chapter and its miscellaneous entries, but the story has only just begun — the information uncovered in the research for this book is the

tip of the iceberg. Deaf Canadians and their achievements will continue to be a vital part of the history of Canada, one that deserves the continued attention of historians and the general public alike. *Deaf Heritage in Canada* may be the first book of its kind on the Canadian Deaf community, but it should not be the last.