

# ASL NEWS

Volume 11, Issue 3

Spring 2010

## Spring Semester Is Underway

Time is flying! It feels like just a short time ago that we were getting ready to start the semester and now it is already March! Currently enrolled students, if you are in last semester of study, it is time for you to fill out your petition for an AA degree or certificate of achievement. Pick up the petition in the admissions office and return it (completed) to Jennifer Lenahan in room 261 before March 19.

This semester the ASL Department welcomes Rory Osbrink, a new instructor who is teaching the Deaf Culture II course. Osbrink is also a Deaf Studies teacher at the California School for the Deaf in Fremont. He has previously worked at UC San Diego, Ohlone College, and Gallaudet University.

The Follett bookstore on campus has plans to begin a textbook rental program beginning in the Fall semester. Keep your eyes open for more details about this potentially money saving change. Of course, books will still be available for purchase, too.

Reminder: There will be no classes on Thursday, March 25, an in-service training day for faculty and staff.

Check your calendars! The Peralta Community College District observes Malcolm X day as a holiday. Some district publications show the holiday on May 14 and others on May 19. **The correct date is May 14.**

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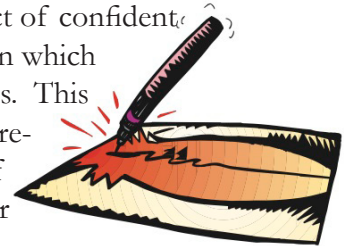
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## James Castle: A Retrospective Exhibit at the Berkeley Art Museum

ASL department staff, faculty, and students at Berkeley City College are eligible for 2-for-1 admission to a career-spanning retrospective of the celebrated self-taught deaf artist James Castle at the Berkeley Art Museum through April 25.\*

Born profoundly deaf, James Castle (1899–1977) was a prodigious artist who, without formal training, created a remarkable and vast body of work over the course of his life in rural Idaho. His drawings, cardboard constructions, paintings, and, even textbooks became his chief means of communicating with the world. Despite the barrenness of Castle's surroundings and the solitary quality of his life, his works lack any sense of loneliness, pain, or worry. On the contrary, making art for Castle was clearly an act of confident pleasure and curiosity, an act in which he immersed his full awareness. This retrospective is the first comprehensive museum exhibition of his drawings, books, and paper constructions.



### *Public Programs with Exhibit*

**Sign Language–Interpreted Tour**, Saturday, March 6, 1:30 p.m. A student from UC Berkeley's graduate program in art practice will present a uniquely informative gallery tour of the work of this singular American artist. The tour will be interpreted by Patricia Lessard, an expert American Sign Language interpreter who is a specialist in interpreting visual art.

**Gallery Talk: Jacqueline Crist and Ann Percy**, Thursday, March 18, noon. Two of the foremost ex-

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# Events & Announcements

## Three Free Places to Park Your Bicycle in Downtown Berkeley.

1. BCC Bike Room. Enter the building through the main doors and take the elevator on your left down to the ground floor. Do not bring bikes up or down on the stairs. 2. Across the street from BCC at the City Garage. **Also FREE vehicle parking for people with disabilities available here.** 3. Inside the Downtown Berkeley BART station. The Bike Station is at the south end. (510) 548-7433 or [www.bikestation.org](http://www.bikestation.org).

**Information about local Deaf events** is available at DCARA's web site, [www.dcara.org](http://www.dcara.org) and click on "events". One-time and on-going events are listed as well as a captioned movie finder.

**Monthly Pizza Night.** 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of every month at Pizza Patio in Fremont. Starts at 6 pm. For more info contact Mitchel at either [whazzzzup17@aol.com](mailto:whazzzzup17@aol.com) or [whazzzzup17@gmail.com](mailto:whazzzzup17@gmail.com). Open to Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and ASL students.

## ASL COFFEE SOCIALS

**Alameda.** 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays of the month, 10 am. Crosstown Coffee House, 1303 High Street. For more information: [MaureenMcFall@mac.com](mailto:MaureenMcFall@mac.com)

**Berkeley.** 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month, 7-10 pm. Royal Grounds Coffee & Tea, 2409 Shattuck Avenue. For more info contact Daniel at [pah\\_daniel@aol.com](mailto:pah_daniel@aol.com) or Pam at [pmbrawl@aol.com](mailto:pmbrawl@aol.com).

**Dublin.** 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday night of the month. 3 of their baristas sign. Starbucks, 7197 Village Pkwy, corner of Village Pkwy & Amador Valley Blvd. [www.deafcoffee.com/html/california/dublin.html](http://www.deafcoffee.com/html/california/dublin.html)

**San Francisco #1.** 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays of the month, 6:05-9:05 pm. Starbucks at 2727 Mariposa Street, near KQED. For more information: [sanfransaslclub@gmail.com](mailto:sanfransaslclub@gmail.com).

**San Francisco #2.** Every Thursday 6-8:30 pm. ASL Cafe by Project Insight. Moscone Recreation Center, 1800 Chestnut Street. For more information, including changes, cancellations, moves, etc.: [contactpi@sfgov.org](mailto:contactpi@sfgov.org) or [www.projectinsight.org](http://www.projectinsight.org).

**San Francisco #3.** Deaf LGBT. 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month, 6-8 pm. Cafe Flore, 2298 Market Street, San Francisco (across from LookOut). For more information go to <http://rlsdbayarea.googlepages.com/calendar>. All hearing and deaf LGBTIQ and straight folks are welcome.

**Santa Clara.** 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month, 8:30-11:30 pm. Starbucks at 3605 El Camino Real. For more information:

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*Castle exhibit continued from page 1*

perts on the art and life of James Castle join forces to offer their insights on selected works in the exhibition, and the stories behind them. Interpreted by Patricia Lessard.

**Gallery Talk: Constructing Castle with Brenda Brueggemann and Katherine Sherwood,** Sunday, April 18, 3 p.m. Bringing together two educator-practitioners who have long focused on James Castle, this program will highlight visual and linguistic elements in his work that contribute to a deeper understanding of his artistic output as a whole. Interpreted by Patricia Lessard.

\*Staff, faculty, and students in the Berkeley City College ASL Program should identify themselves as associated with Berkeley City College at the BAM/PFA admissions desk to obtain 2-for-1 admission through April 25. Admission is \$8 for adults (18-64); \$5 for seniors, disabled persons, young adults, & non-UC Berkeley students; and free for children (12 and under), BAM/PFA members, and UC Berkeley students, staff, and faculty.



The UC Berkeley Art Museum entrance is at 2626 Bancroft Way, between College Avenue and Bowditch Street. For more information go to <http://bampfa.berkeley.edu>.

—From Peter Cavagnaro, Media Relations Manager for the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive.  

## *Interesting Cable Car Facts:*

- In 1964, the Secretary of the Interior named the San Francisco Cable Cars a moving National Historic Landmark.
- In 1998 Fannie Mae Barnes became the first, and so far only, gripwoman working on the cable cars.
- The current cable system pulls all cars at an average of 9.5 miles per hour.
- In the 1880s and '90s, cable cars left from the Ferry Building as often as every 15 minutes.
- The cable cars first went into service in 1873.
- Cable cars today carry nearly 8 million riders every year.

—AAA's magazine *Via*, July/August 2006

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michelyn85@aol.com.

**Santa Rosa.** Meets every Sunday at 10 am at Aroma Roasters at Railroad Square on 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Vallejo.** 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month, 7-11 pm. Starbucks at 400 Lincoln Road East. Contact: tatobud@sbeglobal.net

### ASL MEETUP GROUPS

**Berkeley.** [www.meetup.com/Berkeley-ASL-Meetup/](http://www.meetup.com/Berkeley-ASL-Meetup/)

**San Francisco.** 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month, sometimes more often. Various locations (usually close to BART). <http://asl.meetup.com/294/>

**Tri-Valley.** 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month. Meeting locations will be changing each month. <http://asl.meetup.com/tri-valley-asl-group/>

**Oakland Deaf Church.** Sunday services at 3 pm and Bible study every Wednesday at 6 pm. Location is Harvest Fellowship Church, 620 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Oakland. For more information: <http://parked4christ.org>.

**Vallejo Bible Church of the Deaf.** Sunday services at 10:45 am and Bible study 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays of the month at 7:30 pm. 448 Carolina Street, Vallejo. For more information: [vallejodeafchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:vallejodeafchurch@yahoo.com).

**Deaf Youth Camp of Color Volunteers Needed.** Volunteer positions are camp staff, volunteers & interns. The first-ever Deaf Youth Camp of Color will be held at Camp Taloali in Stayton, Oregon on June 13-27. DYCC will take place immediately prior to the National Deaf People of Color Conference II (entry below). For more information/application packet, go to [www.dycc.org](http://www.dycc.org).

**Sign and Dine.** March 12 & April 9, 6-8 pm. Opportunity to practice ASL in a relaxed atmosphere. Finger foods provided. Beginner through advanced signers welcome. Deaf Community Center (DCC), 1550 San Leandro Blvd., San Leandro. Admission \$5 for each date; RSVP required. To RSVP or for info contact Linda Drattell at [linda.drattell@dcara.org](mailto:linda.drattell@dcara.org) or 510-343-6678 VP.

**Jerry L. Adams "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize" Scholarship.** Up to four continuing BCC students will be selected for \$500 awards and up to two graduating students who are planning to enroll at a four-year college or university in fall 2010 will be selected for \$2,000 awards. To be eligible students must be currently enrolled in at least 6 semester units at BCC (graduating students may have completed their course-work in the previous fall term); have completed a minimum of 12 units at BCC (semester units completed must

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## Help for Haiti

On Tuesday, January 12, the focus of the world landed on Haiti and the Haitian people. The world has come together to provide support and strength for those who lost family members and loved ones as well as their homes and neighborhoods.

People around the world are seeking ways to assist by donating food, water, clothing, money and time. We are still in the information gathering process, but thanks to colleagues around the country, we can provide you the following information at this time. If you would like to make a donation, consider one of these organizations.



**The Friends of Montfort, Inc.,** a 501(c)(3) organization, is a support group for the school, *Institut Montfort* in Haiti, which is run by the Daughters of Wisdom. *Institut Montfort* has over six hundred deaf and deaf-blind children in three locations in Haiti, the majority are in Port Au Prince. They have begun work to provide relief for the deaf and deaf-blind children of *Institut Montfort* who are in need because of the earthquake. As you can imagine, they have a myriad of needs. The best way we can help them at this time is by sending cash donations by check made out to "Friends of Montfort, Inc." to Friends of Montfort, Inc., P.O. Box 314, Merrick, New York 11566-0314.

**Food for the Poor.** Food for the Poor has been involved in Haiti for many years. If you have bulk supplies of food, water, medical, etc., they can be sent to Food for the Poor, 6401 Lyons Road, Coconut Creek, Florida 33073. (**Note:** the label must include SOURCE CODE 72883)

As always, **The Red Cross** is an excellent place to start should you want to donate items, money or your time.

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf is in the beginning stages of a partnership with the World Institute on Disability and the American Red Cross to make Red Cross emergency services more acces-

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include either MATH 48 UW, 248, 250, 251, 253 or an equivalent course with a final grade earned of "C" or better within the Peralta district); have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.50; be pursuing an AA/AS degree or certificate of achievement; demonstrate financial need (applicants must have completed the 2009-10 FAFSA in advance). Additionally, applicants must provide two letters of recommendation and write an essay of 500 words. See Jennifer Lenahan in Room 261 for the application and return completed applications to her. The deadline is April 30.

**Deaf History Month.** Celebrated yearly March 13-April 15 to observe the anniversaries of the following events important to Deaf Americans: 1) March 13, 1988—The Deaf President Now (DPN) movement made it possible for I. King Jordan to become the 1<sup>st</sup> deaf president of Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. 2) April 8, 1864—President Abraham Lincoln signed the charter authorizing the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and Blind, later renamed Gallaudet University. 3) April 15, 1817—the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons, later renamed the American School for the Deaf, was founded in Hartford, Connecticut.

**Sign Language Media Expo 2010.** March 13, 9:00 am-6:00 pm. Alameda County Fairgrounds, 4501 Pleasanton Avenue, Pleasanton, CA 94566. Free admission. Get admission pass by registering online: [www.slmediaexpo.com](http://www.slmediaexpo.com). Activities include exhibits, MATA.TV "Socialized" Plaza, media shows, ASL games, prizes. For more information: [info@slmediaexpo.com](mailto:info@slmediaexpo.com) or (866) 435-1260 (Voice), (240) 236-1318 (VP).

**Deaf Hope Alaskan Cruise Fundraiser.** Deadline to register March 15. Final payment due June 4. Cruise August 13-20, leaving and returning to Seattle. Stops include: Inside Passage, Juneau, Skagway, Tracy Arm Fjord, Victoria, B.C. For more information contact Linda Ginter at VP: 866-563-3715 or [awesome.funtrips@gmail.com](mailto:awesome.funtrips@gmail.com). Proceeds will go to DeafHope. To see flyer: [www.deaf-hope.org/images/2010/DeafHopeCruise2010.pdf](http://www.deaf-hope.org/images/2010/DeafHopeCruise2010.pdf)

**Deaf Community Night Chocolate Fundraiser.** March 20, 3-9 pm. Entertainment includes community awards, fudge competition, auction and more. Deaf Community Center. Tickets: VIP \$45 includes chocolate making workshop (3-5 pm); regular \$25 (5-9 pm). Must be 21 or over to attend. For more info: [info@dcara.org](mailto:info@dcara.org); on vlog at [dcara.org](http://dcara.org) or (510) 343-6670 VP.

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sible to all individuals who may need them. We will be sharing more about this work as it is developed. In addition, as a result of a motion passed at the 2009 RID National Conference, work will begin on the development of a position paper to address the issues interpreters face during emergencies/disasters and non-declared local emergencies/disasters.

—From RID E-News, January 2010  

## ASL Tales Wins Prestigious Benjamin Franklin Award

Winner of the Bill Fisher Award for Best First Book (Children's/Young Adult), *ASL Tales: The Princess and the Pea*, is a new type of children's picture book designed to be universally enjoyed by both Deaf and hearing readers. The book is a whimsically illustrated version of a classic tale that delights readers with its make-you-smile, character-building twist. Unlike any existing books, this hardcover picture book includes a DVD with master storyteller, Pinky Aiello, telling the tale in American Sign Language (ASL). Designed for pleasure reading and educational use, the package includes learning tools, web-based instruction for teaching fundamentals of ASL syntax and vocabulary, and it can be watched in English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Thai, or with English captioning.

ASL Tales Press is the combined work of 20 plus volunteers who recognized that the richness of native ASL storytelling can provide opportunities far beyond what is currently available in popular books on 'sign language'. The majority of materials on the shelves of libraries, classrooms and bookstores, while teaching vocabulary, do not expose readers to the fullness of ASL. This book, and others in the ASL Tales series, can simply be enjoyed as fun and enriching literature



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**Deep Sea Fishing for Deaf Kids.** March 20. The departure point is in Martinez. Potluck fishing for kids. They will get a chance to witness the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Deaf sturgeon derby. Free for ages 8-15; 16-18 years old are welcome, with a valid fishing license. Sponsored by the California Bass Anglers of the Silent Society (Cal BASS). [www.calbass.org](http://www.calbass.org)

**Film "Gerald".** April 17, 1:00 pm. Deaf Community Center (DCC), 1550 San Leandro Blvd., San Leandro. Film in ASL with English subtitles. Admission: \$11. Net proceeds go to DCARA programs and services. Tickets/info by email: [info@dcara.org](mailto:info@dcara.org); by VP: (510) 343-6670. From the director of "Mountain Man" (ASLfilms.com).

**Mother, Father Deaf Day.** April 25. Celebrated annually on the last Sunday of April as an opportunity for all children of Deaf parents (CODAs) to acknowledge their parents' contribution to their lives. For more information go to [www.coda-international.org](http://www.coda-international.org).

**2<sup>nd</sup> National Council of Hispano Deaf & Hard of Hearing Conference.** April 29-May 1. Chicago, Illinois. For info: [www.nchdhh.org](http://www.nchdhh.org)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Annual National Sign Language & Interpreting Conference.** April 30-May 1. Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, California (across from Disneyland). Early bird & students: \$75/day or \$125 combo. Regular registration: \$99/\$175. Late registration: \$150/day. For more information: [www.ohsoez.com](http://www.ohsoez.com)

**13<sup>th</sup> World Deaf Magicians Festival.** May 23-30. Cattolica, Italy. In cooperation with the Society of World Deaf Magicians and supported by the Italian Society of the Deaf (ENS). For info: [www.2010wdmf.com/index.html](http://www.2010wdmf.com/index.html)

**National Alliance of Black Interpreters (NAOBI) Biennial Conference.** June 24-27. "Running with the Vision: Empower. Educate. Excel". Phoenix, Arizona. [www.naobi.org/2010](http://www.naobi.org/2010). For Northern California chapter information contact Erica West at [evwl1002@gmail.com](mailto:evwl1002@gmail.com), 916-420-4900 (Voice/SMS), or 866-954-3764 (VP).

**Deaf People of Color Conference.** June 25-27. Portland, Oregon. Theme is "hands joined, signs united, colors flying". People of ALL colors, races, ethnicities, religions, and cultural affiliations are welcome. [www.deafpeopleof-color.org](http://www.deafpeopleof-color.org)

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or as a foundation for learning ASL and developing an understanding of American Deaf Culture.

*About the Benjamin Franklin Awards™*

The Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA) recognizes excellence in independent publishing. The Benjamin Franklin Award is judged by a panel of book industry experts including buyers at wholesale and retail levels, librarians, book critics, design experts and independent publishing consultants. The panel of nearly 180 judges weighed and evaluated more than 1,800 submissions in 52 categories. The Benjamin Franklin 2008 Awards™ ceremony was held at the Roosevelt Hotel, New York, New York on May 28, 2009.

*ASL Tales: The Princess and the Pea* was written by Alicita Rodriguez & Joseph Starr, illustrated by Judy Hood, and created and performed in American Sign Language by Pinky Aiello. 26 color pages, 11.25 x 8.75" hardcover, ISBN 978-0-9818139-0-5, retail price: \$24.95. [www.ASLTales.net](http://www.ASLTales.net)

For more information about the Ben Franklin Awards: [www.booktrade.info/index.php/showarticle/21500](http://www.booktrade.info/index.php/showarticle/21500) or [www.ibpa-online.org/pubresources/benfrank.aspx](http://www.ibpa-online.org/pubresources/benfrank.aspx)

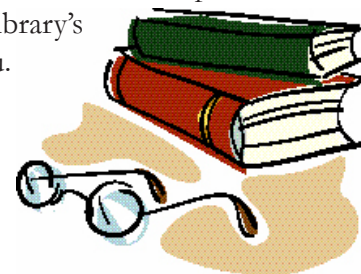
—From Laurie Meyer, *ASL Tales Press*



## Spring Hours for BCC Library

Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am-4:55 pm
Wednesday & Thursday	8:30 am-7:25 pm
Friday	8:30 am-4:55 pm
Saturday	10:00 am-1:55 pm

For more information contact the library's circulation desk at (510) 981-2824 or for in-depth information check the library's website at <http://wpmu.eberkeley.org/library/>



**50<sup>th</sup> Biennial National Association of the Deaf Conference.**

July 6-10. Philadelphia Marriott (downtown). The theme of the conference is, "Celebrate Our Heritage. Invest in Our Future." More information at [www.nad.org/philly/register](http://www.nad.org/philly/register)

**Glamming Event at Dillon Beach.** July 9-12. Those 16 years and older must have a valid California fishing license. Some equipment for children to get clams will be provided. Extra equipment greatly APPRECIATED! Also provided old fashioned s'mores by the campfire at night. Low tide will be at 5:30 am on Saturday, we will be at the mud flats before the maximum low tide. For information on clothing and gear, check website. [www.calbass.org](http://www.calbass.org) or [svaccd.org](http://svaccd.org).

**International Congress on the Education of the Deaf.**

July 18-22. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. [www.iced2010.com](http://www.iced2010.com)

**CODA 2010 Conference.** July 22-25, Fremont, California. "Coming Home Again" conference of the organization Children of Deaf Adults. We are who we are because of a deaf parent. We are who we are when we celebrate our lives together. We are who we are because someone broke ground to define us and we will gather for the 25<sup>th</sup> time to celebrate that. Come home to the birthplace of the CODA conference, a place to celebrate our parent(s), a place to celebrate together.

**Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research Conference (TISLR 10).** Conference theme: Research Methodologies in Sign Language Linguistics. Purdue University, September 30-October 2. For information: [www.purdue.edu/TISLR10](http://www.purdue.edu/TISLR10)

**6<sup>th</sup> Triennial National Asian Deaf Congress.** June 22-26, 2011. New York City, NY. Hosted by the Metropolitan Asian Deaf Association. [www.madanynj.org](http://www.madanynj.org)

**World Federation of the Deaf World Congress** in South Africa 2011. Visit the new website of the World Congress at: [www.wfd2011.com](http://www.wfd2011.com). Information on registration and program will be provided soon.

**Services at St. Joseph's Center for the Deaf & HOH.** Separate men's and women's anger management groups, nutrition workshops for seniors, individual & couples, parenting classes, counseling, and individual & family nutritional counseling. For more information contact Lorraine Wilson, LMFT at [lwilson@sjcd.org](mailto:lwilson@sjcd.org), (866) 574-4476 VP, or (510) 881-2247 TTY.

## IRS Videos in ASL Now Available on YouTube

With tax season in full swing, did you know that deaf and hard of hearing consumers can find answers to their tax questions directly from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in American Sign Language?

The IRS has built a YouTube channel complete with a series of ASL videos—that are also voiced and captioned—on a myriad of tax topics, including e-File and Direct Deposit, Free File and Fillable Forms, Education Tax Credits, Unemployment Compensation and Home Energy Credits. ASL videos on many more important subjects for taxpayers will be added as they become available.



Just go to the IRS YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/IRSvideosASL](http://www.youtube.com/user/IRSvideosASL) to see ASL videos that will help you complete your taxes this year. You can post and share these videos through your websites, vlogs or other social network venues. Click on the subscriptions button at the top of the YouTube page and you can find out right away when future videos become available. Videos in English and Spanish are also available.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is also committed to making every document on its website accessible to the widest possible audience. Skilled accessibility contractors and IRS accessibility specialists insure that documents are, to the maximum extent feasible, accessible to persons using special assistive technology, including screen reading software, refreshable Braille displays, and voice recognition software. Check the IRS's Alternative Media Center for more information.

—From Deaf Network & IRS website 



# An Arctic Community Recognizes Inuit Sign Language

By Nancy Cayton, ASL Department Staff

A 2005 court case against Bobby Suwarak, a deaf man from Nunavut Territory in Canada, brought the existence of an indigenous sign language to the attention of mainstream society. Once people acknowledged that a language with a very limited number of speakers was in use, this begged the question of whether users of the language can get a fair trial.

Prior to 2005, Suwarak had been to court and prison two previous times without attracting much attention. In 2005, however, three successive lawyers appointed to his case refused to represent him, saying he could not receive a fair trial because of his inability to comprehend what was happening.

Suwarak, who became deaf at about 5 years old, grew up in Baker Lake, a community of about 1,700 people in Nunavut. Nunavut, previously part of the Northwest Territories of Canada, is the newest, largest, and

least-densely populated Canadian political jurisdiction. It is in the Arctic, entirely above the tree line.

The primary spoken language of the residents, who are Inuit, is Inuktitut. Suwarak attended the local elementary school for only one week before leaving due to the frustration of being unable to communicate with the teacher.

Living in an isolated region, having no formal education, and not using signs that match what Deaf Canadians typically used, people assumed that Suwarak's communication was idiosyncratic, a "homemade" sign language. In previous court appearances, Suwarak's childhood friend, David Kautaq, who learned the language from Suwarak's family, served as the "interpreter" because the court could not locate anyone else who understood him.

Tim Kavanagh, the third in the series of lawyers appointed to the case, had met Suwarak and Kautaq during Suwarak's previous court appearances. Kavanagh doubted that Kautaq had the necessary skills to qualify as a court interpreter—although Kautaq seemed to be able to easily communicate with Suwarak, he had difficulty with understanding court proceedings and the specialized legal vocabulary. In some cases, the language they were using didn't have terms for concepts being discussed.



Map of Canadian Provinces. Nunavut is in yellow at the top. Reproduced with the permission of Natural Resources Canada 2009, courtesy of the Atlas of Canada.

Although he had refused to represent Suwarak and was not officially on the case, Kavanagh kept an eye on what was happening. When Suwarak was jailed, Kavanagh filed an *amicus curiae*, a "friend of the court" statement, allowing him to give the judge relevant information about the situation without actually representing Suwarak. Following that, he argued that Suwarak could not get a fair trial without an unbiased and trained interpreter. Since no such interpreter appeared to exist, Kavanagh asked for a stay of proceedings, which was granted.

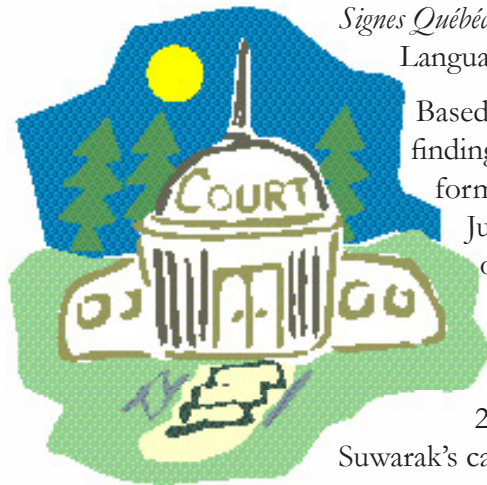
To ascertain Suwarak's language skills, and thus if he could participate in his own defense and receive a fair trial, Jamie MacDougall, Ph.D., an associate professor at Montreal's McGill University, was brought in. MacDougall specializes in cognition, language, and perception, particularly as it relates to deaf people.

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MacDougall had already performed assessments of Suwarak for the previous court cases dating to the late 1990s, as well as doing research on the signing used in Nunavut.

In 2004, MacDougall found that there was enough evidence to conclude that the signing being used by residents, including Suwarak, was an indigenous sign language, now referred to as Inuit Sign Language. It is a very complex sign system and used extensively in the region. The underlying visual-spatial-kinesthetic properties appear to be consistent with other signed languages, though clearly unrelated to American Sign Language (ASL) or *Langue des Signes Québécoise* (LSQ)\*. He recommended training to improve Suwarak's communication skills.

\*American Sign Language is used throughout Canada except in the French-speaking areas where *Langue des Signes Québécoise*, Quebec Sign Language, is used.



Based on MacDougall's findings and other information presented, Justice Earl Johnson of the Nunavut Court of Justice issued an 18-page ruling in June 2005 indicating that Suwarak's case would have to be

continued. He gave the court administration a deadline of September 2006, more than 2½ years after the charges were filed, to complete a training program for Suwarak and those who will act as his interpreters during the trial.



*Nunavut group working on documenting ISL. Photo courtesy of Jamie MacDougall.*

When the time period was up, Crown prosecutor Rachel Furey entered a stay of proceedings saying that "It's not in the public interest to proceed," which closed the case.

MacDougall continues to work with the Nunavut Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY) and the Department of Justice to document Inuit Sign Language and to provide written and audiovisual materials. Some of the materials include an illustrated glossary and a DVD that shows locals telling stories using either ASL or ISL, with translation into the other language, creating an "oral history" of the communities of Taloyoak, Rankin Inlet, and Pangnirtung.

In February 2005, when Suwarak's case initially broke, the Canadian Association of the Deaf released a state-

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### **Resources used to write this article**

#### **Canadian Association of the Deaf Website.**

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ment saying, “The CAD completely supports that Inuit Sign Language (ISL) be recognized as the first language of Deaf Inuit people. CAD pledges to provide information and assistance to help promote the visibility of ISL and to build interpreter training programs for wider use of ISL in the region.”

Nunavut currently officially recognizes English, French, Inuktitut, and Innuinaqtun. It is considering adding Inuit Sign Language, as well as American Sign Language, to that list. Premier Eva Aariak has stated that the CLEY “recognizes the uniqueness and importance of Inuit Sign Language (ISL) in Nunavut.” As such, the CLEY believes that ISL deserves special attention and support and acknowledges that there are few resources for it.

There was some activity to include ISL in the Inuit Language Protection Act and/or the Official Languages Act. Although that has not happened, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the Canadian Constitution, has a section that makes discrimination, including discrimination against people with disabilities, illegal. 

## **World Federation of the Deaf Statement Regarding the Creation of a Unified Arab Sign Language**

*WFD calls for the unification in process of Sign Language in the Arab region to cease immediately*

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is concerned about steps being taken to unify Sign Languages in the Arab region. There are 22 countries and many more indigenous sign languages in the region.

WFD would like to state that such a step is a violation of the linguistic human rights of Deaf people in the region and an unwanted interference with linguistic diversity. Language planning decisions regarding Sign Languages should always remain with the linguistic community, in this case Deaf people, in a similar way as non-native speakers of Arabic language should not interfere with the planning or development of Arabic. Sign Language planning activities should therefore

under all circumstances be contrived and realized in cooperation with National Associations of the Deaf.


According to the WFD Statement on the Unification of Sign Languages: the *WFD Board wants to state firmly that any forcible purification or unification of Sign Languages, conducted by governments, professionals working with Deaf people, and organizations for or of the Deaf, is a violation of the UN and UNESCO treaties, declarations and other policies, including the recent UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Deaf people in every country have the sole right to make changes, if necessary, in their own local, provincial and national Sign Languages in response to cultural changes. The control of the development of any Sign Language must be left to any social group where the particular Sign Language is used.*

Every sign language in the world, like any spoken language has its own heritage, history, culture and traditions and such a process of forcible purification or unification would be to disregard all of these aspects of a Deaf community. This would be a violation of the linguistic human rights and cultural rights of a sign language community.

The WFD calls for the unification project to cease. In its place, WFD suggests a greater consultation with Deaf people in the region, and strongly recommends cooperation with WFD Ordinary Members. WFD encourages all parties to achieve mutual understanding for better recognition of national sign languages in the Arab region.

The World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) strongly support the views of the WFD in its concern about the proposed steps being taken to unify sign languages in the Arab region.

WASLI is aware that many sign language interpreters are not native users of indigenous sign languages. They are aware of the difficulties faced by interpreters of signed languages in conveying new concepts and terms, in interpreting in higher education or televised news broadcasts for example, and of the wish to find a “solution” be creating a new sign.

WASLI fully endorses the WFD/WASLI joint statement which recognises the primacy of organisations of Deaf People to chart the political, cultural, and educational development of sign language in their country, including the dissemination of sign language dictionaries and teaching materials. 

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