

Vancouver 2010: A New Era of Participation and Collaboration

Moving forward from the effects of the 1880 Milan Resolution

The 1880 Milan decision by educators, for Deaf People, is a dark historical event. 164 delegates of the International Congress on the Education of Deaf-Mutes gathered in this Italian city to discuss the education of the Deaf and a resolution was passed to ban sign language and promote only oralism in the schools of the Deaf. Only a few delegates opposed this resolution. The immediate impact of the resolution was the purging of Deaf teachers and administrators in schools for the Deaf, including those schools that were set up by the same Deaf people. Although progress has been made in restoring sign language as the language of education for Deaf children there are many jurisdictions around the world that have yet to acknowledge the importance of our preferred language. Through many years of struggle and perseverance Deaf teachers and administrators returned to the schools and reclaimed their place in the education of Deaf children. In spite of these advances in our education of Deaf children a 'mindset' became entrenched in general society regarding Deaf people who chose to use sign language and some point to the Milan decision as a factor. That 'mindset' viewed those who use sign language as disabled and to be 'helped' by the majority group in many societies.

Vancouver, Canada is the site of the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) in July 2010. The congress meets together every five years to share research and ideas regarding education of Deaf people. ICED is not an organization with structure or bylaws it is simply an event where researchers and educators meet to share information and to network. Wayne Sinclair, a member of the British Columbia, Canada Deaf community posed a question at a community town hall meeting regarding the idea of obtaining a recognition that the Milan 1880 decision had a detrimental effect on Deaf people around the world. There was a strong grassroots support to proceed. Wayne, along with four other Deaf community members, wrote a letter to request a meeting with the ICED Vancouver 2010 planning committee to discuss consideration of a public acknowledgement at the congress. The response from the ICED planning committee was positive and expressed an interest to meet with us. A negotiation team was formed with three additional people to meet with a negotiation team from the planning committee.

The goal of the committee is to plant a new marker in the history of Deaf people around the world. The members of the committee hope to be able to establish a new reference point where by we no longer refer back to the 1880 Milan resolution. We are hopeful that a new reference point, The Vancouver 2010: An Era of Participation and Collaboration, be established as a point of renewed effort to ensure equality for all people. The committee hopes to obtain a public agreement to reject the 1880 Milan resolutions (see-insert webpage), acknowledgement of the detrimental effects on Deaf people globally from the Milan resolution, support for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, support of the WFD 2007 resolution, and an active support by educators and researchers for the equal participation of Deaf people in all aspects of policies and governmental decisions in countries around the

world. Many Deaf people have indicated that these are important issues especially the acknowledgement of the detrimental effects of the 1880 Milan Resolution.

The core group of Deaf community members agreed that both the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) needed to be informed as the issue was an international one rather than just a local or national issue. Communication was established with both the CAD and the WFD so that we could relay information and solicit advice and perspectives on our negotiations and discussions with the planning committee. Members of the grassroots committee include Wayne Sinclair, Monte Hardy, Hester Hussey, Doug Lambert, Janice Lyons, Kristen Pranzl, Nigel Howard and John Fraser.

The work initiated by the grassroots members of the Deaf community of British Columbia is a step on the path to true participation and collaboration that includes Deaf people in their societies and government around the world. The progress in many countries demonstrates the possibilities and many examples exist to the success of full participation and collaboration. However, there are still many more jurisdictions and countries where Deaf citizens are devalued and excluded.

How can Deaf people support this initiative? Write a letter or e-mail a letter to the ICED 2010 planning committee supporting the following:

- a) Rejection of the 1880 Milan resolution;
- b) Acknowledgement of the detrimental effects of the 1880 Milan Resolution;
- c) Request support for the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability;
- d) Request support for the WFD 2007 resolution; and
- e) The participation of Deaf citizens in education and governmental policies in each country;

Letters from individuals or associations are encouraged. You can ask the following organizations or agencies to write as well:

- a) National, state or provincial, and local associations;
- b) National, state or provincial, and local teacher's or educator's associations;
- c) University or college researchers; and
- d) National, state or provincial and local governments.

The more letters from individuals or organizations that are sent the more strength is given to the 2010 ICED planning committee to move ahead with this action.

Write to:

Dr. Claire Anderson, Conference Chair

21st International Congress on Education of the Deaf

Suite 101 – 1444 Alberni Street,

Vancouver, British Columbia V6G 2Z7

Canada

Or e-mail: iced2010@advanced-group.com

Please also send a copy of the letter to:

Wayne Sinclair or Monte Hardy

#106-2844-273rd Street

Aldergrove, British Columbia V4W 3S6

Canada

Or Email: hardy63@live.com or deafwanderer@hotmail.com

Vlogs regarding this issue can be viewed at:

Why do we demand a letter of apology from the ICED? (ASL Version)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZygSp18jA7I>

Why do we demand a letter of apology from the ICED (IS version)

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hTNxx5iZBs>

Part 2: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICv6_8Ha9mM