



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023 – 2024

BRIDGING THE GAP

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# SDHHS



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# VISION & VALUES



**SDHHS HAS BEEN SERVING SASKATCHEWAN SINCE 1981**

## **OUR MISSION**

TO SUPPORT THE INDEPENDENCE OF DEAF, DEAFENED AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE BY PROVIDING SERVICES WHICH ENHANCE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.

## **OUR VISION**

A WORLD WITHOUT BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF, DEAFENED, OR HARD OF HEARING.

## **OUR VALUES**

COMMUNICATION WITH RESPECT, DIGNITY, AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY.  
COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION AMONG INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES.

SELF-DETERMINATION, EMPOWERMENT, AND CHOICE.

OPERATIONAL INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY THAT INSPIRES TRUST.  
ACCESSIBILITY.

# WHO WE ARE

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MICHELLE GRODECKI..... PRESIDENT  
 PAULETTE SMITH..... VICE PRESIDENT  
 GORD HEIN..... PAST PRESIDENT  
 ART HILLCOX..... TREASURER  
 MUSTAFA ALABSSI..... DIRECTOR  
 FATIMA NAFISA..... DIRECTOR  
 PATTI TROFIMENKOFF..... DIRECTOR  
 ALLARD THOMAS..... DIRECTOR  
 BRENNAN ESTELL ..... DIRECTOR  
 ALISON DECK ..... DIRECTOR  
 DAVID FOURNEY ..... DIRECTOR  
 CAROLYN CAUL..... SECRETARY

## REGINA OFFICE

KAREN NURKOWSKI..... INTERPRETER  
 SHAYNA HOGGARTH ..... INTERPRETER  
 PATTI SPICER..... VOCATIONAL WORKER  
 & ECFS

## SASKATOON OFFICE

NAIRN GILLIES .....EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
 KAMI HARBIDGE ..... EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT  
 REN PERRA ..... OFFICE COORDINATOR  
 BRANDIE RADCLIFFE .... INTERPRETER  
 JODY THOMPSON ..... VOCATIONAL & YOUTH WORKER  
 KRISSY HAINES ..... SIGN SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL  
 ROBYN HOLMES ..... ECFS  
 ALANDA MCLEOD ..... SIGN SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL  
 TYLER BURGESS ..... MENTAL HEALTH WORKER  
 NICOLE MUSEY ..... 4C PRESCHOOL TEACHER  
 ASHLEY BUCKNALL..... 4C PRESCHOOL EDU. ASSISTANT

## SASKATCHEWAN NORTH

SUE SCHMID ..... INTERPRETER  
 RAE-MAIRI RICHARDSON..... SIGN SUPPORT  
 PROFESSIONAL

## SASKATCHEWAN SOUTH

BARB FROESE ..... INTERPRETER



# Freelancers and Contractors

## **FREELANCERS**

JANET DITTRICK ..... DEAF INTERPRETER  
RHONDA LEIER ..... COMPUTERIZED NOTE-TAKING SERVICES  
DONNA WHITELAW ..... COMPUTERIZED NOTE-TAKING SERVICES  
CARLA KLASSEN ..... INTERPRETER  
RACHEL JANZEN ..... INTERPRETER  
ALICIA PONCIANO ..... INTERPRETER

## **CONTRACT WORKERS**

ADAM STRATYCHUK ..... VIDEO EDITING  
SHAWN STRATYCHUK .. VIDEO EDITING  
NICOLE MUSEY..... SIGN'N STORIES WORKER  
DENNY MAURICE ..... YOUTH /SIGN'N STORIES WORKER/ INDIVIDUAL INCLUSION WORKER  
FATIMA NAFISA ..... YOUTH PROGRAMMING  
ISAAC MARSDEN ..... YOUTH PROGRAMMING  
DENA JOHNS ..... SASKATOON OFFICE CLEANER  
AMNA WAHID ..... REGINA OFFICE CLEANER  
ELLA TOMTENE ..... SASKATOON SUMMER STUDENT



# Many Thanks to our Volunteers!

We appreciate your amazing energy & wonderful support!

WALIEDIN ABDALLA  
SEVIOUR ABEKANI  
RANIA AHMED  
RAYAN AHMED  
MUSTAFA ALABSSI  
INNOCENT AMANI  
CHRISTIAN ARRELANOS  
CAMERON AUSER  
BURTON BIRD  
KEITH BIRD  
KELBY BIRD  
LEONA BIRLEY  
EMMA BOWEY  
QUENTIN BUCHELER  
ASHLEY BUCKNALL  
SHELLY CARVER  
LINDSAY CHILD  
KYLEY CROSS  
KERRA DUCHEK  
LESLIE DUNN  
AMANDA EHNISZ  
MAWAZO FELIX  
LAURA FORRESTER  
BARB FROESE  
BETHANY FULLER  
NAIRN GILLIES  
PATRICIA GILLIES  
ADDISON HAINES  
KRISSEY HAINES  
KAMI HARBIDGE  
ALYSON HEIN  
MISHE HIBBARD

ART HILCOX  
SHAYNA HOGGARTH  
MATT HOLLAND  
MARG HOLMES  
HOORIA HOORIA  
BOB HUTCHINSON  
LUCILLE HUTCHINSON  
AMORITA HVORKA  
LINCOLN HVORKA  
RACHEL JANZEN  
AMANDA KERR  
ANDREW KNORR  
DOLAN LENNEA  
GRACE MALASHITU  
DENNY MAURICE  
ALANDA MCLEOD  
STUART MERSON-DAVIES  
CARMEN MILLER  
CLINTON MILLER  
SAMANTHA MORRISON  
TIM MORSE  
BRONWYN MURRAY  
MUJAHED MUSA ADEM  
NICOLE MUSEY  
FATIMA NAFISA  
BRON NURKOWSKI  
KAREN NURKOWSKI  
REN PERRA  
BRANDIE RADCLIFFE  
MIYA RICHARDSON  
RAE-MAIRI RICHARDSON  
XANDER RINALDI

MARK RITTINGER  
NOVA RITTINGER  
LANA JAZEN  
TAJA CARROLL  
SUE SCHMID  
MARYNA SHAMOON  
MARGARET SHA'OULLE  
PAULETTE SMITH  
STACEY SOLILO  
ADAM STRATYCHUK  
BRAD STRATYCHUK  
SHAWN STRATYCHUK  
MERWA SULIMAN  
GORD THOMPSON  
JODY THOMPSON  
NORMA THOMPSON  
JESSICA TIEFENBACH  
ELLA TOMTENE  
LEZLI-JO TROFIMENKOFF  
PATTI TROFIMENKOFF  
WARREN TROFIMENKOFF  
CANDACE TURNER  
KRISTIAN ULRICH  
JOYEUSE UWAMARIYA  
PATRICK UWIDUHAYE  
CINDY VIEN  
AMNA WAHID  
KAINAT WAHID  
JOHN WARREN  
ROSALIE WISHLOW  
HASSAN ZAKA  
BAMBOO SHOOTS

# President's Report

The SDHHS Board of Directors has met on three occasions as a whole group to review business and set direction for the agency. Within those meetings, the board of directors established working committees in the areas of: Mental Health, Social Media Policy Development, AGM Planning and Bylaw Review. I want to thank this past year's board members for their contributions to the meetings and the committees. There is still plenty of work to do in order to continue driving positive change for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing community and it's my hope that next year's board members will continue to be involved with working committees to ensure a better future for everyone. By accepting a position on the board, members are committing to working to improve the services of Deaf & Hard of Hearing individuals in Saskatchewan.

Recently, you may have seen in the news that the Saskatchewan Government recently passed the Accessible Saskatchewan Act (Bill 103) which recognizes ASL and Indigenous Sign Languages as languages of instruction. While this is definitely a step in the right direction, there are still many unknowns about how this will be implemented and how access will be guaranteed for DHH children in the province. The board has tasked Nairn with asking pointed and specific questions as the Executive Director to secure government attention and ensure appropriate qualifications and standards for teaching DHH students.

Krissy Haines has worked hard to get SDHHS's ASL classes approved by the Ministry of Education as a dual credit for high school students. Effective immediately, any high school student who takes an ASL class from SDHHS can apply to their school principal to have their completed coursework counted as a high school credit that counts towards graduation requirements.

SDHHS recently completed a large project called Sign'n Stories that saw dozens of Children's stories translated into ASL. A huge thank you to the staff and volunteers who have spent hundreds of hours on this project!

There is lots of buzz about a Deaf Centre being established in Saskatchewan; this was one priority area identified by staff and board members at last year's retreat. SDHHS has applied for a grant for a Deaf Hub in Saskatoon which will be in partnership with Deaf Organizations. At this time there is no concrete promise of funding.

This year we welcomed a new Interpreter in Regina (Shayna) and SDHHS received funding for a part time Mental Health Support Worker (Tyler). The Provincial Budget did not see any new funding for the agency however, we're able to maintain the status quo for services and programming currently being offered.

As a membership, I encourage you to continue to be involved in the community. I was recently introduced to a term by Dr. Michella Bandas that I love. It is called "common-unity". It comes from the word "community". Common-unity is Deaf and Hard of Hearing (and their allies) working together to address Deaf and Hard of Hearing needs. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for SDHHS and the community when we all work together!

Michelle Grodecki  
Interim-President

# Executive Director's Report

It is hard to believe we are at year end again. Saskatchewan has seen improvements in inclusion, and accessibility for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) people in the last several years. Honestly, the work has just begun.

Every child born in Saskatchewan is screened for hearing in their first week of life, and followed up at 3 and 6 months. There are now many more services available to the community such as: Deafblind services; ASL High School Curriculum; Text 911; Video Remote Interpreters; DHH bilingual-bicultural preschool; Outreach services in the North servicing 16 communities; books, resources and literacy materials in ASL, English, Michif and Cree; and the Saskatchewan Driver Training manual in ASL. We continue to provide high-quality interpreting services (both in-person and online) for the entire province. While each of these is a huge accomplishment, there are next steps and improvements to be made on all of them.

The highest priority is given to prevention of hearing loss and early intervention services for children which can reduce or eliminate barriers for those with hearing loss and other disabilities. We have focused efforts on wrap-around services to work with families and communities to better include the DHH.

With the passage of Bill 103 that “recognizes ASL and ISL as the language of the Deaf in Saskatchewan”, it has the goal to create a more inclusive province for all people with disabilities. The CCSD aligned with the WFD in their report to:

*Advocate for inclusion of sign language resources in public and educational programs, integrating principles from the WFD's 2023 position paper. This includes prioritizing Deaf individuals in the development and teaching of sign languages, establishing sign language teacher training curricula, and recognizing the valuable cultural contributions of Deaf communities to a diverse range of learners. And Encourage research on the status and use of sign languages in Canada, conducted by university linguistics departments, and suggest the development of a comprehensive sign language curriculum for both academic and community levels. These recommendations are aimed at enhancing the recognition, accessibility, and inclusion of sign languages in Canada, thereby supporting the well-being and linguistic rights of the Deaf community and contributing to a more equitable and inclusive society.*

There is a need to make documents or websites for provincial, federal, municipal or private sector accessible in ASL. This requires many hours of specialized intensive work including interpreting services, video editing, and digital publication and management. We recognize that making Saskatchewan an accessible place to access the economy and internet is an important part of inclusion.

There continues to be a shortage of trained interpreters nationwide. Being competitive with the wages in other provinces is difficult. Potential new hires in the province are already working as online interpreters. Technology allows them to work for other Provinces or for American companies at wages we cannot offer. SDHHS has found it difficult to recruit and/or retain quality staff for this reason.

We offer community-based peer connections through rehabilitative, educational, and vocational day programming and socializing. We welcome clients to come and have a coffee and chat in ASL with their community peers. We are providing a space for them to function as a community and find a linguistically rich, holistic, inclusive environment that they're able to navigate.

The Deaf community has approached the provincial government on different occasions asking for letters of support towards the acquisition a Community Resource Centre. It will be the most cost-effective way of delivering sustainable services to the entire community.

Nairn Gillies  
Executive Director

# A Year in Review

**MAY 2023:** ECFS WORKER ROBYN HOSTED “LITTLE BUTTONS” CLASSES

**MAY 2023:** SDHHS WAS PROUD TO HOST CAMP DRAGONFLY WITH 12 STUDENT CAMPERS (& THEIR SUPPORT WORKERS!)

**JUNE 2023:** SDA & SDHHS HOSTED EXPO IN SASKATOON... OVER 200 PEOPLE ATTENDED!

**JUNE 2023:** SDHHS HOSTED TRIVIA NIGHT & A CRAFT RAFFLE AT CAPITOL MUSIC CLUB

**JUNE 2023:** SDHHS HIRED DENNY MAURICE AS A SASKATOON YOUTH WORKER

**AUG 2023:** KIDS SUMMER DAY CAMP FOR 5 DAYS OF FUN!

**SEP 2023:** THE FALL FUNDRAISER WAS AT THE GORDIE HOWE COMPLEX.

**OCT 2023:** HOSTED A BOOTH AT BABY BUMP EXPO IN REGINA.

**NOV 2023:** KLASS A AUCTIONS HOSTED AN ONLINE AUCTION FUNDRAISER FOR SDHHS.

**DEC 2023:** REGINA & SASKATOON OFFICES EACH HOSTED A HOLIDAY CHEER EVENT.

**JAN 2024:** SDHHS HIRED SHAYNA HOGGARTH AS OUR NEW INTERPRETER IN REGINA!

**FEB 2024:** SIGN'N STORIES WEBPAGE LAUNCHED!

**FEB 2024:** SDHHS WAS AN EXHIBITOR AT THE SASKATOON FAMILY EXPO.

**SCHOOL YEAR:** CCCC PRESCHOOL CONTINUED CLASSES AT ST. AUGUSTINE SCHOOL

**YEAR-LONG:** INTERPRETING FOR SK RESIDENTS WAS OFFERED THROUGH ZOOM, FACETIME, SKYPE & IN-PERSON - OVER 1500 ASSIGNMENTS COMPLETED!

**YEAR-LONG:** SDHHS STAFF CONTINUED ONGOING TRAINING TO IMPROVE THEIR PROFESSIONAL SKILLS, TO ENSURE WE ARE PROVIDING THE BEST SERVICES POSSIBLE FOR SASKATCHEWAN!

Holiday Cheer



Trivia Night



Baby Bump Expo





# From the Office Coordinator

This past year has been incredibly rewarding and busy at SDHHS. Working alongside other staff members, we pulled off some fantastic events, including the SDHHS Trivia Night and Craft Raffle, Fall Fundraiser, Online Auction, Deaf Expo, and Holiday Cheer. Not only are these events great opportunities to socialize with the community, but they also help raise essential funds for our programs.

One of the highlights for me was coordinating our amazing volunteers. I'm thrilled to say our volunteer list has grown significantly this year. Their dedication and hard work have been invaluable!

I'm proud of the improvements we've made with our website, particularly with the addition of the Sign'n Stories webpage. It was a joy to be part of this project, and I even had the chance to voice some of the stories myself. This program has been well-received and has become an incredibly valuable resource for our community.

A key part of my role is coordinating the Interpreter calendar. This year, we completed over 1,500 assignments, ensuring our clients had access to the crucial communication services they needed. This is not always an easy task, but our interpreting team is very dedicated and works extremely hard to accommodate as many requests as possible.



As always, one of the most rewarding parts of my job is interacting with the community. Whether folks are coming in for support or just stopping by for a coffee, seeing familiar and friendly faces is a constant reminder of why our work matters. I look forward to continuing to support our clients and appreciate being welcomed into the local Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

Ren Perra

*Ren and Ella stopped by the Selfie Factory for a donation... and had to take some pictures!*

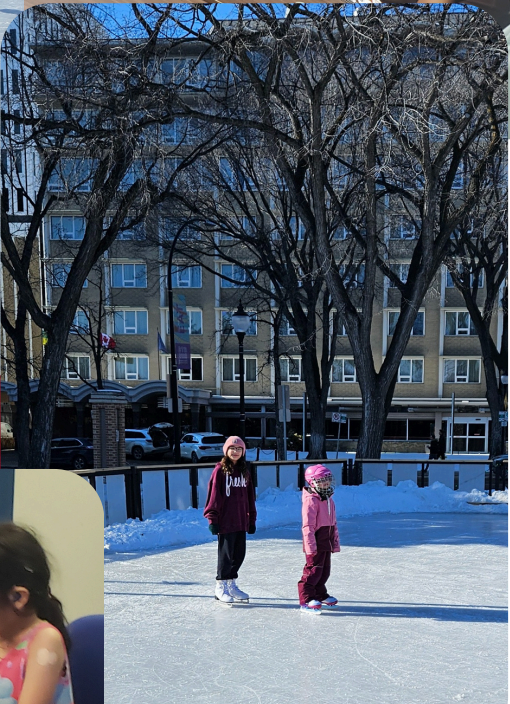


# Youth Programming

The Regina and Saskatoon Youth Programming was a great success this year hosting a variety of activities in each city! SDHHS hopes to continue to offer activities in the community. The Youth Programming at SDHHS offers healthy lifestyle choices, positive mental health, problem solving skills, a sense of belonging, peer networking, and so much more! Thanks to our Youth Leaders for all the work that went into the past year!









# Vocational Education & Employment

This year, we worked with not only Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, but also DeafBlind, DeafPlus, those who use assistive listening devices such as amplification systems or hearing aids, and individual consumers that have a cochlear implant. Our clients are diverse. Their hearing loss and the degree to which they do or do not hear is unique to each individual person. This makes our jobs as Vocational Workers both challenging and interesting every day!

Our contract with the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training requires us to look at Employability Dimensions within the categories of Work Job Readiness, Career Decision Making, Skills Enhancement, Work Job Search, and Work Job Maintenance. In each of these categories we support our consumers in different ways.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Acquiring life skills and employability skills that support their goals.
- Each individual, personally identifying strengths, skills, interests, values to connect to career choices.
- Receiving required employment supports to assist them in the labour market.
- Development of an individualized employment action plan with achievement milestones.
- Developing fundamental workplace skills including numeracy, computer skills, literacy, etc.
- Creating resumes, cover letters, and filling-in application forms.
- Becoming increasingly independent in their own career path and goals.

Some careers our clients have gone into this year include:

**Janitorial**

**Delivery**

**Assembly**

**Baking**

**Education**

**Pharmacy**

**Landscaping**

**Construction**

**Nursing**

**Self-employment**

**Food Service**

**Youth Work**



Some of the activities we helped support our consumers through this year are:

- Developing resumes
- Applying for jobs
- Access to proper communication supports
- Psychoeducational assessment
- First Aid/CPR/AED training with full ASL supports
- Registering for, and making a plan for post secondary education
- Making connections with post secondary institutions
- Matched alarm systems/notification systems to consumers
- Establishing WCB claims
- Interest surveys and profiles
- Looking for scholarship opportunities
- Researching & referring to additional programs such as the CanSask Career Services, PIE, & PEP
- Women in Trades workshops including Auto Body, Automotive Services Technician, Building Systems Technician, Electrician, Machinist, Parts Management Technician, Plumber, and Welder accessible with ASL
- Fall Protection training accessible with ASL
- Made SkidSteer/Forklift/WHMIS training accessible with ASL & a DI



From a professional development perspective, we have had access to a program called SkillShare which has allowed us to learn new skills ourselves, and we are always learning and researching various ideas, technology, and new ways to approach the world. Each consumer we work with is unique and has different goals they want to achieve and we need to be able to support them in their life journey. We hosted a Work Healthy Workshop in August and focused on mental health, healthy work environments, and self-care. We have been working on forming relationships this past year with places such as SGI, the Saskatoon Trades and Skills Center, Home Depot, and Inclusion Saskatchewan. Creating awareness and reminding people about hearing loss always creates a greater understanding and a more compassionate work environment.

We look forward to working with people from all across the province again this year!

Patricia Spicer  
Jody Thompson

# Interpreting

The Interpreters were extremely busy this past fiscal year. We remain interpreting both in-person, and virtually. We were fortunate to add a new Interpreter to our interpreting roster. We welcomed Shayna Hoggarth to our Regina office in January of 2024. She is a new graduate from the American Sign Language, English Interpreting Program in Winnipeg, MB. Regina is her hometown, and she is happy to be back.

Our interpreting team is as follows:

In Regina, we have Karen Nurkowski and our newest Interpreter Shayna Hoggarth. Barb Froese works out of Swift Current, often travelling to Regina. In the north, we have Sue Schmid in Prince Albert, and Brandie Radcliffe in Saskatoon. We also have two other crucial members of our team - Freelancers Carla Klassen and Rachel Janzen out of Saskatoon.

All of the Interpreters travel to all areas of the province. Ren, the Office Coordinator, is amazing at juggling the schedule to accommodate interpreting requests.

We have had some interpreting students do their practicum placements here. SDHHS loves supporting our up-and-coming grads. Shayna did her practicum in Regina, and Yoshie from Vancouver did her practicum in Saskatoon. We would love to thank these students for choosing to do their practicum Saskatchewan. We would also thank the community for welcoming these students into your personal lives and community events. This experience allowed the students to improve their ASL skills, to practice interpreting, and increase their cultural awareness.



**SDHHS' North SK Interpreters**



**SDHHS' South SK Interpreters**

**FUN FACT:**  
TOTAL HOURS INTERPRETED  
FOR THE YEAR...  
**3354 HOURS!**

**FUN FACT:**  
OUR BUSIEST MONTH WAS  
JUNE 2023, WITH **199**  
**REQUESTS!**

**INTERPRETING METHODS:**  
30% VIRTUAL  
70% IN PERSON

# Sign Support Professional

**Alanda McLeod** has been working with a few clients for a year, continuing ASL instruction, independence, ZOOM sessions, and support. This includes helping at the CCCC Preschool when needed. Alanda gave a few presentations on Deaf Awareness, like Tea Time at the SK Intercultural Association with Robyn in January.

Summer was a busy time. The Deaf Expo on June 10, 2023, turned out great; including going around the city for donations, working the booth for Indigenous Awareness and handing out prizes to the winners.

Her first leadership experience was taking eight youth to Ontario with Denny from July 9 to 15, 2023. It was interesting to see the changes in our group after traveling outside of Saskatchewan. They gained so much from having the opportunity to attend Bob Rumball Camp. She also helped Robyn, Nicole, and Denny with the Kids Summer Day Camp in July 2023, and supported camp goers at Camp Oshkidee as a family worker in August. Awareness booths: Indigenous Services Canada's Mental Wellness on September 21; The Teddy Bear Bash on September 24; Bump, Babe, Beyond Expo on October 20; Metis Health Conference on February 2 and 3; Family Expo on February 24; and Metis Nation Early Learning and Child Care Conference on March 22 and 23.

Through the year, Alanda has embraced new experiences, took on new challenges and did new things. That has helped her discover abilities that she may not have known she had. One of the challenges she experienced was ASL translation.



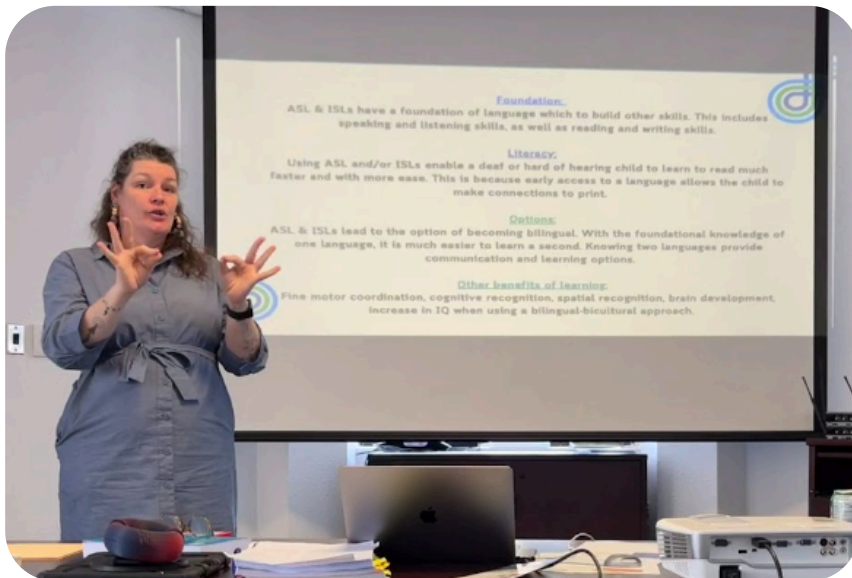
Working together with Rae-Mairi, Alanda was a part of the support staff team at Redberry Camp, May 2023 and they are excited to be doing this again in May 2024. This is important for youth to gather together and learn more about Deaf Culture and ASL. Rae-Mairi and Alanda presented at a professional development day in North Battleford, educating the students in the classroom on Deaf culture. They taught some ASL to staff and students to support the deaf student in their school.



# Sign Support Professional

**Rae-Mairi Richardson** has transferred her work from Regina to Northern Saskatchewan. She continues to work with children, youth and young adults. She travels to Grandmother Bay, Pelican Narrows, Meadow Lake, Stanley Mission, Nipawin, Sucker River, La Range, North Battleford, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon. All of these places are getting a lot of support through ZOOM sessions every week along with in-person visits. She has been teaching ASL to youth by ZOOM for Southern areas such as Regina, Moose Jaw, Weyburn, Broadview, Ochapowace and White City. She enjoys being able to travel and still connect through ZOOM at the same time. She has created a good balance working with the DHH community. The times vary depending on the situation in each location and the experience has been great.

Rae-Mairi brought many Northern Youth to Saskatoon and Regina for Youth Programming and Community Events. This included Youth Work Experience training workshops and our annual Fall Fundraiser. She continues teaching ASL with activities and storytelling videos created by all ages of community members and the staff at SDHHS. She has been helping a lot of youth with studying for their driver license. She has attended a few Metis Conferences and other conferences to provide more information and create awareness about SDHHS and DHH communities. Some of her outreach has included approaching a Saskatchewan MLA regarding the lack of services in Regina and for Indigenous Mental Health in PA. She has been supporting a few clients with their Mental Health issues, teaching ASL in their families, and teaching ASL in 15 schools. She has also been a huge support at SDHHS workshops such as Indigenous Beading, and Storytelling Books.



Rae-Mairi wants to say thank you for supporting her adventure of going to South Korea for the World Federation of the Deaf Conference in July 2023. She learned a lot about Humanity and Deaf Communities along with learning many different signed languages.

Rae-Mairi is more than just grateful for the support with her work up North. She has been noticing a lot of improvements with people learning ASL which will only grow a stronger community! These things have even brought some media attention which prompted an interview for CBC.



# Sign Support Professional

Access is always an important part of the job to **Krissy Haines**. Making sure our community is provided support at the same level as any other community member in Saskatchewan. For Krissy's role as SSP this can look like a phone call to make sure other organizations are hiring an Interpreter, to translating mail that uses complex English, to providing additional language support in addition to an Interpreter, to ensuring the same access is provided to those who are Deaf and HoH who do not communicate in ASL.

The biggest win for Krissy in 2023 was getting SDHHS's ASL classes approved as a dual credit at the high school level! Saskatchewan students in grades 10-12 can take our ASL classes, and earn credits toward their high school transcripts.

Through brainstorming collaborations between Krissy and other SDHHS staff members, we are all noticing how there are very few accommodations for DeafBlind community members, and how much of a struggle this has been.

She has worked hard to help nudge us ahead of the market when it comes to available accessibility aides by creating ABC hand shapes- - not only in ASL, but including Braille on them as well! This will benefit those who have affected vision, and want - or need to learn ASL for communication access.

These have also been a great support for teaching ASL to kids! The funny part of the 3D printing process is we have even found a clever use for the failed handshapes to become art!

This past year has had many tiny successes that will hopefully open doors to big wins for our community in the future!



With Accessibility becoming a focus for the Government, Krissy has been encouraging and supporting community members in creating CRA online accounts to empower independent access to their personal information without having to telephone an agent for such matters. Her goals to push for equitable access are always a priority.

# Early Childhood & Family Services

Another exciting year has passed, filled with many memorable moments and achievements!

Robyn continued to host Little Buttons classes, delighting in the children as always. The kids eagerly anticipated the blue tote, excited to discover the theme and engage in signing and playing with their parents and friends.

Our team has expanded our knowledge to provide the best for the children, taking VCSL Training alongside other professionals from across Canada. This training also offered us the opportunity to network and build connections with others in the field.

We participated in numerous booths at expos this year, significantly increasing awareness of our services. Our booths at the Saskatoon Family Expo, Children Nutrien Festival, Teddy Bear Bash, and Bump, Babe, Beyond Expo Regina allowed us to connect with children, their families and other professionals. Additionally, we presented to medical students and the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association for their Tea Time, as well as at several Summer Day Camps. These events were wonderful opportunities to recognize and celebrate diverse cultures and communities. Many thanks to our amazing team of staff, volunteers, and little helpers who made these events possible!

ECFS Worker Robyn sporting her finest business attire!





This year was particularly exciting as ASL is now recognized as an official language in the Saskatchewan Accessibility Act, Bill 103. We are also building a great relationship with SPARC and look forward to continuing this collaboration. We are excited to have their representative visit our preschool and share ideas for the future of the children.

Last December, our Holiday Cheer event was successful in Saskatoon and Regina. A huge thanks to the volunteers who brought the Whoville theme to life. It was lovely building connections with everyone, and we look forward to seeing you all again next year.

ECFS also contributed to Sign N' Stories, with one of our clients participating in reading a book. Witnessing this client's pride and joy was a truly special moment. We look forward to more children participating in this amazing project. You can read more about it in this year's Annual Report.

Robyn continues to support the CCCC Preschool, and it is wonderful to see the children's language skills flourish. Initially quiet, they are now actively engaging in conversations with each other and the adults. It's incredibly rewarding to see our clients thrive!



We also provide in-person one-on-one sessions for clients who need to develop their language skills. Some visit our office, while others receive home visits or connect with us via Zoom if they live far away. We continue to use our ASL Activity Kits with several clients and support our SSP and preschool programs to ensure the children have all the access they need.

Thank you for your continued support!

Robyn Holmes  
Patti Spicer



It has been a tremendous year of growth for 4C Preschool! There are ten students in total and they are so different compared to the beginning of the school year. Students have increased their vocabulary and are signing longer sentences. We are so proud of them, but it is bittersweet because some of them are moving on to their primary years. We are looking forward to new faces in the fall!

4C Preschool proudly adopted a Bilingual/Bimodal approach. The program is designed for Deaf/HH/CODA (plus more) to acquire two languages, develop their identity and open their world. This is different from a total communication approach in that we try to use one language at a time. Depending on the child's goals and where they score on the Visual Language vs Auditory Language scale, we use different strategies to ensure the child understands what is being communicated. For example, Sandwiching:

Saying it, Signing it, Saying it  
or: Signing it, Saying it, Signing it

This includes explaining the form and visual meaning of a sign, using pictures to aid comprehension, and implementing a strategic 'pause' to encourage children to express themselves. There are strategies to encourage languages' two parts, comprehension and expression. Our goal is for our students to become strong in both languages. This accommodates their needs based on age and skill while showing them strategies for language development. We also empower the parents as they are key for DHH children.

It is important to emphasize that every DHH child is different. That is why our program gives every child the opportunity to have full access to both languages and then watch their strengths shine. Having a culturally Deaf teacher is critical because they are shown that they can always advocate for themselves and embrace their own identity, and know that they can do anything but hear.

Miss Nicole continues to teach and develop the program by expanding resources, such as Language First and Visual Language Visual Learning. These are highly recommended for new parents and professionals. Miss Nicole also observes the students and uses assessments to keep track of their language and general skills. Orlene Martens, Speech-Language Pathologist, Ashley Bucknall, Educational Assistant who is Deaf and who can speak and sign, and Denny Maurice, Inclusion Support Worker who is also Deaf, work closely together with Miss Nicole providing access to both languages.





It is fascinating to see how young DHH children acquire languages. It brings us to our steadfast core belief that every DHH child has the right to access Bi-Bi Education. An accessible language, like ASL, provides children excellent and full language and, notably, mind development.

The 4C classroom is located at St Augustine School on Boychuk Drive. Classes run Monday to Thursday, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. On Fridays, we host *Friday Family Days* where we gather together at different places such as the Wonderhub, the Western Development Museum, Wanuskewin Park, The Backyard for inflatables jumping, a Farm Corn Maze, CJs Climb & Play, Apex, Pike Lake, Clip & Climb, Kidz Castle, Saskatoon Zoo, Swimming at Shaw Center, and more! We have also had activities in our classroom, such as Pumpkin Carving, and Gingerbread House decorating! We provide every opportunity for children to socialize, develop their identity, and develop language. Each student's parents, siblings, and family are encouraged to participate. Some students from different schools join us through the SDHHS ECFS program. Robyn Holmes, the ECFS Worker, visits the 4C Preschool to support students and their parents.

We typically start our morning with free play. We have many language based activities for them to complete. During snack time, we chat about what they eat, what they do, etc. to expand their vocabulary and language skills. Then we head off to the gym for plenty of physical activities, including playing Duck Duck Goose, Ring Around the Rosie, and Go Go Stop. The kids also love driving the little wiggle cars around the gym. After that, we head back to the classroom to do stories and crafts or activities before the students are picked up by their caregivers.

We are thrilled for Royal Assent of Bill 103 – The Accessible Saskatchewan Act, officially recognizing ASL as a primary language for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people!

Best wishes to all the students and their families!

Nicole Musey – Teacher  
Ashley Bucknall – Education Assistant  
Denny Maurice – Individual Inclusion Support Worker

**4C Preschool children fully engaged in many different activities!**





# ASL Classes

This year, we were fortunate to have five dedicated instructors:

**Caroline Bergbusch, Twyla Chartrand, and Rae-Mairi Richardson** teaching online, while **Nicole Musey and Alanda McLeod** led in-person classes in Saskatoon.

We are thrilled to see such a high number of ASL students. Many have volunteered their time with SDHHS events and have gone on to use ASL in their careers or within their families.

**Twyla:** In the past year, I have taught through Zoom classes. In Spring 2023, I taught 2 classes, ASL 101 and 201, each of those classes had 10 students. Fall 2023, I had 8 students in ASL 202. Winter 2024, I taught ASL 101 with 9 students. Currently, I am teaching ASL 201 with 11 students. Some of the students are teachers, EA's, parents and relatives. It is nice to see a deaf or hearing child join in to learn a few signs. Some students just wanted to learn a new language and hope to meet and make friends with a Deaf person. All of them have shown eagerness to learn ASL. My favorite memories were seeing them use ASL that they learned in class and trying to have conversations with me or other students. I do look forward to teaching ASL class again in the Fall.

**Caroline:** During the Spring and Fall of 2023 and Winter 2024, I taught ASL 101 and 102 classes online via Zoom. It was a very busy and rewarding time for me. Most students had fun learning ASL. A few students had a hearing loss and wanted to learn sign language and Deaf Culture to increase accessibility or communication in their everyday life. One of my students was a medical doctor who wanted to learn sign language to communicate with her Deaf patients. I have been teaching ASL classes with SDHHS for over 25 years. I continue to enjoy teaching classes because it is very challenging to teach the students online via Zoom.

**Alanda:** I believe the ASL students' club is growing because they need to practice as much as possible as they wouldn't want to forget. I have taught three classes from April 2023 to March 2024; it was a joy to teach students ASL and watch them grow their confidence. Future ASL students may want to improve their signing skills to be able to pursue their goals of being interpreters or working with others at school. Every school needs staff who are fluent in American Sign Language. I have decided to take a break from teaching to pursue my training with the Sign Language Institute of Canada. I have also been taking some Signing Naturally level 3 workshops. However, I plan to sub for ASL teachers when required.

**Nicole:** ASL teacher Ms. Musey taught ASL 102 in Spring 2023, ASL 102 again in Fall 2023, and ASL 101 again in Winter 2024, for a total of three classes during the reporting period. She taught the classes in person at the Saskatoon SDHHS office. Most students love learning the language in real life (face to face) rather than virtually. Some are refusing to take Level 2 virtually and would like it offered in person. She tried her best to expose students to Deaf culture, social justice issues and awareness in the ASL and Deaf community. The students have really enjoyed it. They especially love the Deaf Panel part.

Classes were held every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. All of the students were eager to learn ASL. They all had various backgrounds, such as government workers, teaching assistants, parents, workers with autistic children, hard-of-hearing students, two couples with one of them having long-term hearing loss to make it easier to communicate, and more!

**Rae-Mairi:** Students from all over Saskatchewan joined via Zoom. Each student was eager to learn and motivated to engage in dialogues and discussions about ASL culture and the Deaf community. Rae-Mairi enjoyed this past year and looks forward to teaching ASL again. We learned that the students desire some in-person social time. Many of the ASL participants were EAs, aiming to develop more confidence and skills to communicate with the students they work with. It was a great experience to see how our ASL classes empowered the students to gain confidence and valuable experience.





SDHHS created the beginnings of a library of children's books in ASL that we are calling Sign N' Stories. We have more than 40 books on our website that are interpreted in ASL by D/deaf & Hard of Hearing (DHH) and voiced by hearing volunteers, all of whom are from across Saskatchewan!

If you want to see how we make the ASL stories, take a look at this video: <https://youtu.be/c--qwGum0gw> It shows the process of making just 1 video in ASL – It takes a lot of time!

Some of the key achievements of the Sign N' Stories project were that we created temporary contract jobs for 2 Deaf young adults for almost a year. And then we were able to pull in a few other contract workers to speed up the work over the summer. We had some amazing volunteers who enjoyed the idea of Sign N' Stories – whether it was a DHH person volunteering to sign the stories on video, or a hearing person voicing the book for the videos – they all were excited to participate!

SDHHS has felt uplifted seeing children access the stories, and feels that many of the DHH volunteers were empowered, and inspired, with increased self-confidence after seeing themselves on video. SDHHS is also proud of the diversity of the people – different ages, different cultures, and with different signing styles!

Thank you to the Community Foundations of Canada, Investment Readiness Program for granting us funds and the opportunity to make this project happen. Also, MANY thanks to the staff and volunteers for participating in this project. We hope to continue growing our Sign'n Stories library soon!

The SDHHS Sign'n Stories Project was made possible with generous funding provided by:



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
OF CANADA





There is a large variety of Canadian children's books available through the SDHHS Sign'n Stories! Pictured here with our volunteers are just a few of the books that we have filmed in ASL:



♥  
**THANK YOU**  
 to all of the ♥  
 Saskatchewan  
 volunteers who  
 signed and  
 voiced for the  
 Sign'n Stories  
 project! ♥

SDHHS is adding new stories to the Sign'n Stories library whenever we can! Here is the link to the webpage that contains our Sign'n Stories project thus far: <https://sdhhs.my.canva.site/signnstories>

# Treasurer's Report

SDHHS contracted the services of MWC Chartered Professional Accountants to complete the 2023-2024 Financial Audit.



The Auditors Financial Statement is included in the Annual General Meeting package for you review.

Currently, SDHHS is in a surplus position. Funds from the surplus will be used to help offset the costs not funded for through core funding.

I would like to thank MCW Chartered Accountants for their thorough work.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Art Hillcox  
SDHHS Treasurer



# Funder Recognition



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Access Communications

Children's Fund



REGINA



City of  
Saskatoon



Thank you!!

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