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* [American Sign Language and Deaf Culture Courses](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/asl/index.html#aslc)
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International and Heritage Languages

ASL

**American Sign Language**

**Background**

In Canada, there are two commonly used sign languages: American Sign Language (ASL) which is used in Anglophone communities and Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) which is used in Francophone communities.

Sign languages used in Canada and throughout the world are specific to their communities and are therefore not universal or necessarily mutually intelligible. ASL is considered the first language or mother tongue of many Deaf people in Canada and the United States. It is through ASL that the Deaf community communicates and shares experiences, stories, poetry, humour, etc. In addition to Deaf users of ASL, many others may use ASL as a second or additional language. Often, these individuals are affiliated in some way with those in the Deaf community, for example, hearing people who have Deaf family members, relatives, or friends or people who work with or provide services to Deaf people, such as teachers, employers, and others.

For many Deaf people, ASL is essential for effective daily communication and interactions, but ASL is also an important second or additional language. Today, more and more Canadians are recognizing the value of ASL as a second or third language. They recognize the benefits of developing fluency in ASL and an appreciation of Deaf culture. By learning ASL, hearing students are able to communicate with their Deaf peers and enable their participation in the local and extended Deaf community. Skilled ASL first and additional language communicators may find career opportunities that involve working with Deaf people and others. In addition, expanding the number of ASL additional language speakers contributes to building a more inclusive society and remove barriers as Deaf people come to have a wider circle of colleagues and citizens  to converse and interact with directly.

While it is difficult to accurately estimate the number of people who are fluent in ASL, we know that it is it is an important minority language in North America. It is often estimated that there are approximately 500,000 persons in Canada and the U.S. that know and use ASL. In Canada, Statistics Canada reports that according to the 2006 Census 8,995 persons reported a sign language as being their mother tongue or one of their mother tongues, as provided below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A Sign Language as a Mother Tongue** | |
| American Sign Language | 2,485 |
| Quebec Sign Language | 730 |
| Sign languages, not included elsewhere | 5,780 |

In addition, Statistics Canada reports that according to the 2006 Census 43,090 persons reported knowledge of a sign language, as provided below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Knowledge of Sign Languages** | |
| American Sign-Language | 11,110 |
| Quebec Sign Language | 730 |
| Sign languages, not included elsewhere | 5,780 |

**The Characteristics of American Sign Language**

American Sign Language is a complete visual-gestural language with its own grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. Like other signed languages, it uses the hands, the body, and facial expressions (including mouth movements) to express meaning and the eyes to perceive meaning. Face-to-face interaction is particularly important in ASL because it has no written form. There are, however, notation systems that are used for recording signs on paper. ASL is separate from English, and is distinct from other signed languages. An example of the distinctiveness of signed languages from each other and from the surrounding spoken language(s) is that, although English is the shared spoken language of the U.S., Canada, and Britain, signers of ASL do not understand signers of British Sign Language (BSL).

**American Sign Language Arts (ASLA)**

American Sign Language Arts is offered in bilingual ASL- English programming offered at the Manitoba School for the Deaf and often is a required subject in ASL-English Bilingual program schools in other provinces.

Manitoba is developing curricula for the American Sign Language Arts. Development work has been launched this year. It is expected that a draft version of *Kindergarten to Grade 12, American Sign Language Arts (ASLA) Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes* will be available for review and comment purposes at a later date.

The goal of the American Sign Language Arts curriculum is for students to extend, refine, and deepen their knowledge of ASL and enhance their ability to use ASL effectively for self-expression and exploration, interpersonal communication, building community, and for creative, and academic purposes. As students develop greater fluency in ASL, they will use appropriate structures of ASL and ASL Literature to meet the demands of school and daily life. A strong language and literary base will enable them to understand and formulate hypotheses and apply intellectual knowledge when creating ASL stories, poems, and other aspects of ASL literature. Their continued development of ASL literacy skills will enable them to learn and convey academic knowledge and skills in other subjects more effectively.

**American Sign Language and Deaf Culture (ASL & DC) Courses**

Through learning the preferred language of the Deaf community, students who study ASL gain access to the rich cultural heritage of that community, which includes a distinguished tradition of visual poetry, narrative, and theater. Students of ASL also learn about other aspects of North American Deaf culture, including the values, perspectives, and worldviews of Deaf people, and social and educational aspects of deafness.

Students of ASL may find that they gain a new perspective on how other languages are structured. Through learning a language that uses a different modality of expression than the oral-auditory modality of spoken languages, students begin to identify and explore aspects that are common to all languages and those that are unique to specific groups of languages. Research on the commonalities between signed and spoken language provides strong evidence that all languages are governed by some of the same basic properties.

Manitoba has developed curricula for the American Sign Language and Deaf Culture courses. A final version of [*Grade 9 to Grade 12 American Sign Language and Deaf Culture (ASL & DC): Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes (2015)*](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/asl/framework/index.html) is now available.

American Sign Language and Deaf Culture courses may be offered as optional second language courses alongside Aboriginal, French, and International languages offered by their school. In such cases, schools need to ensure that their Deaf community is consulted and that, wherever possible, students have access to Deaf role models with ASL as their first language. Learners need, and benefit immensely from having, opportunities for sustained conversations with other users of ASL, and they need to be exposed to language role models in a variety of situations.

**For Adult and Continuing Education**:

If you are interested in taking American Sign Language (ASL) courses during the evenings or weekends, please contact:

* [Red River College Continuing Education](http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Courses.aspx?RegionCode=WPG#A) (look for ASL)
* [ASL Teaching Services](http://www.aslts.ca/) for more information about courses offered in Winnipeg

If are interested in enrolling in an American Sign Language – English Interpretation Program, a joint program is offered by the University of Manitoba in cooperation with Red River College. In the program, you will receive training in theory, skills, ethics, and practice of interpretation of ASL-to-English and English-to-ASL in a variety of settings. For further information see:

* [Red River College, Deaf Studies](http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/ProgramInfo.aspx?ProgCode=DEASF-CT&DescriptionType=17&RegionCode=WPG)
* [University of Manitoba, ASL-English Interpretation Program](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/linguistics/programs/undergraduate/AEIP.html)

**Special Language Credit Option: American Sign Language**

As of the 2004-2005 school year, students may be eligible for up to 4 Senior Years credits for American Sign Language (ASL) through the Special Language Credit Option. There are special procedures for American Sign Language (ASL) examinations. For more detailed information, see [*American Sign Language and The Special Language Credit Option*](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/asl/index.html) (Revised May 2017).

**ASL Resources**

A number of organizations provide support and resources for those interested in learning ASL. Links to a few of these organizations and internet-based ASL resources follow.

[Manitoba School for the Deaf](http://www.msd.winnipeg.mb.ca/)

[Manitoba Services for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/dhh/index.html)

[Alberta School for the Deaf](http://asd.epsb.ca/)

[The BC Provincial School for the Deaf](http://sd41.bc.ca/programs/school_for_the_deaf.htm)

[Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf](http://www.ecddf.ca/secondschool/index.html)  
Milton, Ontario

[Robarts School for the Deaf](http://www.robartsschool.ca/)  
London Ontario

[Sir J. Whitney School for the Deaf](http://www.sjw.reach.net/)  
Belleville, Ontario

[Canadian Association of Educators for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](http://www.caedhh.ca/)

[ASL University](http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/)  
This is an *online* curriculum resource for *American Sign Language* students, instructors, interpreters, and parents of deaf children

[ASL Pro](http://www.aslpro.com/)  
This website has a completely free *online ASL* educational resource website featuring over 11000 ASL Signs.

**ASL Contacts**

**For ASL Arts:**

**Sarah Rabu**  
American Sign Language Arts Teacher   
Manitoba School for the Deaf  
Manitoba Education and Training  
242 Stradford Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2Y 2C9  
Telephone: 204-945-8934 Voice/TTY  
Fax: 204-945-1767  
Email: [srabu@msd.winnipeg.mb.ca](mailto:srabu@msd.winnipeg.mb.ca)

**For ASL and Deaf Culture Courses:**

**Deborah L. Goertzen**  
Education/ASL Consultant  
Program and Student Services  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit  
Manitoba Education and Training  
242 Stradford Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2Y 2C9  
Telephone: 204-945-1229  
Fax: 204-945-7914  
Email: [deborah.goertzen@gov.mb.ca](mailto:deborah.goertzen@gov.mb.ca)

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**Get Started**

* [International and Heritage Languages](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/index.html)
* [**American Sign Language**](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/asl/index.html)
* [German](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/german/index.html)
* [Hebrew](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/hebrew/index.html)
* [Spanish](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/spanish/index.html)
* [Ukrainian](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/ukrainian/index.html)
* [Special Language Credit Option](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/langcredit.html)
* [Statistics](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/stats.html)
* [Contacts](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/contacts.html)

**Related Links**

* [My Child in School](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/mychild/index.html)
* [Aboriginal Education](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/abedu/index.html)
* [Diversity Education](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/diversity/index.html)
* [Student Services](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/index.html)

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[Government of Manitoba](http://www.gov.mb.ca/)