

December 11, 2013
For immediate release

Calgary, Alberta

Deaf and Hear Alberta is deeply disappointed and saddened at the news of allegations of the use of an unskilled and unauthorized sign language interpreter at the memorial for Nelson Mandela on Tuesday, December 10.

The absence of a properly trained and skilled interpreter denied those who communicate using sign language around the world an opportunity to participate in this historic event.

Deaf and Hear Alberta considers the use of this untrained and unskilled interpreter unacceptable and a contravention of the rights to equal access to communication for the Deaf community.

Comments by leaders in the Deaf community in South Africa clearly indicate that the man working as the “interpreter” was not trained or known to those working in the field, due to his use of only manual gestures, the amount of repetition, gaps in translation and the lack of facial expression, a key component of a visual language.

This incident, which has sparked outrage by Deaf groups, professional bodies of qualified sign language interpreters and their advocates and allies around the world, continues to underscore the critical need for qualified and well-trained sign language interpreters to enable communication access for the Deaf and hard of hearing who communicate using sign language.

Deaf and Hear Alberta is proud to support the high quality American Sign Language Interpreter program offered through Lakeland College and maintains a stringent hiring and screening process to ensure that its interpreters are among the most highly skilled in Canada. Deaf and Hear Alberta’s interpreters must also maintain membership in their professional association (Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada) and conform to a strict code of ethics.

Deaf and Hear Alberta also engages in on-going advocacy and education of its service users and community organizations that the only valid choice for communication equity for the Deaf is through the use of a properly qualified sign language interpreter.