



**Ontario Deaf Foundation Proudly Introduces
ASL Research and Resource Development Research Fund**



In memory of Ilene Liebman Youngs¹

The Bilingual-Bicultural Research Fund commenced its annual research award competition in January 2014. Established in 1997 in honour of the late Ilene Liebman Youngs, this Fund promotes research and resource development on Deaf child-rearing, education, and community life with emphasis on a positive, well-informed, bilingual-bicultural approach.

Ilene Liebman Youngs' life exemplified devotion to the education of Deaf children, to the Deaf community and to asking important questions to inform best practice in a bilingual-bicultural approach. A member of the first teacher research group in Canada to explore bilingual-bicultural education of Deaf children, Ilene was known for her curiosity and analytic mind.

Ilene graduated from Gallaudet with her Masters in Deaf Education in 1979 and taught at the Mackay School for the Deaf in Montreal for 10 years before moving to Milton in 1990. In Montreal, Ilene was an active member of the Montreal Association of the Deaf and after moving to Ontario, was an active member of the Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf and the Ontario Association of the Deaf.² Ilene participated as a mother in the research of Laura Pettito on manual babbling of Deaf babies and in the research of Janet Jamieson on the role of self-confidence and language learning of Deaf toddlers with Deaf and hearing parents. She was a preschool home visiting teacher at the EC Drury School for the Deaf for seven years.

¹ Photo courtesy of Macklin Youngs DEAF CULTURE CENTRE archives

² Notes on Ilene Liebman Youngs are taken from excerpts of Linda McLaughlin's article, "In Loving Memory of Ilene Bonnie Liebman Youngs", *OCSD Bulletin*, September-December 1997.

In her seminal research, "*Seize the Moment*": *A Pilot Case Study of a Deaf Toddler's Natural ASL* (1996)³, Ilene examined the early ASL development of a two-year old Deaf child interacting with his Deaf parents and home-visiting teacher. Ilene's study highlighted the importance of recognizing the child's non-manual signals in combination with the manual features of signs to create meaning, often overlooked in the past by both professionals and parents. Without recognition of these features, the child could easily be misunderstood. Ilene was the first to see the *Bilingual Bicultural Education for Deaf Students, Monograph Series, No.1* in which she was co-author, published just before her untimely death in 1997.

We remember and are inspired by Ilene's work with young Deaf children and by her research. Her legacy remains alive today through the Ontario Deaf Foundation ASL Research and Resource Development Fund program.

In 2022, her children, Megan and Vance Youngs took over and became the patrons of her fund, hence renaming her fund as *ASL Research & Resource Development Fund* to reflect the current Deaf community.

³ Liebman Youngs, I. (1996) "*Seize the Moment*": *A Pilot Case Study of a Deaf Toddler's Natural ASL*", In: D. Smith and A. Small, (Eds.), Teacher research in a bilingual-bicultural school for deaf students: monograph series, no.1. (pp.12-28).