# Sociolinguistic Profiles of Twenty-four Deaf Communities in the Americas

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# Abstract

In this report, we describe the deaf people and sign languages in 24 different locations, and contextualize this information within the broader social context of each place. The following countries, departments, collectivities, territories, and provinces are discussed: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Greenland, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Quebec, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Suriname, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands. Nine sign languages are found to be present in these locations, including American Sign Language, British Sign Language, Danish Sign Language, Sign Language of the Netherlands (also called Dutch Sign Language), French Sign Language, Guyanese Sign Language (also called Guyanan or Guyana Sign Language), Kajana Sign Language, Quebec Sign Language, and Surinamese Sign Language (also called Suriname Sign Language).

# Contents

# 1   Introduction

During our sign language assessment team's first round of survey in the Americas Area (including North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean), we did a number of background investigations of places where there was no immediate need for on-site fieldwork because of the relatively small size of the deaf community, the recognition of a particular sign language in use that is not indigenous to the community (most commonly American Sign Language), and/or the large amount of information already available about the target location (Quebec). The purpose of this report is to present this information in one place for those interested in these smaller deaf communities. Locations included in this report needed to fit the following criteria:

- The location is part of the Americas Area,
- we are not planning on pursuing language-assessment fieldwork in this location, and
- we are not planning on writing a more extensive report about this location.[1]

We gathered information about each deaf community's sociolinguistic situation through Internet research, published academic articles and books, and telephone and email communication with people knowledgeable about the local deaf community.[2] The profiles presented in this report are ordered alphabetically by location, describing deaf communities and sign language use in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Greenland, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Quebec, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Suriname, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands.

Each profile begins with basic information about the location's geographic and social context and then includes available information about disability and how deafness, the deaf community, and sign-language use are situated in each location's social environment. Many deaf people identify themselves with a unique global deaf culture and do not perceive themselves to be disabled. However, for this report, we have chosen to include general disability information whenever more specific information about deaf communities is scarce, since many societies classify deaf and hard-of-hearing people with their disability communities. In addition, some culturally-deaf people identify themselves as capital-D "Deaf", in order to focus on their cultural identity, rather than a lower-case d "deaf," focusing on audiological status. We recognize the diversity of perspectives and conventions for referring to deaf and hard-of-hearing people around the world. For this report, we have chosen to use a lower-case "deaf" to be most inclusive of all deaf and hard-of-hearing people, regardless of their cultural and linguistic identification, with the goal of providing a broad perspective of each target location's deaf people groups.

In Table 1, we summarize the population and sign language information covered in this report, including each location's total population (rounded to the nearest thousand), the estimated deaf population (rounded to the nearest five), and the sign language(s) believed to be used there, including the following:

- American Sign Language (ASL): refers to the sign language based in the United States and large portions of Canada; may also include Signing Exact English and Signed English vocabulary and linguistic structure. In this report, ASL is used in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Guyana, Quebec, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia,

United States Virgin Islands, and possibly Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

- British Sign Language (BSL): refers to the sign language based in the United Kingdom and, in particular, Great Britain. In this report, BSL is used in the Falkland Islands and possibly the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.
- Danish Sign Language (DSL): refers to the sign language based in Denmark and related to other Nordic sign languages. In this report, DSL is used in Greenland.
- Sign Language of the Netherlands (SLN): refers to the sign language based in Holland and the Netherlands, is sometimes called Dutch Sign Language, and may include Sign Supported Dutch (SSD). In this report, SLN is used in Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles.
- French Sign Language (LSF): refers to the sign language based in France. In this report, LSF is used in the French Departments of French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and the overseas collectivity of St. Pierre and Miquelon.
- Guyanese (or Guyanan or Guyana) Sign Language (GSL): refers to the sign language based in Guyana.
- Kajana Sign Language (KSL): refers to the village sign language based in the Kajana region of Suriname.
- Quebec Sign Language (LSQ): refers to the sign language based in Quebec, Canada.
- Surinamese (or Suriname) Sign Language (SSL): refers to the sign language based in Paramaribo, Suriname (the community accepted name is unknown).

**Table 1. Summary of locations and sign languages**

| Location | Total population | Deaf population | Sign language(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Anguilla | 14,000 | 15–50 | ASL |
| Antigua and Barbuda | 86,000 | 25–85 | ASL |
| Aruba | 103,000 | 100 | SLN |
| The Bahamas | 310,000 | 310–1,085 | ASL |
| Barbados | 285,000 | 285–400 | ASL |
| Bermuda | 68,000 | 70–500 | ASL |
| British Virgin Islands | 24,000 | 25 | ASL or BSL? |
| Cayman Islands | 49,000 | 50–200 | ASL |
| Dominica | 73,000 | 75–320 | ASL |
| Falkland Islands | 3,000 | 5 | BSL |
| French Guiana | 222,000 | 220–1,780 | LSF |
| Greenland | 58,000 | 60–100 | DSL |
| Guadeloupe | 408,000 | 440–3,520 | LSF |
| Guyana | 753,000 | 754–8,000 | GSL and ASL |
| Martinique | 402,000 | 400–3,200 | LSF |
| Montserrat | 5,000 | 5 | ASL or BSL? |
| Netherlands Antilles | 200,000 | 200–300 | SLN |
| Quebec | 7,500,000 | 7,500–750,000 | LSQ and ASL |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis | 40,000 | 40–100 | ASL |
| Saint Lucia | 160,000 | 160–300 | ASL |
| Saint Pierre and Miquelon | 6,000 | 5 | LSF |
| Suriname | 492,000 | 490–26,000 | SSL, SLN, and KSL |
| Turks and Caicos Islands | 33,000 | 30–100 | ASL or BSL? |
| United States Virgin Islands | 110,000 | 110–200 | ASL |

# 2 Anguilla

Anguilla is the northernmost of the Leeward Islands in the Lesser Antilles of the Caribbean, east of Puerto Rico. Its total area is approximately 102 square kilometers (39 square miles), and its capital is The Valley. See Figure 1 for a map of Anguilla (WorldAtlas.com 2009).



**Figure 1. Anguilla map.**

The population of Anguilla is roughly 14,000, over 90 percent of which are descendents of African slaves. English settlers colonized the island in 1650 and claimed it as their own. In the last century, Anguilla unsuccessfully fought for its independence and, in 1980, Anguilla became a separate British dependent territory. Its official language is English, although Anguillan Creole English is also spoken (Lewis 2009). Anguilla's major religion is Christianity and its economy is driven by tourism (CIA World Factbook 2010).

The 2001 Anguilla census included responses from 11,430 people (Government of Anguilla 2001) - the majority of the 12,130 people living in Anguilla at that time (IndexMundi 2008). In 2001, 0.345 percent of the total population indicated that they had a hearing disability, for a total of 39 people. If this percentage is applied to the increased population of 14,000, it would indicate a total of 49 people with significant hearing loss in 2009. A commonly-used way of estimating a country's deaf population is to calculate 0.1 percent of the total population (Harrington 2004), which would point to approximately 14 deaf people in Anguilla. These estimates do not, however, indicate how many deaf people use a sign language as it undoubtedly includes people who have lost their hearing but have not chosen to use sign language or identify themselves with a deaf cultural community.

We could find no available information on the Internet about deaf schools, deaf associations, or religious deaf groups in Anguilla. Currently, there are roughly 2,500 students in the school system, with just over half of them being students in the primary grades (Government of Anguilla 2009). There are six government-run primary schools and one secondary school, the Albena Lake Hodge Comprehensive school. None of the schools with web pages indicated that they had any special resources for special needs, deaf classrooms, or other signals that would indicate deaf students being educated there.

With recent figures that indicate a very small deaf population, it is unlikely that there is a developed indigenous sign language. This assumption is supported by the apparent lack of deaf educational opportunities or deaf social meeting places, the most common places for new sign languages to emerge. If there is a deaf signing population, it is possible that they could use BSL (because of Anguilla's historical

roots and current political connections with Britain and the United Kingdom). However, in 2008, two hearing performers called "Hands of Praise" signed a song based on ASL at the Mount Fortune Seventh Day Adventist Church in Anguilla (Handzpraise. 2008). This documented presence of ASL, together with Anguilla's geographical location being in close proximity to other countries in the Caribbean where the use of ASL has been confirmed (e.g. Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands), points to a high probability of the use of ASL in Anguilla.

# 3   Antigua and Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda are located in the Caribbean Sea, southeast of Puerto Rico. Antigua is made up of six parishes and two dependencies, one of which is Barbuda. In 1981, they gained independence from the United Kingdom when they became an independent state in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The two islands make up a total of 442 square kilometers (171 square miles) (Antigua 280 sq km and Barbuda 161 sq km) with an estimated population of 85,600 in July 2009 (CIA World Factbook 2010). See Figure 2 for a map of Antigua in its Caribbean context (Worldatlas.com 2010).
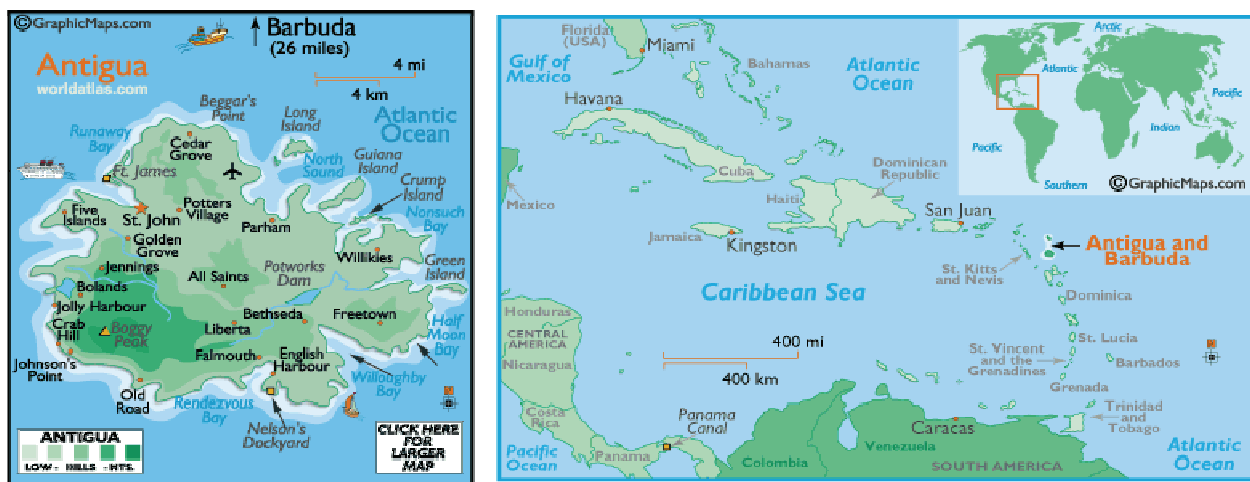


**Figure 2. Antigua and Barbuda map.**

Over 90 percent of the population is black and the majority of people adhere to Christian beliefs. As of 2008, 30 percent of the population was urbanized. The decline in tourism since 2008 and limited water supply has greatly affected the economy of Antigua and Barbuda ; approximately 11 percent of the employable population is unemployed. In 2003, the literacy rate in Antigua and Barbuda was 85 percent (CIA World Factbook 2010).

Records from the Developmental Assessment Service show the frequency of children (under the age of 15) with varying disabilities within Antigua and Barbuda. Mental retardation was the most common disability at 3 per 1,000; children labeled with a hearing loss were among the least common disability at 0.3 per 1,000 (Martin, et al. 2000). For the current population, that points to an estimated 26 deaf and hard-of-hearing people. The local deaf association has confirmed that there are at least 84 people with hearing loss in Antigua and believes there could be many more in their community (Hands That Speak 2010). Harrington's (2004) calculation points to 86 deaf people.

The Antigua and Barbuda Association of Persons with Disabilities (ABAPD) was founded in 1995 with the mission "to provide the environment which enhances and maximizes the opportunity for every person with a physical, psychological, intellectual and/or sensory impairment and/or limitation in Antigua and Barbuda to achieve their full potential in their economic, social, religious, and political life" (ABAPD 2009). It is a non-profit organization which relies on donations and volunteers. The Ministry of Health

pledged an annual grant and assistance in constructing offices for ABAPD but a volunteer at ABAPD indicated that they are still waiting for these funds (Peters 2009 and Whyte 2009). The ABAPD has worked toward a constitution more inclusive of people with disabilities by suggesting changes in the preamble, fundamental rights (section 3), discrimination (section 14), personal liberty (section 5), and protection of the law (section 15). Their recommended changes for personal liberty (concerning arrest or detention) and protection of the law (concerning court hearings) included access of information for deaf and hard-of-hearing people through sign language and interpreter assistance. The ABAPD is making strides to provide more access to employment, housing, family life, recreation, information, technical aids and equipment, income maintenance, and social security (ABAPD 2009).

Even though the constitution prohibits discrimination, there are no laws mandating accessibility for people with disabilities (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2002). In 2005, a Task Force was started by the government to encourage the Millennium Development Goals program which pledges to include people with disabilities in all development activities. Workshops were conducted to provide awareness and solicit the support of various organizations (Disabled Peoples' International North America and the Caribbean 2006). The first Antigua and Barbuda Disability Awareness Fair was held October 4, 2008 (Emanuel 2008) and a deaf Antiguan in her mid-50s, supervises the Physically Challenged and Hearing Impaired Shop at the Craft Market (Peters 2009).

In 2001, three hearing people founded "Hands That Speak" (HTS) with the mission to reach the spiritual, social, and educational needs of the deaf community. They have provided services such as ASL interpreting, counseling, and assistance with employment, donations, and various types of spiritual ministry (Hands That Speak 2010). Hands That Speak appears to have been inactive for the past two years and, since its suspension, only one known church currently offers sign language interpretation (George 2010). Christian Deaf Ministries hosts a Caribbean camp on a different island each year; it was held in Antigua in 2006 (Beharry 2007). In 2007, it was held in Grenada and included deaf people from St. Vincent, Antigua, the United States, and Jamaica (Dungan 2007). The Global Deaf Connection, based in the United States, hosts workshops for deaf individuals and their families in Antigua and Barbuda. They cover topics such as HIV/AIDS prevention, disability rights, self advocacy, and provide free screening in vision, physiological, developmental, and dental services (Antigua Sun 2010). As a result of Global Deaf Connection, five deaf people are planning to found a deaf association. Currently, deaf adults arrange meetings for picnics, funerals, and visits to the beach through email and text communication (George 2010).

By law, education is provided for children between the ages of five and 16 and the Education Act states that special arrangements are to be made for children with special needs. There are two facilities for physically-challenged children and one school for deaf children, although some parents choose to mainstream their deaf children in regular classrooms without extra assistance (ABAPD 2009). The Red Cross opened the Antigua School for the Deaf, a school for deaf children to teach them how to read, write, and lip-read (Peters 2009). In 2008, there were 18 deaf students attending the Antigua School for the Deaf (Seal 2008). Currently, there are 12 students and two of the teachers are deaf. In addition, the National Vocational and Rehabilitation Centre for Disability focuses on education for older people with disabilities.

The only known sign language materials in Antigua and Barbuda are from the United States, including texts such as *The Joy of Signing*, *Signing Exact English,* and *Signing Made Simple*. According to George (2010), this is the basis for the sign language used in Antigua, but signs from these resources are sometimes adapted to better fit local culture. ABS Television news provides sign-language interpretation of their broadcasts (Observer 2009). George (2010) indicated that there are four interpreters in Antigua. Two of these interpreters were trained in Jamaica because there was no training available in Antigua, but some of the signs they learned in Jamaica were changed to fit the signing used in Antigua. She also

indicated that the sign language in Antigua is similar to countries in the eastern Caribbean (e.g. Trinidad, Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, etc.).

Antigua and Barbuda are making strides to provide more support and access to the deaf community. They have strong connections with international disability organizations, access to a deaf school, and a deaf association appears to be in the initial stages of development. According to local sources, the Antigua and Barbuda deaf community use ASL and Signed English, with some connection to Jamaica but sharing more similarities with ASL used in the Eastern Caribbean.

# 4 Aruba

Aruba is located in the southern Caribbean, north of Venezuela. Formerly claimed by the Dutch in 1636 and, having seceded from the Netherland Antilles in 1986, Aruba is now a separate autonomous member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Aruba's capital is Oranjestad, which is located on the western coast of the island, where approximately a quarter of the 103,000 (as of 2009) Arubians reside. Aruba's land area is 193 square kilometers (75 square miles) (CIA World Factbook 2010). See Figure 3 for a map of Aruba in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).
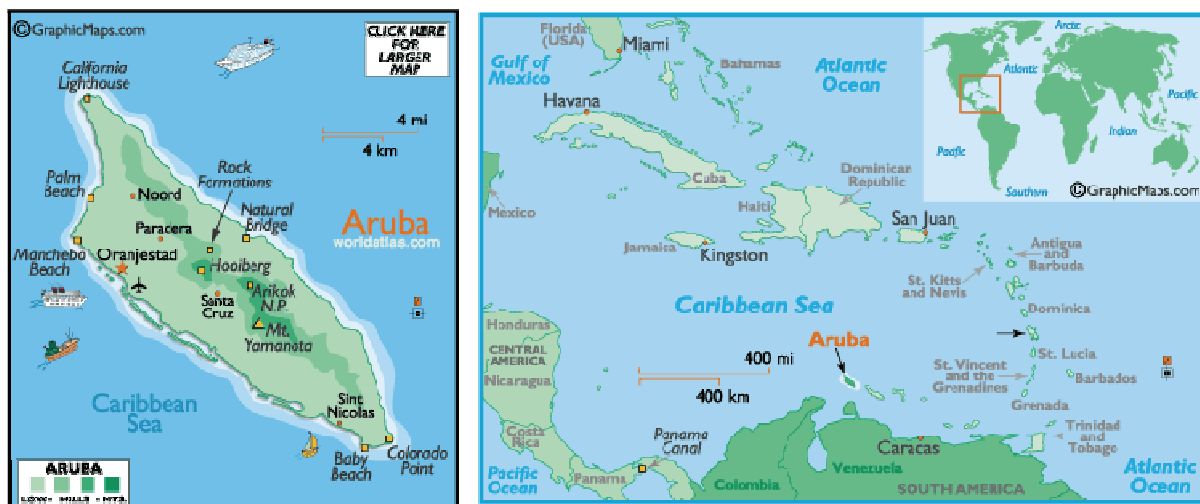


**Figure 3. Aruba map.**

According to the *Ethnologue*, Dutch is Aruba's official language but is decreasing in use. English is spoken by almost as many Arubians as those who use Dutch, but Papiamentu is the predominant language on the island (Lewis 2009). The vast majority of the population identify themselves with Christianity, with over 80 percent affiliating with Roman Catholicism. Over 97 percent of Arubians are literate. Even though Aruba is ranked as the 217th largest country in the world as far as land area, and 193rd in terms of population, they invest in their educational system more than other similarly-sized countries and rank 78th based on the percentage of a country's gross domestic product that is invested in education. Most of Aruba's economy is built on tourism, with 1.5 million visitors each year; 75 percent of those are from the United States. Previous economic activity in oil refinery and storage ended in 2009 (CIA World Factbook 2010).

Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent calculation points to approximately 103 deaf people. Soper (2008) estimated that there are approximately 100 deaf people who may use a sign language. In the 1970s, there was a rubella epidemic that led to an increase of deaf and hard-of-hearing children in Aruba but that number has since decreased.

The Foundation for the Hearing Impaired (Fundacion pa Esnan cu Problema di Oido, FEPO) is the government organization responsible for addressing the needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing population in Aruba. Infants are given a hearing test at around 10 months of age at White Yellow Cross clinics around the country and the government's General Health Insurance provides hearing aids to children (United Nations 2003).

According to the International Recognition Department (2009), Aruba's educational system is built on the system in the Netherlands and is conducted in Dutch and Papiamentu through public education supported by the government and private, primarily Catholic, educational options. School attendance is not compulsory but 97 percent of the school-aged population is reported to be attending school. There are three primary special schools available to children with special needs that all use Papiamentu. One of these three special schools is a deaf school, Skol Scucha Nos (also referred to simply as "Scucha Nos"). Teachers at Scucha Nos are reported to use both speech training and sign language; some of the students have cochlear implants or hearing aids. Scucha Nos accepts students between the ages of 4 and 18 (Gordijn 2007). It was established after the increase in the deaf population in the 1970s but, currently, only has 12 students between the age of 3 and 13, only serving students categorized as having very severe hearing loss (United Nations 2003). All Scucha Nos students attend a mainstream school for one day a week in order to avoid isolation at special schools. Prior to a pilot project which began in 2002 at Scucha Nos, there were no secondary education options available to deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Some students may be mainstreamed into regular secondary schools (typically in vocational schools, designed for those who struggle with learning in academic settings) (Aruba 2003–2006, United Nations 2003).

Although sign language is reportedly used at the deaf school in Aruba, no specific information was published about what sign variety is in use. A representative of Aruba's tourist site VisitAruba.com indicated through email correspondence that there is no indigenous sign language present in Aruba and that the deaf community uses DSL (Lambert 2010). The Sign Language of the Netherlands (SLN) is also referred to as DSL by some people but both names identify the same language (Van den Bogaerde 2010). The use of the SLN was supported by Aruba's shared history with the Netherlands Antilles until 1986, seceding after the Scucha Nos deaf school was established, and the use of the SLN has been confirmed in the nearby Windward Islands of the Netherlands Antilles.

# 5   The Bahamas

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is located off the southeastern coast of Florida, United States; northeast of Cuba. Typically referred to as "The Bahamas," it is an archipelago of over 700 islands spread over 100,000 miles in the Western Atlantic Ocean. It has an estimated total population of 310,000 (as of July 2010) covering 3,865 square kilometers (1,492 square miles) of land. Eighty-four percent of the population live in urban areas. Approximately 211,000 people live in the capital city, Nassau, which covers most of the main island of New Providence. The second most-populated island is Grand Bahama, with over half of its 47,000 people living in Freeport. The rest of the islands are mostly rural and are typically referred to as the Family Islands (CIA World Factbook 2010, UNESCO 2007). See Figure 4 for a map of The Bahamas and its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).

**Figure 4. The Bahamas map.**

The Bahamas gained independence from British control on July 10, 1973. In 2010, Bahamians speak English and Bahamas Creole English; approximately 96 percent of the population is literate (CIA World Factbook 2010 and Lewis 2009). The Bahamas are among the most wealthy Caribbean islands, with an economy driven by tourism and banking. Only eight percent of the country was estimated to be unemployed as of 2006, and less than 10 percent live under the poverty line. Protestant Christianity is the majority religion (CIA World Factbook 2010).

According to the 2000 national census, approximately five percent of the total population reported having some kind of disability and seven percent of the disabled population indicated a hearing loss. As compared to Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula pointing to a Bahamian deaf population of 310, this percentage applied to the total population would indicate a deaf population of 1,085. Over 65 percent of the disabled population was reported to live in New Providence, 14 percent in Grand Bahama, with the other islands having less than five percent each (The National Commission on Special Education 2005). Out of all school-age children, 25 percent were reported to need special education services. Most of these are placed in self-contained classrooms or segregated special schools (The National Commission on Special Education 2005). The Bahamas National Screening Program believe that many children with special needs, including deaf and deaf-blind children, are not receiving any type of special education at all.

Special education began in The Bahamas when the Red Cross Society founded a school for blind children in 1949. A decade later, they started a school for children with mental handicaps and, in 1964, the Red Cross established the Centre for the Deaf in Nassau, in conjunction with The Bahamas Ministry of Education (The Ministry of Education n.d.). As of 2010, deaf students in The Bahamas attend school either at the Red Cross Centre for the Deaf in Nassau or are placed in mainstream settings with special classrooms, such as the Maurice Moore Primary and Jack Hayward High Schools in Freeport, Grand Bahama, or in one of four special-unit classrooms in mainstream schools in Nassau, such as the Sir Gerald Cash Primary School and the Stephen Dillet Primary School. While the Centre for the Deaf keeps younger students at its compound at Pitt Road, more advanced students may be taught off-site in classes at S.C. Mcpherson and C.C. Sweeting Junior High School and at the Government Senior High School.

According to the National Commission on Special Education Final Report, the goals of The Red Cross Centre for the Deaf are to provide an educational environment conducive to deaf and hard-of-hearing needs, resources to families with deaf children, speech and hearing training, and interpreters for court hearings and other needs. Staff members include hearing and speech specialists and deaf teachers, all who

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focus on educating students to be mainstreamed into hearing schools and help with job placement after graduation. While the Ministry of Education helps staff and fund the school, the Red Cross Society maintains the buildings. As of 2002, there were 52 deaf students at the Centre for the Deaf (International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (CISS) 2002)); the current buildings were determined to no longer provide the space or equipment necessary for the school to be high-functioning. There are hopes of building new buildings to house a school that would include both deaf and blind students (National Commission on Special Education 2005).

Students who have more residual hearing may rely more on hearing aids and be mainstreamed outside of special classes. There were 31 deaf and hard-of-hearing (and one deaf-blind) students reportedly enrolled in the 76 (64 public and 12 private) schools included in the 2000 census, representing three percent of school age children grades 1–12. In that same year, there were 120 special-education teachers, 25 percent who worked in mainstreamed education settings; some who were trained as deaf specialists (Gardiner-Farquharson et al. 2005). Adderley (2007) reports that many deaf students do not pass national exams (e.g. Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) and Bahamas General Certificate in Secondary Education (BGCSE)) due in part to *listening parts* of the exam which they cannot complete because of their hearing status.

The 2000 census results show that 46 percent of parents/guardians did not attend parent-teacher conferences for their children and more than 30 percent did not bother to collect progress reports for their children with special needs (The National Commission on Special Education 2005). In 1975, the Grand Bahama Centre for the Deaf was established, later named the Grand Bahama Association for the Deaf (GBAD), with the goal of providing a supportive meeting place for parents with deaf children.

The Bahamas Deaf Sports Federation (BDSF), located in Nassau, appears to be the only deaf-led association in the Bahamas. BDSF seems to have taken off after the Deaf International Basketball Federation (DIBF) held a deaf coach clinic in Nassau, November 24–27, 2005. Twenty deaf people participated in the training (Gunna 2005). Marvin Finlayson, the main contact person for BDSF, is also a leader in the Bahamian deaf community. According to First Caribbean International Bank (2006):

> "Marvin has excellent speech, lip-reading, and writing skills and is fluent in sign language. He is the first deaf person to graduate from the College of the Bahamas and has used his ability to function in both the deaf and hearing world to assist other hearing-impaired persons in The Bahamas. He is the past president of the Talking Hands Society, founding member of the Bahamas Deaf Sports Federation, Director of Deaf Ministry at Grace Community Church and Visual Communications Instructor. He is employed with the Ministry of Education as a Technical Educator where he teaches deaf children and adults the rudiments of computer science."

There are at least four Christian deaf ministries in the Bahamas: the Baptist Bible Church (Amanda8508 2009) and the Grace Community Church in Nassau; the New Testament Baptist Church and Tabernacle Baptist Church in Freeport (King 2007, Hampshire View Baptist Deaf Church. n.d.). There may be a third ministry in Freeport, led by Baptist International Missions, Inc. (Baptist International Missions, Inc. n.d.). The International Christian Centers for the Deaf is also interested in starting a deaf ministry and school in the Family Islands (International Christian Centers for the Deaf 2005).

From all available sources, it appears that Signed English and ASL are the main languages of the Bahamian deaf community, although there may be some negative attitudes toward the use of ASL (as compared to Signed English) in deaf schools (Ferrel 2005). Educate Bahamas (2009) posted a link to an ASL presentation of numbers for children. The Bahamas Learning Channel has started an educational program called "Communicating with Hands" that targets the general public for teaching about deaf issues and basic sign language, such as the alphabet, seasons, feelings, and transportation. It is the only

program that teaches sign language through television in the Bahamas (The Bahamas Learning Channel n.d.).

Ferrell (2005) relates, from her visit to The Bahamas, that there are no professional interpreters available and teachers in deaf schools are called out of their classrooms to interpret when needs arise. This was the case in a recent communication by the Prime Minister over television where a teacher from the Centre for the Deaf interpreted for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers (Gay 2008). Deaf advocates have pushed for increased captioning and sign language interpreting on television in order for deaf Bahamians to have better access to national news (Samuel 2008). According to Gilbert (2009), "The Ministry of Labour and Social Development, through the Department of Social Services and Disability Affairs Division, signed an agreement with the Broadcasting Corporation of The Bahamas to provide qualified interpreters to use sign language during special programs." This interpretation is now provided during every newscast on ZNS television Channel 13 and Cable 12 News, signed by a rotation of six teachers from the Centre for the Deaf (Gay 2008). Through these and other services, the Bahamian deaf community are experiencing increased access to society through sign language which King (2007) indicates is the only language that some deaf people use to communicate.

# 6   Barbados

Barbados is the easternmost Caribbean island and is located north of Trinidad and Tobago and east of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It has a total population of approximately 285,000 (as of 2009), with 100,000 Barbadians (also called Bajans) residing in its capital city of Bridgetown, located on the southwest coast of the island in the parish of St. Michael. Barbados is made up of 11 parishes and one formally-identified city (Bridgetown). The island has a land area of approximately 430 square kilometers (166 square miles) (CIA World Factbook 2010). See Figure 5 for a map of Barbados in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 5. Barbados map.**

Barbados was officially part of the United Kingdom until 1966, when it gained complete independence. English is the predominate language and almost 100 percent of the population is literate (CIA World Factbook 2010). According to the *Ethnologue,* Bajan (also called Bajadian Creole English) and ASL are other languages that are in use in Barbados (Lewis 2009). Even though Barbados is ranked as the 200th largest country in the world as far as land mass, and 180th in terms of population, they invest in their educational system and rank 24th as compared to other countries, based on the percentage of a country's gross domestic product that is invested in education. Traditionally, the Barbados economy has been based on the sugar industry, but this changed in the 1990s with a heavy influx of tourism. Today, the country

enjoys one of the highest incomes in the region and caters to high-end tourists. Approximately 75 percent of the current population claim Christian religious ties (CIA World Factbook 2010).

Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent calculation points to a deaf population of 285 while Soper (2008) estimates approximately 400 deaf people who may use a sign language. According to King (2010), who has served on a series of mission trips to Barbados over the last few years, there are approximately 300 signing deaf people in Barbados.

The Barbados Association for the Deaf and Blind was established as an act of Parliament in 1957 in Bridgetown, St. Michael Parish. In the year of its founding, the association started the first school for deaf students. The Lion's Club of Barbados built a structure in "The Pine Plantation," St. Michael Parish, to house the school. The school focused on deaf education and, by 1968, there were 40 deaf students who attended. In 1975, the school's focus broadened to include blind students and increased the student population to 96; that year, sign language was introduced into the deaf education approach. The school name was changed to Irving Wilson School for the Blind and Deaf, incorporating the name of the school's first principal. Since then, "Total Communication" has been the school's communication philosophy, where any means of communication, sign or speech, is used with the deaf students. According to the Barbados Postal Service (2009), in 2009, the school had 68 students, ranging from ages 3–17, with 14 teaching staff, some of whom are deaf teachers-aides. Irving Wilson School for the Blind and Deaf is currently the only educational institution for deaf students in Barbados, although eight other primary schools around the country also offer special-education services in special classroom units where some deaf students may attend. In addition, the Ann Hill School in St. Michael Parish offers secondary educational options to people with disabilities, but no specific mention was found of any deaf students attending this school (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development 2010).

New Life Deaf Club is the only known deaf club in Barbados and functions under the umbrella of the Barbados Council for the Disabled. This club focuses on recreational and social activities for the deaf community, including drama, dance, and signing together. New Life Deaf Club has branches in the capital's parish of St. Michael and in St. John, which is a parish on the east side of the island.

Unemployment is still a serious issue for all members of the Bajan deaf community, as indicated by a NATIONNews.com article, where the current president of New Life Deaf Club is cited as saying: "Presently, these people still find it difficult to gain meaningful employment and, when they do, they are often paid less than other workers. Some employers even deny them the right to be employed, on seeing their application forms, only because of their disability." Some deaf graduates of Irving Wilson are reported to be engaged in prostitution (built primarily on the tourist industry) as an employment choice, as little else is available to them. This is a special concern, because there is very little sex education material that is targeting the deaf community or available in sign language; the Barbados deaf community may be largely unaware of the risks of HIV/AIDS (NATIONNews.com 2010).

By 1996, sign language was "recognized as the official language of deaf people," was "used as the first language in education of deaf people," and was "recognized as the main means of communication between deaf persons and others" (Michailakis 1997). According to the *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009), ASL is the predominate language used by the signing deaf community. This is confirmed by visits to Barbados over the last few years made by King (2010), a native ASL user from the United States, and by the government's offering of ASL courses to the general public (Barbados Council for the Disabled 2010).

Opportunities for hearing people to learn sign language in Barbados have increased in recent years, with the first courses for adults being offered in 2001 and for children in 2006. According to McClean (2009), adults in Barbados have the opportunity to attend sign-language classes twice a year for 14 weeks. There are three levels available. Classes for children (age 5–18) are also being offered on Saturdays during this

same time span. These ASL courses are being coordinated by the National Disabilities Unit (NDU) and Irving Wilson School. According to McClean (2009), the primary goal of this Sign Language Programme is to facilitate "the integration and inclusion of the hearing impaired in all aspects of community living, promote the equalisation of opportunities for the hearing impaired, and to make Barbados an enabling environment for persons with disabilities." McClean also indicates that:

> Instruction in sign language is also available to school children at 35 primary schools, including one private primary school, and two secondary schools. Individuals may also complete the courses in their own communities by making a request to the NDU. The NDU's Sign Language Programme is now entering its ninth year. To date, 1,906 adults have graduated from the varying levels of the programme, while 1,308 children have completed the two available levels.

In December 2002, the Minister of Social Transformation argued for stronger legislation that protects the rights of disabled Barbadians and promotes the increased use of sign language, in particular: "This legislation should stipulate…the inclusion of sign language, an official language, making it part of the school curriculum in primary and secondary schools, and a requirement of parents and families with children who are hearing impaired" (Barbados Daily Nation 2002). According to Goodman (2009), the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Social Care attended the graduation of 342 children from their first year of sign-language courses through the Sign Language Programme and noted that "sign not only empowers those in our society who are hearing impaired, but…children receive positive physical effects from learning to sign."

With an established deaf club and deaf educational centers, all sources point to the Barbados deaf community using ASL. ASL also appears to be supported by the government and promoted in organized ways through sign language classes for hearing children and adults.

# 7 Bermuda

Bermuda's 34 square kilometers (13 square miles) of land area is located in the North Atlantic Ocean east of South Carolina, United States. It is a territory of the United Kingdom. The first permanent residents arrived in Bermuda in 1609 and, in 2009, the estimated population was 67,800 (CIA World Factbook 2010). Bermuda is considered the third most densely-populated country in the world, with three thousand people per square mile. Hamilton is its capital city, with approximately 900 people, whereas Saint George is the largest city comprised of approximately 1,800 people (Mongabay.com 2010). See Figure 6 for a map of Bermuda and its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).
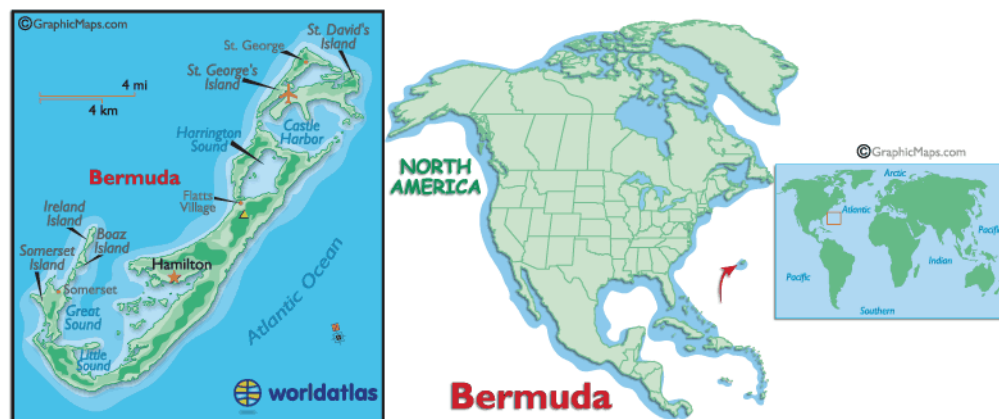


**Figure 6. Bermuda map.**

English is Bermuda's official language but Portuguese is also widely spoken . Bermuda has a 98-percent literacy rate. The economy depends on the international business sector and tourism. Bermuda has the

third-highest income per capita in the world, with an unemployment rate of only two percent (CIA World Factbook 2010). Even though Bermuda has one of the highest per capita incomes in the Americas, there is little support for their disabled community, in comparison to other countries. Minimal financial assistance is offered only to disabled people who profess to having no income, do not own a home, and do not have major savings or investments. A "Special Persons" photo identification is offered to local disabled people; however, since it does not contain the word "disabled" it is not helpful in obtaining disability rights when traveling to other countries. Free bus passes are offered to local residents with a Special Persons card but are not made available to disabled foreigners visiting the island. The Bermuda Physically Handicapped Association continues to strive for laws that provide equal access to persons with disabilities. In 2005, a committee was formed to recommend a national policy on disability.

The 2000 census registered 164 persons claiming hearing difficulty or deafness, but at least 100 of them were listed in the 65+ age range and may not use a sign language (Population and Housing Census). The director of the Bermuda Islands Association of the Deaf (BIAD) n.d. claims there are 300–500 members in the deaf community (Williams 2002), which is significantly higher than Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula which would estimate a deaf population of 68.

The BIAD was established in the 1980's by the Somers Isle Jaycettes with deaf adults, parents, and teachers of deaf children (Bank of Bermuda Foundation 2009). BIAD works toward assisting deaf and hard-of-hearing Bermudians while increasing deaf awareness in the hearing population. They offer services such as sign language classes, adult education, support for families of deaf children, telecommunication equipment for purchase, information on overseas education, and camps for deaf people. BIAD is especially focusing on increasing communication access through closed-captioned television and relay services, which would allow deaf people to make independent phone calls (Forbes 2010).

Education is mandatory for children ages five through 16 and is free through secondary school, although some may attend private fee-paying schools. There are currently two special-education facilities for disabled children (Education International 2007), but deaf and hard-of-hearing children are also mainstreamed at Gilbert Institute, Dellwood Middle School, and Cedar Bridge Academy (Roberts 2005). Before these mainstream schools were designated to receive deaf students, speech therapists and special teachers traveled all over the island to assist deaf students. As of 2005, there were 23 students with hearing loss being mainstreamed (Walters 2005). The Clarke School for the Deaf, located in Massachusetts, United States, provided mainstreaming workshops for the staff at Gilbert Institute (Wolf 2005).

In 1966, a deaf-education teacher from Canada went to Bermuda to teach in a special-education school. When he arrived, he was not allowed to use sign language because the school system favored the oral method. In 1977, Mrs. Virginia Wilson formed a signing ministry through the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and is credited with first bringing sign language to Bermuda (Trott 1999). She received training from Gallaudet University and St. Augustine School for the Deaf and Blind in Florida. A former director of BIAD, Mrs. Wilson now offers sign language classes at St. Paul's AME church and is an advocate for deaf education and employment.

Recently, the Bermudian government supported two teachers to pursue deaf-education training in the United Kingdom and the United States. In return, they were required to return to the island to teach. The teacher who was trained in the United States is deaf and supervises three students who use sign language as their first language. The teacher trained in the United Kingdom supports ten students, ranging in age from six months to 11 years, who use mostly an oral approach, including sign language, only when absolutely necessary. The three students using sign language have full-time interpreter tutors and some of the other students have support assistants, although it is recognized that all students would benefit from

increased support (Harriott 2005). One deaf student shared that she learned Signed Exact English from her British school teachers but she wished she had learned BSL because Bermuda is a British territory. During her high school years she had interpreters; she then received her bachelor's and master's degree in the United States (The PEC Salutes n.d.). The ASL alphabet is the only deaf or sign-language-related information currently on the BIAD website (Bermuda Islands Association of the Deaf n.d.).

Some interpreting is available in Bermuda, mostly through religious centers. A Seventh-Day Adventist church in Hamilton provides ASL interpreting, when requested. The First Church of God in Bermuda has an interpreted service every Sunday morning. Although interpretation was provided at the Bermuda Festival of the Performing Arts, according to Pollard (2010), no interpretation is planned for any of the festivals in 2010. Even though Bermuda is a United Kingdom territory, the primary sign language used by the Bermudian deaf community appears to be ASL.

# 8   British Virgin Islands

The British Virgin Islands (BVI) are located in the Caribbean, east of Puerto Rico, and are part of the Virgin Islands archipelago, with the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) to the west. Technically, the British Virgin Islands is simply the "Virgin Islands," but is commonly referred to as the BVI to differentiate it from the USVI. It is made up of about 60 islands and cays, 15 of which are uninhabited. The British Virgin Islands have a total area of approximately 153 square kilometers (59 square miles). The population of the British Virgin Islands is approximately 24,000, with the vast majority of that population living on the islands of Tortola and Virgin Gorda (Brinkhoff 2007). The capital is Road Town, located on the island of Tortola. See Figure 7 for a map of the British Virgin Islands (WorldAtlas.com 2009).



**Figure 7. British Virgin Islands map.**

The British Virgin Islands were claimed by Britain in 1672 after a lot of wrestling among the Dutch, (who first settled there in 1648) French, Spanish, and Danish. It is now an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, but is internally self-governing. Its main economic businesses are tourism and financial services, with tourism contributing approximately 45 percent of the national income and financial services another 50 percent (WorldAtlas.com. 2009, Wikipedia 2009). There are strong ties between the British Virgin Islands and the much larger United States Virgin Islands, so much so that the British Virgin Islands adopted the use of the United States dollar in 1959. Protestant Christianity is the dominant religion and more than three-quarters of the population is of African heritage (CIA World Factbook

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2009). English is its official language, although Virgin Islands Creole English is also spoken (Lewis 2009).

The British Virgin Islands would have approximately 24 deaf people after calculating Harrington's (2004) estimate of 0.1 percent of the total population. Soper (2008) estimates that there are less than 100 deaf people who may use a sign language in the British Virgin Islands. There was no specific information found about sign language used in schools or deaf social life. One mailing list was found addressing general disabilities and one specifically addressing the needs of deaf-blind children (Logue 2009). However, no information for deaf cultural or sign language topics was found on the Internet. There are no known centers specifically established to teach sign language.

The British Virgin Islands follow British educational methods and offer compulsory and free educational options. As of 1991, there were 15 schools available; three of these are high schools, with one of them holding 80 percent of the high school population in 1990. In 1991, the British Virgin Islands founded their first community college (Graves 2009). According to the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board (2010), there are no deaf schools in the British Virgin Islands and a very small deaf population. Any deaf children would attend the school for the disabled: Eslyn Henley Richez Learning Center, located in Tortola, previously called the Fort Charlotte Children's Centre (Government Information Services 2010). This school was opened in October 1972 and currently has 17 students with disabilities (at least some of whom have motor disabilities and use wheelchairs), employing five teachers in 2008 (Needham 2008).

With such a small deaf population, it does not appear that an indigenous sign language could have formed. Any signing deaf people probably use BSL because of the historical roots and current political connections or ASL, because of the British Virgin Islands connection to the United States Virgin Islands.

# 9   Cayman Islands

The Cayman Islands are located in the Caribbean, south of Cuba. It consists of three islands: Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman, for a combined land area of approximately 262 square kilometers (101 square miles). See Figure 8 for a map of the Cayman Islands (WorldAtlas.com 2009).



**Figure 8. Cayman Islands map.**

The Cayman Islands surrendered to England in 1670 under the Treaty of Madrid and are now a territory of the United Kingdom. The Cayman Islands and Jamaica were treated as a single colony until 1962; when Jamaica became independent, the Cayman Islands became a separate British Overseas Territory

(Wikipedia 2009). The majority of the population lives on the largest of the islands, Grand Cayman. According to the CIA World Factbook (2009) and the *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009), English is the official language of the Cayman Islands, although other languages, such as Haitian Creole, French, and Spanish may also be spoken. Protestant Christianity is the main religion. Because direct taxation does not take place on the islands, businesses have spread and there are now more businesses (68,000) than there are people (49,000). Businesses include various tourist activities and attractions, banks, insurance companies, and mutual fund companies, with tourism being the largest source of income (CIA World Factbook 2009).

According to Washabaugh (1981), the deaf community of the Cayman Islands is reported to have had a sign language similar to Providence Island. Both islands are filled with ethnic diversity and have a higher-than-average percentage of deafness among the people. In 1911, 1921, and 1943 the occurrence of deafness was around four deaf per 1,000 people (0.4 percent). In 1981, however, Washabaugh (1981) found only 18 deaf people out of a population of around 11,000, the occurrence of deafness decreasing to around 1.6 per 1,000 (0.16 percent). The decrease in the amount of deaf people could be attributed to several factors: better healthcare, increase in marriageable population, or emigration to nearby countries. If the 0.4 percent deaf estimate holds today, there are currently approximately 196 deaf people in the Cayman Islands but, using the more recent percentage of 0.16 percent, the deaf population would be approximately 80. Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula points to a deaf population of 49.

The Cayman Islands have historically been fairly isolated but, in 1953, the first airstrip was completed, which allowed quicker and easier access and dramatically-increased tourism. According to Washabaugh (1981), the prominent sign language used before 1953 was Old Caymanian Sign Language; several of the signs used were similar to those used on Providence Island at that time. The fingerspelling system was slightly influenced by BSL. However, after building the airstrip, new options became available for the deaf community of the Cayman Islands. While some went to Jamaica, others went to the United States and were educated through an oral method or sign language. By the 1980's, the younger deaf children were being schooled on Grand Cayman, with ASL being the language of instruction (Washabaugh 1981).

According to the article "Education and Schools in Cayman" on the New Resident (2009) home page, the Lighthouse School offers education to children ages 4–16 that face multiple challenges, such as vision, hearing impairment, and learning disabilities. A Government Information Services article states that deaf children are being taught ASL within the school system, and classes in ASL are being offered for families of deaf children by the primary teacher of deaf students at the Lighthouse School (Cayman Islands Government Information Services 2001).

## 10 Dominica

Dominica is a Caribbean island located about half way between Puerto Rico and Trinidad and Tobago. It has a land area of approximately 751 square kilometers (approximately 290 square miles) with a 2009 population estimate of 72,660. In 2008, 74 percent of the population resided in urban areas. Dominica is divided into ten parishes; the capital city is Roseau; the population is almost 15,000. See Figure 9 for a map of Dominica in its Caribbean context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).

**Figure 9. Dominica map.**

The locals are called Dominicans, which is not to be confused with Dominicans from the Dominican Republic, a much-larger island to the northwest. The estimated unemployment rate in 2000 was 23 percent and 30 percent of Dominicans lived below the poverty line in 2002. English is the official language, although there are many who speak French Patois and an English Creole (Lewis 2010). In 2003, Dominica had a 94-percent literacy rate (CIA World Factbook 2010).

According to the National Coalition of Dominican Women (2009), 12 percent of Dominica's population is disabled. The Population and Housing Census of 2001 recorded that 0.5 percent (320 people) of the population have hearing disabilities (Pan American Health Organization 2007). Soper (2008) estimates the signing deaf population to be under 100 people, based on a country's gross domestic product to reflect the possible influence of health care access of each country. Harrington's (2004) estimate of the deaf population would suggest approximately 73 deaf people. According to Murphy (2010), the Dominican deaf community is very small and they do not have many connections with deaf people outside of Dominica.

Even though Dominica was one of the first countries to sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, their disabled people are still marginalized, with disabled females experiencing the worst marginalization (United Nations 2003). The Dominica Protection of Employment Act chapter 89.02 guarantees disabled women the right to work, but there is little specialized training or education to help prepare them for employment. There is no law that prohibits discrimination and it is not illegal to employ a person with disabilities for less than minimum wage.

On October 26, 1983, the Dominica Association of Disabled Persons (DADP) was established "to unite all forms of disability in a common struggle for 'full participation' and 'equality' with and among its fellow citizens" (National Coalition of Dominican Women 2009). DADP has over 400 members and is funded by grants, an annual government subvention, donations, and special events they use for fund-raising. A sustainable development program was put in place by DADP for 2005–2009. Some of their training included skills to help disabled people find gainful employment and communication through Braille, sign language, and amateur radio. Other accomplishments of DADP are: obtaining local and overseas medical treatment, raising public awareness, encouraging a national policy on disabilities to be adopted by the government, and training in independent living, income-generating skills and leadership skills (DADP 2005). In 2009, the government of Japan granted $80,000 USD to the DADP for their project on technology training for people with disabilities. In 2007, their Braille Literacy Program was funded with $50,000 USD by UNESCO (Joseph 2009).

Dominica is moving towards inclusive education but does not want to promote integration where students are fit into the existing school structure. Instead, educational supervisors want to promote inclusion where the school changes their educational system to meet the needs of the disabilities represented. Inclusive education is a challenge, since there is a lack of public awareness in Dominica about people with disabilities and a lack of human resources and materials. UNESCO (2007) indicates that, in Dominica:

> "According to the 1997 Education Act, Section 81 Sub-section (2), 'a student who is entitled to a special education programme shall have the programme delivered in the least restrictive and most enabling environment to the extent that resources permit and it is considered practicable by the Chief Education Officer in consultation with professional staff of the school and the Ministry and the parents, having due regard for the educational needs and the rights of all students.' In Sub-section (3) the Act goes on to say that 'a special education programme may take the form of an individual education plan in that the plan is tailored to the specific or individual needs of the student.'"

The School for the Hearing Impaired was founded in 1972. It is funded by the government and is the only school in Dominica which provides education for deaf students, offering classes from pre-school through high school. In the 1996/1997 school year, the School for the Hearing Impaired had five teachers, two who had some form of special teacher training (Caribbean Development Bank 2003); a 1999 school survey indicated there were 26 deaf and hard-of-hearing children attending the school (Pan American Health Organization 2009). According to Timothy (2010), there are currently only four students and two teachers at the school and the language of instruction is Signed English. Although profoundly deaf students are not being mainstreamed, attendance appears to be decreasing, due to emigration and, in general, families having fewer children.

There are no professional interpreters in Dominica and no sign language classes (Murphy 2010). According to Timothy (2010) and Murphy (2010), there is not much structure among the adult deaf community but they do gather together on weekends. Local sources report that there is no indigenous sign language in Dominica and that the Dominican deaf community uses Signed English and/or ASL.

# 11 Falkland Islands

The Falkland Islands are located about 482 kilometers (300 miles) east of the Argentina coast in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is made up of two large islands: West Falkland and East Falkland – and a couple hundred smaller ones, with a total landmass of approximately 7,564 square kilometers (2,920 square miles). The population is just over 3,000 (not including the 1,700+ military personnel living at the Mount Pleasant military base); approximately two-thirds of that population lives in the capital city of Stanley, located on the eastern coast of East Falkland. See Figure 10 for a map of the Falkland Islands (WorldAtlas.com 2010).

**Figure 10. Falkland Islands map.**

The Falkland Islands were first settled by the French in 1764 but, two years later, were handed over to Spain, and then to Britain in the early 1800s. Since its beginning, there has been significant controversy over who claims sovereignty in the islands, with the most recent being fought in the Falkland War between Argentina and the United Kingdom in 1982. Today, it is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom, and is largely self-supporting, except for the British military presence.

The economy is mostly based on fishing, although sheep farming has also played a part, and tourism is growing. Fishing license fees can bring in more than $40 million USD a year to support the Falkland Island economy. More recently, oil exploration has led to the discovery of large amounts of oil, causing a disagreement between Argentina and the United Kingdom about who has sovereignty over the oil resources and the Falkland Islands as a whole. Over two-thirds of the population uses the Internet. There are two paved airports. The majority of the population follows Christianity and over 90 percent are of British birth or descent. English is the national language and, based on the *Ethnologue*, no other languages are spoken in the Falkland Islands (Lewis 2009).

According to Wilks (2010), there are very few congenitally-deaf people in Falkland Islands. With those who are learning sign language, BSL is used. In some cases, baby sign language programs in ASL are used with the incorporation of BSL vocabulary. Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent calculations of deaf populations would suggest approximately three deaf people in the Falkland Islands! No other estimates were found.

The first school in the Falkland Islands was established in Stanley in 1955: the Stanley Junior School. In 1992, the first secondary school was opened: Falkland Islands Community School, in Stanley. Currently, there are six schools in the Falkland Islands, two in the capital, three small settlement schools (Fox Bay, Port Howard, and North Arm), and one at the military base in Mount Pleasant. There is a traveling team of teachers that reaches more isolated students for two out of every six weeks; these students, living in rural areas (known as "Camp"), also receive educational input through radio/telephone teachers stationed in Stanley. Some older Camp children are being sent to the capital for school, lodging in a boarding hostel (Manikas 2009).

The Infant and Junior School in Stanley has a special education room and a speech and language therapist that visits three times a week. Because there is no deaf institution, any deaf or hard-of-hearing students present in the Falkland Islands are probably mainstreamed into special education rooms. Since these

schools are all staffed by licensed United Kingdom teachers who follow the United Kingdom curriculum (Barret 2008), this points toward the use of BSL. Because the Falkland Islands deaf population is exceptionally small and because there are no sociolinguistic factors pointing to a distinct deaf community, there is probably no sign language indigenous to the Falkland Islands.

# 12 French Guiana

French Guiana,[3] officially called The Department of Guiana, is located on the northern coast of South America and is bordered by Suriname on the west, Brazil on the south and east, and the Atlantic Ocean on the north. French Guiana is currently in land disputes with neighboring Suriname; its total land area is approximately 89,150 square kilometers (34,421 square miles). It is segmented by many rivers and covered in tropical rainforest, with 90 percent of the land area covered by jungle and woodlands (CIA World Factbook 2010). See Figure 11 for a map of French Guiana in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 11. French Guiana map.**

French Guiana was first settled by the French in 1604. Until 1951, Devil's Island served as France's penal colony, where prisoners were sent, once France's prisons became overpopulated (WorldAtlas.com 2010). French Guiana's official language is French, but as many as 12 other languages are used in country, according to the *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009). An estimated 83 percent of French Guiana's 222,000 people are literate. The main religion practiced is Roman Catholicism. Twenty-five percent of French Guiana's gross domestic product is based on the French Space Center, located in Kourou; unemployment is a serious issue (CIA World Factbook 2006).

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[3] French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique became overseas departments of France in 1946; France is divided administratively into 26 regions, which are further divided into 100 departments, subdivided into 342 Arrondissements and 4,039 Cantons, and 36,682 Communes. Some of the overseas territories have positions at both the regional and department levels, as is the case for French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique. Of France's 26 regions, 22 lie in mainland France in Europe, and the other four are French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Réunion (an island in the Indian Ocean). The inhabitants of all French departments are French citizens with full rights, both political and legal, and educational systems are supported by the French government. Economies are tied to France's and, as a part of the European Union, they use the Euro as their monetary unit. The deaf communities of French Guiana, Guadeloupe, and Martinique share a unique connection because, although they are geographically separated, they share a common bond with France's well-developed and progressive deaf-educational system that has taught through LSF for centuries.

Only a little over half of French Guianese are actually born in French Guiana, with almost 20 percent coming from mainland France and French Caribbean islands; the remaining 30 percent immigrating from neighboring countries (primarily Suriname, Brazil, and Haiti). It is estimated that approximately three quarters of the total population are Creoles (people of mixed French and African ancestry) (Wikipedia 2010). As of 2010, 90 percent of the population is concentrated along the coast, mostly around the capital city of Cayenne (56,000) and the two next-largest cities of Kourou (27,000) and Saint-Laurent-Du-Maroni (27,000) (Mongabay.com 2005).

According to Soper (2008), there are an estimated 300 signing deaf people in French Guiana. Using Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula, French Guiana would have a deaf population of 222. However, in a 1998 Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) report about health in the Americas, eight out of every 1,000 children in Guadeloupe (0.8 percent) were identified as having a significant hearing loss. In this same report, Guadeloupe was found to be more advanced economically and educationally than French Guiana. If this 0.8 percent figure holds to the overall populations in each country and economic factors have a direct correlation with deaf population as is typically assumed, French Guiana's deaf and hard-of-hearing population could be estimated at 1,780 (Pan American Health Organization. 1998).

French Guiana has two known deaf associations: Association des Parents et Amis des Déficients Auditifs de Guyane (APADAG) and GUYASOURD Activités, both located in Cayenne. Education in French Guiana is compulsory and provided by the French government (Encyclopedia of the Nations 2010). Although no deaf schools were found in the established French Guiana educational system, the association APADAG was founded in 1989 to address the issue of deaf children being sent to France or the Antilles (Guadeloupe and Martinique) for their education. It appears that, traditionally, there were very few deaf educational options in French Guiana itself and that the government sent deaf children to other French departments for schooling. In 1994, APADAG began offering an alternative educational option to parents: independent educational visits to deaf children in their own homes. This home-centered education includes training through both oralism and LSF. They have three centers in French Guiana, two in Cayenne, and a third in Saint-Laurent du Maroni. As of 1994, APADAG was working with 45 deaf and hard-of-hearing children throughout French Guiana in this way. In 1993, they also started offering vocational training for young adults over age 16 to help them find employment. Recently, they were working with 80 young people in this capacity. In 1995, they started offering a "Training Centre in LSF" but the lack of deaf trainers and teachers led this center to close, despite the many requests for it from the French Guianese community (Association des Parents et Amis des Déficients Auditifs de Guyane n.d.).

# 13 Greenland

Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat) is located northeast of continental North America and west of Iceland. It is the world's largest island, with over 80 percent of its 2,166,086 square kilometers (836,330 square miles) covered in ice. Greenland's capital is Godthab (Nuuk). See Figure 12 for a map of Greenland in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).

**Figure 12. Greenland map.**

Greenland was claimed by Denmark in 1380. In 1979, it became a self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark and, in 2009, completely responsible for its internal affairs. Denmark continues to govern Greenland's international relations. The July 2010 population estimate for Greenland was 57,637; 84 percent of the population is urban (CIA World Factbook 2010). Approximately a quarter of this population lives in the capital city of Godthab (Nuuk). The second largest city, Sisimiut, is located north of Nuuk on the western coast and has about 5,500 people. All other cities have populations under 5,000 (Citypopulation.de 2010). Approximately 90 percent of the population is composed of native Greenlanders (Inuit and Greenland-born whites) and the other 10 percent are Danish. The main religion is Evangelical Lutheran Christianity; the economy is driven by the fishing industry (CIA World Factbook 2010).

According to the *Ethnologue*, primary languages in Greenland are Greenlandic (Inuktitut) and Danish (Lewis 2009). Although Greenlandic is spoken by the majority of Greenlanders, it has not been the socially-prestigious language of the country because Danish was the official language of Greenland until 2009. Danish's official capacity ended in 2009 when the "Home Rule Act" was implemented. As of 2010, Danish is not required to be taught in schools or used for official purposes. Resources offered in Greenlandic are now growing, but even with more than half of the population having access to the Internet, the transition to Internet websites use of Greenlandic has been slow (CIA World Factbook 2010, Norden n.d.).

Almost all Greenlanders are literate, but educational levels lag behind the rest of the Nordic countries. Only a few hundred people complete post-secondary education (about 1 percent of the population), as compared to 25 percent in the rest of the Nordic countries, and only 15 to 30 percent of the population finishes the "sixth form" (equivalent to the final 2 years of high school in the United States), as compared to 50 percent or higher in other Nordic countries (Langgaard n.d.).

Although the specific deaf population in Greenland is unknown, Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula would point to a deaf population of 58, while Soper (2008) estimates that there are approximately 100 deaf people who may use a sign language. Barish (2008) indicated that there are a total of 10 deaf people in the entire capital city of Nuuk, a little under 0.18 percent of the total Nuuk population, and only two deaf people in the third largest city of Ilulissat. It is probable that the largest deaf population could be found in Sisimiut, since this is where the only deaf school in Greenland is located.

According to The Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2001), there is at least one regional consulting office for deaf people, which is administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour Market. Barish (2008) reports that deaf people do receive a disability check

from the government, but the monthly stipend is not even enough to cover a nice pair of hiking shoes. Some deaf people live very isolated lives; not all deaf people have had the opportunity to learn sign language. In Ilulissat, for example, of the two known deaf people in town, only one of them knew sign language.

Deaf education in Greenland developed slowly because of its low population and geographic isolation. Bergman and Engberg-Pederson (2010) report that: "In 1957, two Greenlandic children were sent to a school for the deaf in Denmark, beginning a practice that was continued until the mid 1970s. In 1978, the first school for the deaf was founded in Sisimiut, which, however, has very few children today." Nine years of compulsory education are required for all students and offered by the special school for the deaf in Sisimiut (Ronnig and Wiborg 2008).

As recounted by Nuttal (1998), in 1987, a young deaf Inuit boy was expected by the government to start attending school at age nine. The local school did not want him in their classroom because they were afraid of the effect that it would have on the other students, so it was decided by the government that he would be sent to the Sisimiut deaf school. Although his parents wanted to remove him from the deaf school because they did not believe he was living healthily as compared to their traditional Inuit way of life, the law requiring compulsory education for his age group kept him boarding at the Sisimiut deaf school and later led him to a deaf school in Denmark to continue his education.

According to Bergman and Engberg-Pedersen (2010), DSL has had a strong influence on the sign language used in Greenland. The traditional names for DSL are tegnsprog, tegnsproget, and dansk tegnsprog (meaning sign language, the sign language, and DSL, respectively). In Danish, DSL has no acronym, but the full term "dansk tegnsprog" is often used. The Danish Deaf Association estimates that there may be as many as five thousand DSL users throughout the Nordic regions. Unlike Swedish Sign Language and Finnish Sign language, DSL has not yet been officially recognized as a minority language in Denmark or other Nordic countries.

In 1991, the Denmark government began encouraging the use of DSL in the educational curriculum for deaf students. As of 2010, teachers in deaf classrooms take DSL courses at deaf schools or regional centers designed for that purpose. However, since 2000, the increase of cochlear implants being given to deaf children has led to the decreased acquisition of DSL by deaf children and their families. In Greenland, Bergman and Engberg-Pedersen (2010) indicate that:

> "The government seems to expect it to be possible for the children to stay in their villages after cochlear implantation and attend schools for hearing children with no sign-language support. The sign language used among Greenlanders is very close to DSL but possibly considered a separate language by the signers."

While other Nordic countries, such as Finland, Sweden, and Iceland have a sign language named after their country (Finnish Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language, Icelandic Sign Language), Greenland does not. It appears that the current name of the sign language used in Greenland is DSL. However, with the local community exerting more independence as a country, the deaf community may want to rename their sign variety to reflect their increasing identification with Greenland as distinct from Denmark (Bergman and Engman-Pedersen 2010).

# 14 Guadeloupe

Guadeloupe is located in the Caribbean, south of St. Kitts and Nevis and north of Dominica. It was annexed by the French in 1674. The Guadeloupe Archipelego is made up of a number of islands, only six of which are inhabited. These inhabited islands include the large islands of Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre, neighboring islands of Marie-Glante and Les Saintes (made up of Terre de Haut and Terre de Bas)

to the south, and La Desirade to the east. The Guadeloupe islands have 1,629 square kilometers (629 square miles) of land area which is hilly and volcanic. Guadeloupe's population of 440,000 is mostly composed of people of mixed African descent; the primary religion is Roman Catholicism. The capital city is Basse Terre, located on the island of Basse-Terre, but only has 37,000 of the total Guadeloupe population. The largest city is Pointe-A-Pitre, located on Grande-Terre, which has an estimated population of 140,000 and functions as the major port for Guadeloupe. See Figure 13 for a map of Guadeloupe and its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 13. Guadeloupe map.**

Although the official language is French, the vast majority speak Guadeloupean Creole French; some others on the island speak Haitian Creole and English (Lewis 2009). In 2007, Saint Barthelemy and Saint Martin were "officially detached from Guadeloupe and became two separate French overseas collectivities with their own local administration" (Wikipedia 2010). This split caused Guadeloupe to lose approximately 4.5 percent of its land area and 8.5 percent of its population. Saint Barthelemy and Saint Martin are scheduled to have their own deputies on the French National Assembly in 2012. For the purpose of this report, they will not be dealt with separately from Guadeloupe because of their shared political and educational history with the rest of Guadeloupe. It is probable that Saint Barthelemy and Saint Martin share a common sign language and deaf history with the rest of Guadeloupe and other French departments and collectivities (Wikipedia 2010, Studentsoftheworld.com 2006).

According to the World Health Organization, Guadeloupe had approximately 5,600 people with disabilities who were receiving some kind of support from the government in 1998. In addition, 718 students with disabilities were given special allowances by the government for their education (World Health Organization n.d.). According to Soper's (2008) estimate, there are an estimated 900 signing deaf people in Guadeloupe, while using Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula points to a deaf population of 440. However, in a 1998 Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) report about health in the Americas, eight out of every 1,000 children in Guadeloupe (0.8 percent) were identified as having a significant hearing loss, pointing to a deaf population of 3,520 (Pan American Health Organization 1998).

Education in Guadeloupe is compulsory and provided by the French government (Encyclopedia of the Nations 2010). The first deaf school in Guadeloupe was founded by the famous Roch-Amboise-Auguste Bebian, who was born in Pointe-a-Pitre, Guadeloupe. Bebian moved to France to study with Abbe Sicard and the three deaf teachers, Jean Massieu, Ferdinand Berthier, and Laurent Clerc, at the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets de Paris. After working in deaf education in metropolitan France, Bebian returned to Pointe-a-Pitre to set up a deaf school on February 24, 1839 (Wikipedia 2010, Sauvage n.d.).

Guadeloupe has two known deaf associations: Association Culturelle des Sourds de la Guadeloupe and Sourds Entendants Recherche Action Communication (SERAC) Guadeloupe. The Association Culturelle des Sourds de la Guadeloupe was created to facilitate access for deaf people in social, cultural, and professional situations in Guadeloupe through LSF (Sourds Entendants Recherche Action Communication (SERAC) Guadeloupe n.d.). SERAC Guadeloupe was founded in 1999 and offers LSF interpreting and classes (Sourds Entendants Recherche Action Communication (SERAC) Guadeloupe n.d.). All information points to the Guadeloupe deaf community using LSF.

# 15 Guyana

Guyana, formerly called British Guiana, is located on the north side of South America along the Atlantic Ocean between Suriname and Venezuela, north of Brazil. See Figure 14 for Guyana in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 14. Guyana map.**

Guyana is the third smallest country in South America, with a land area of 214,969 square kilometers (133,576 square miles), although some areas are under territorial dispute with Venezuela and Suriname. It is divided into ten regions. The total population, as of August 2010, is estimated at 752,940. There is currently a negative growth rate caused by the pervasiveness of AIDS in Guyana. Georgetown, located on the coast, is Guyana's capital with a population of approximately 239,000. Only 28 percent of the total population lives in urban areas, with the majority of these living in the capital. Guyana's income depends heavily on agriculture and extractive industries. Nearly 99 percent of the Guyanese people over the age of 15 have attended school. Guyana was a Dutch colony in the 17th century, taken over by the British in 1815, and gained its independence from the United Kingdom by 1966. After the abolition of slavery, the black former slaves settled in the urban areas and people from India were brought to work in the sugar plantations. The Guyanese population is now very diverse ethnically, consisting of East Indian (44 percent), African (30 percent), mixed ethnicity (17 percent), and Amerindian (9 percent). There is no single major religion among the Guyanese, but Hinduism is the most adhered to at 28 percent of the population. The official language is English but many other languages are spoken (CIA World Factbook 2010).

According to Cholmondeley (2010), the 2000 Guyana census estimated the deaf population to be 4,000. But Hallahan and Hallahan (2010) indicate that there are believed to be nearly 8,000 deaf people who use sign language. Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent calculation points to a much smaller deaf population of 753. High poverty levels and negative perspectives in the society toward people with disabilities may

cause many deaf people to be isolated, leading to a lack of educational and social opportunities. Deaf people located in rural areas who have not had the opportunity to interact with the urban Guyanese deaf communities in Georgetown and New Amsterdam often do not know or use sign language (Voluntary Service Overseas 2007).

Although the National Policy on Rights of People with Disabilities mandates equal educational opportunities for disabled youth and adults, no legal measures are in place to enforce it. Inclusive education in Guyana offers some special classes for students with disabilities but uses the same curriculum as regular schools, with no training for curriculum adaptation to meet the needs of students with disabilities. There are seven primary schools that provide special education, mostly located along the coast, and no secondary school opportunities. According to the 2002 national census, there are about 450 deaf children between five and 14 years of age and only 100 are attending school. These are placed in one of three special-needs schools (McIntosh n.d.).

David Rose School for the Handicapped was founded in the 1960's after a Rubella outbreak led to an increased number of deaf children; it was the first school to offer educational options to the Guyanese deaf community. Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) began special education teacher training in September 2003. In 2008, the Ministry of Education and the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (GCBRP) began the "Train the Sign Language Trainer Initiative." The goal of this initiative was to help teachers communicate with deaf students on a basic level by 2009 at the following 12 schools: Covent Garden Nursery, David Rose School for Handicapped, Diamond Special Needs, Friendship Secondary, Golden Grove Primary, Graham's Hall Primary, Plaisance Primary, South Road Nursery, South Ruimveldt Park Primary, St. Paul's Primary, St. Winefride's Secondary, and West Ruimveldt Primary (Knews 2008). In 2009, six private schools were accepting deaf students: South Road Nursery, Graham's Hall Primary School, Prospect Nursery, Enmore Primary, Diamond Special Needs School, and the New Amsterdam Special Needs School (Government Information Agency 2009).

There are a number of organizations which serve the Guyanese deaf community. The Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (GCBRP) was founded in Georgetown, in 1986, with the goal of helping people with disabilities integrate into society (World Health Organization 2002). The Support Group for Deaf Persons is located in Georgetown and was founded in 2005 by the GCBRP, the National Deaf Children's Society, and local partners (Government Information Agency 2008). They offer training for hearing and deaf people to become sign language teachers, offer an interpreter training program and interpreter services, provide educational classes for young deaf people, assist the Guyana Police Force when deaf persons are involved, and provide support for families of deaf persons (Knews 2009). The Kitty Deaf Club was started by a couple of deaf British VSO volunteers in 2006 and is located in Georgetown. The Kitty Deaf Club works toward providing Guyanese deaf people opportunities to socialize with each other and integrate into wider society. As of January 2009, there were 50 members of the Kitty Deaf Club (Knews 2009). Before the Kitty Deaf Club was established, the only places deaf people met on a regular basis were at churches or in homes of deaf friends. The primary religious meeting places for the Guyanese deaf community include Guyana Deaf Mission in Georgetown, a deaf ministry in Bartica, Wismar Baptist Deaf Ministry, and the Jehovah's Witnesses in New Amsterdam and Georgetown. Other organizations serving the deaf community in Guyana include the National Deaf Children's Society, Deaf in Guyana, and the Diamond Deaf Youth Club.

According to Cholmondeley (2010), there was no sign language in use in Guyana before the 1980s because of the emphasis on oral education. In three of the special education schools in Guyana, the basics of ASL were introduced in the 1990s and each school continued its use while creating their own particular adaptations (Hallahan and Hallahan 2010, International Disability Rights Monitor 2004). ASL classes have been offered through the Children's Circle Mission and staff members from at least two universities from the United States have had a major role in training Guyanese teachers in deaf education and ASL

(Jones 2008, McIntosh n.d.). Currently, both ASL and GSL (page 5 and Table 1) are in use by the Guyanese deaf community. Cholmondeley indicated that GSL is used when deaf Guyanese communicate among themselves, rather than with foreigners and ASL users. She also reported that, while hearing people in Guyana do not use GSL, Guyanese deaf people do quite a bit of code-mixing between GSL and ASL in their daily conversations. GSL courses are now being offered and Hallahan and Hallahan (2010) mentioned that the younger generation of deaf Guyanese are creating their own GSL variety, as compared to Guyanese over the age of 40, who tend to use ASL.

Sign language classes for teachers or parents of deaf children were first offered in April 2004 by the Voluntary Service Organization (VSO) in cooperation with the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (also known as CBR), which began to teach sign language to 30 deaf and 20 hearing youth from the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Training workshops were also offered for family members of deaf people and other interested individuals. As a result of this project, a sign language manual and two sign language videos were created and made available through the International Society for Deaf Children (ISDC) and the GCBRP (National Deaf Children's Society 2008). The Deaf Baptist Fellowship online store also lists two volumes of *Guyanan Sign Language* by Don Cabbage, with each book containing over 500 illustrated words (Deaf Baptist Fellowship Store 2009).

In 2008, the Community Based Deaf Awareness Action began in cooperation with the East Bank Community Based Rehabilitation Programme and the USAID Guyana Democratic Consolidation and Conflict Resolution. Their goal is to provide deaf awareness, as well as sign language classes, to the East Bank community in Georgetown. Free sign language classes were offered to medical professionals, police, religious leaders, deaf people, and parents of deaf children. As of 2008, sign language was taught at the following special education schools: Diamond, New Amsterdam, David Rose School for Handicapped, and the Guyana Deaf Mission (Stabroek Staff 2008). In 2009, the Kitty Deaf Club of Georgetown held their first annual Guyana Sign Language Expo (Knews 2009). The same year, about 60 police officers took a three-day sign language course that was offered by the Support Group for Deaf Persons at Felix Austin College in Georgetown (Guyana Chronicle 2009).

There is no formal research available about the sign language used in Guyana but deaf community leaders have shown increased interest in language research and development, including the creation of a sign language dictionary of GSL to be used in GSL classes. It appears that at least half of the people who are teaching sign language are not native ASL users but native signers of other sign languages. There appears to be varying degrees of bilingualism in ASL and GSL, depending on each deaf person's social network. Currently, deaf clubs, associations, and religious ministries are making a concerted effort to provide solid educational, interpreting, and language options available to the community.

# 16 Martinique

The Department of Martinique is located in the Caribbean, south of Dominica and north of St. Lucia, and is the northernmost of the Windward Islands. Martinique's capital and largest city is Fort-de-France, located on the western coast of the island, with an estimated 95,000 people. The second largest city is Le Lamentin, located on the interior of the island and east of the capital city, holding approximately 36,000 people. Martinique's total land area is 1,060 square kilometers (409 square miles) and is made up of rugged terrain and rain forests (Studentsoftheworld.com 2006). See a map of Martinique in its geographical context in Figure 15 (WorldAtlas.com 2010).

**Figure 15. Martinique map.**

The majority of the Martinique population of 402,000 speaks the dominant language of Martiniquan Creole French, although the official language of Martinique is French (Lewis 2009). Literacy levels average above 97 percent. Ninety-five percent of the Martinique population claim Roman Catholicism as their religion. The economy is based on agriculture and tourism and, as compared to other islands in the Caribbean, Martinique has a higher-than-average standard of living (CIA World Factbook 2003, Wikipedia 2010).

In 2000, 1,500 people in Martinique under the age of 20 were compensated by the government because of a disability and 5,500 people over age 20 applied for some type of disability-related service with the government (World Health Organization n.d. Martinique). According to Soper (2008), there are an estimated 500 signing deaf people in Martinique. Using Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula, Martinique would have a deaf population of approximately 400. However, in a 1998 Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) report about health in the Americas, eight out of every 1,000 children in Guadeloupe (0.8 percent) were identified as having a significant hearing loss. In this same report, Guadeloupe was found to be only slightly less advanced economically and educationally as compared to Martinique. If this 0.8 percent figure applies to overall populations in each country and economic factors have a direct correlation with deaf population as is typically assumed, the deaf and hard-of-hearing population in Martinique could be about 3,200 deaf people (Pan American Health Organization 1998).

Deaf education in Martinique is compulsory and provided by the French government (Encyclopedia of the Nations 2010). One school for children with special needs is located in the northern interior, in Le Mourne Rouge: Maison Departementale des Personnes Handicapées. There is also an Institute for the Hearing Impaired (Institut pour déficients auditifs) in Red Cliff and possibly another option in Schoelcher. One blog posting indicated that a teacher who was trained in Paris, France, was working in Martinique with the deaf community as of 2008 (Zananas n.d.).

Martinique has four known deaf associations: Association "DEAF WORLD TOURISM" in Lamentin, and Association Martiniquaise Pour L'Education et l'Insertion des Sourds (AMEIS), Fédération des sourds de la Martinique, and Surdus Antilles in Fort-de-France. AMEIS is a regional association of parents of deaf children in Martinique who work toward social and professional integration of deaf adults in their region and provide training in LSF. Surdus Antilles provides specific training in sign-language education, and offers courses in LSF and interpreting to the public. In 2007, five interpreters received interpreter certificates from this program. All information points to Martinique using LSF.

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# 17 Montserrat

Montserrat is located in the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean, approximately 300 miles southeast of Puerto Rico and 30 miles south-southwest of Antigua. It is part of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea. Its nearest neighbors are St. Kitts and Nevis to the northwest, Antigua and Barbuda to the northeast, and Guadeloupe to the southeast. Its total area is approximately 70 square kilometers (27 square miles). See Figure 16 for a map of Montserrat (Lonely Planet 2010).



**Figure 16. Montserrat map.**

The population of Montserrat is just over 5,000 people, located in three parishes: Saint Anthony, Saint Peter, and Saint Georges. Although Plymouth is its capital, many government buildings were moved to the northwest edge of the island after the Soufriere Hills Volcano erupted in 1995, destroying much of the island and leaving Plymouth mostly abandoned. Approximately two-thirds of the population (approximately 8,000 Montserratians) left the island following the first eruption, but some of these have since returned. Although this volcano has continued to erupt, Montserrat has been able to slowly rebuild and its population is growing, although slowed by the lack of housing. According to the CIA World Factbook (2009), it is expected that over half of this island will remain uninhabitable for at least another decade, despite the United Kingdom's 123 million-dollar-aid program.

Montserrat was claimed by Britain in 1632, following the arrival of English and Irish colonists, and came officially into Britain's possession in 1783. It continues to be a British-dependent territory today and its economy is largely dependent on the United Kingdom's aid. There are two airports which serve it as a popular tourist destination. According to the *Ethnologue*, there are two languages spoken in Montserrat: the official language, English, and Montserrat Creole English (Lewis 2009). Christianity, in many denominational forms, is the most common religion.

There are four primary schools on the island: Brades and Look Out Primary (government schools), St. Augustine Roman Catholic School in Palm Loop, and Samuel Academy School in Salem. According to the Department of Education, the government schools offer special education programs for students with physical, mental, and emotional special needs. They focus on inclusion for students with special needs and admit that "the provision for students with special educational needs has been grossly inadequate in many areas" (Department of Education Youth and Sports 2009). The St. Augustine Roman Catholic School considers themselves a supplement to government education (MYTravelGuide 2006), but neither they nor the Samuel Academy School (for which no information could be found), indicated taking

students with special needs. Because the educational preference for people with special needs is inclusion, deaf students are most likely mainstreamed with hearing students, if they receive any education at all.

No information was available on the Internet about a deaf population, deaf schools, deaf associations, or religious deaf groups in Montserrat. It is probable that, with such a low total population, there are very few deaf people living in Montserrat. Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent deaf estimate of the total population would suggest a total of five deaf people. If there are any deaf people who use sign language, they probably use BSL because of Montserrat's political connections or ASL because of its wide-spread nature in the Caribbean. There is no reason to believe that there is any indigenous sign language present in Montserrat.

# 18 Netherlands Antilles

The Netherlands Antilles is made up of five islands, clustered in two groups in the Caribbean Sea. The Windward Islands of Curacao and Bonaire are located north of Venezuela, South America, and the Leeward Islands of Sint Maarten (which lies on an island shared with France's Saint Martin), Saba, and St. Eustatius are situated east of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. All together, the five islands make up 800 square kilometers (309 square miles) in land area. The capital and largest city, Willemstad, is located in Curacao (CIA World Factbook 2010). See Figure 17 for a map of the Netherlands Antilles in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 17. Netherlands Antilles map.**

The total estimated population of the Netherlands Antilles, as of 2009, is approximately 200,000 with 93 percent of that population living in urban areas. The Windward Islands hold approximately 75 percent of the Dutch Antillean population. See Table 2 for the population of each island.

**Table 2. Population of Netherlands Antilles islands**

| Island | Location | Approximate population |
|---|---|---|
| Curacao | Windward Island | 142,000 |
| Sint Maarten | Leeward Island | 41,000 |
| Bonaire | Windward Island | 13,000 |
| St. Eustatius | Leeward Island | 3,000 |
| Saba | Leeward Island | 1,500 |

The majority of the population is of mixed black heritage, with the remaining 15 percent being of East Indian, Carib Amerindian, and Caucasian descent. All islands in the Netherlands Antilles identify themselves primarily with Christianity, but St. Eustatius and Sint Maarten are primarily Protestant, while Bonaire, Curacao, and Saba are predominantly Roman Catholic. The Netherlands Antilles' economy is built on tourism in Curacao, Sint Maarten, and Bonaire, petroleum in Curacao and Bonaire, and off-shore finances. The economy has struggled in recent years; almost 16 percent of the population was unemployed as of 2009. The Netherlands Antilles are an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Dutch government is only responsible for defense and foreign affairs. It is set to be dissolved on October 10, 2010, so that each will have new constitutional status with the Dutch government, following the pattern that Aruba set when they gained independence in 1986. In the future, Curacao and Sint Maarten will be their own constitutional countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, while Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius will become a direct part of the Netherlands as special municipalities, sometimes referred to as "Kingdom Islands" (CIA World Factbook 2010, Wikipedia 2010).

In 2007, English and Papiamentu became official languages, alongside Dutch, in the Netherlands Antilles. Netherlands Antilles Creole English and Spanish are also spoken, with Spanish increasing due to growing numbers of tourists from Spanish-speaking countries like Venezuela and the Dominican Republic. Papiamentu is, however, the predominant language in the Netherlands Antilles, with approximately 65 percent of the population speaking it (CIA World Factbook 2010, Wikipedia 2010). While Papiamentu is the primary first language in the Windward Islands of Curacao and Bonaire, English is the first language of the majority on the islands of Sint Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Saba in the Leeward Islands (Lewis 2009). Over 96 percent of people in the Netherlands Antilles are reported to be literate (CIA World Factbook 2010).

Using Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent calculation of deaf population, the Netherlands Antilles could have approximately 200 deaf people spread across the five islands, with 45 in the Leeward Islands, most of whom would be located on the island of Sint Maarten. The remaining estimated 155 would be in the Windward Islands of Curacao and Bonaire. Soper (2008) estimates that there are approximately 300 deaf people who may use a sign language in the Netherlands Antilles. No official deaf population count was found.

The deaf community in the Windward Islands, located north of Venezuela, uses the SLN. There is one deaf school located in Willemstad, Curacao: Scola Myrna Dovale. This school is partnering with a deaf school in Holland: SG Effatha in Zoetermeer. Through the years, this school in Holland has supported the deaf school in Curacao by sending deaf teachers to Curacao to teach SLN. In addition, teachers from these two schools are regularly using videophones to discuss deaf education approaches in sign language and share their experiences (AuPix 2007). Because Aruba, a former Windward Island, also uses the SLN in their deaf community, it is probable that the SLN is used in both Windward Islands.

The educational system in the Leeward Islands combines educational approaches from the Netherlands, the Caribbean, and the United States; education is offered in the majority languages of Dutch and English, depending on the institution (Department of Economic Policy and Research 2010). No specific

information was found about any deaf associations, schools, or the use of sign language in the Leeward Islands. The deaf population is possibly too small and scattered to have developed their own sign language. There does not appear to be any type of organized service for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Sint Maarten and no sign language use has been identified.

Although further information may lead to the need for additional investigation in the Leeward Islands, current evidence points to the use of the SLN in the Netherlands Antilles. Local sources indicate there is no indigenous sign language in the largest island of the Netherlands Antilles, Curacao, and it is also unlikely that one has developed in any of the other less-populated islands.

# 19 Quebec, Canada

Quebec is the largest Canadian province by land area and is located in the eastern part of the country. It is the only province in Canada with French as its official language, spoken by the majority of the population. See Figure 18 for a map of Quebec and its geographical context within Canada (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 18. Quebec map.**

With an estimated 7.5 million people in 2006, Quebec is the second most populous Canadian province, following Ontario. The capital city of Quebec is Quebec City. However, Quebec's largest city is Montreal, with an estimated 3.6 million people, which makes it over five times as large as the capital, the second largest city. Both Quebec City and Montreal are located on the St. Lawrence River in the southern part of the province (Wikipedia 2010). According to the *Ethnologue*, LSQ is spoken in Quebec and some other Canadian provinces. It has alternate names of Langue des Signes, Langue des Signes du Québec, Langue Signe Quebecars, LSQ, and Québécoise (Lewis 2009).

Although ten percent of the Quebec population is believed to be deaf or hard-of-hearing (approximately 750,000 people), only an estimated 50 to 60 thousand acquired LSQ as their first language. Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent formula points to a much smaller deaf population of 7,500. LSQ users are located primarily in Quebec but are also scattered in other Canadian provinces (Wikipedia 2010). "Ontario was the first (and, so far, the only) province to pass a law regarding ASL and LSQ (in 1993): the Ontario

Education Act was amended to recognize ASL and LSQ as languages of instruction for deaf students" (The Canadian Encyclopedia 2010). According to Lewis (2009), it is rare for deaf people to learn both ASL, which is the predominant sign language in Canada, and LSQ.

Miller (2001) indicates that LSQ started to develop in the 1830's with the founding of the first deaf school in Quebec City, Canada:

> "In 1830, a lawyer named Ronald MacDonald was sent by the legislature of the Province of Lower Canada to the USA to learn current methods in deaf education. MacDonald spent a year at the American Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, where he learned sign language at the hands of Laurent Clerc. The historical record does not tell us whether the sign language MacDonald learned was the French Sign Language (LSF) that Clerc had brought with him in 1827, or the new ASL that was at the time developing from the contact between LSF and local sign languages, homesign systems, or both…." (140–141).

According to The Canadian Encyclopedia (2010), the Catholic Church:

> "Established two francophone schools in Montréal - the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets (for boys) in 1848, and the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes (for girls) in 1851. Thomas Widd (1839–1906), a deaf Englishman, founded the Protestant Institution for Deaf-Mutes in Montréal in 1870. This school is now known as the Mackay Centre for Deaf Children. The two Catholic schools closed in the mid-1970s. A short distance north of the city of Québec, another school - the Institut des Sourds de Charlesbourg - served deaf students from 1961 to 1988."

Approximately 40 years after the founding of the first deaf school, a deaf man arrived from France to teach in the boy's school, which increased the use of LSF among the male deaf community. At the same time, ASL in the girl's school increased with the arrival of teachers who were trained in New York and used ASL. Because of this segregated education, there may currently be some LSQ variation due to gender, with female LSQ users using a variety more influenced by ASL and male LSQ users using a variety more influenced by LSF.

Further information about LSQ history can be found in Michell's chapter 10 of *Deaf History Unveiled* (1993), "Exclusion and Integration: The Case of the Sisters of Providence of Quebec", Carbin's *Deaf Heritage in Canada* (1996), and Perreault's *Deaf Experiences in Quebec, 1850–1900, Models of Difference* (2008). Various researchers and universities are currently focusing on investigating LSQ, including the Université du Québec à Montréal's linguistic department and researcher Christopher Miller, at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. (Linguist List 2010). LSQ publications also include documentaries about the community (e.g. Beyond Silence and Bonne Chance Max) and dictionaries (Surdite.org 2010).

It is probable that the majority of the Quebec deaf community have ties to Catholicism, as it is the dominate religion of Quebec. However, no specific Catholic deaf ministries were found. Three instances of other deaf ministries were found in online research, including the Jehovah's Witnesses who appear to have at least twenty-four meetings throughout Quebec and one DVD in LSQ entitled "What Does God Require of Us?" (411.ca 2010, Watchtower 2010), The United Church of Canada (United Church of Canada 2010), and a Pentecostal deaf-led church (Pentecostal Association of Canada 2009).

Numerous organizations serve the Canadian deaf population, including the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada, Deaf Culture Centre – Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, Inc., The Canadian Association of the Deaf, The Canadian Hearing Society, and The Deaf Culture Centre. Deaf associations, sports clubs, and other groups are active within the deaf community of Quebec. A number of resources in French are available through the Language Portal of Canada about LSQ (Language Portal of

Canada 2010) and more specific information about the deaf and hard-of-hearing community can be found at www.surdite.org, in French and LSQ.

Information points to the LSQ community as being both large and distinct from the deaf communities that use ASL and LSF. The Quebec deaf community appears to be well served by various organizations, associations, and clubs. Current language development seems to be supported and pursued by both the Canadian government and academia.

# 20 Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Federation of Saint Kitts (or St. Christopher) and Nevis form a two-island nation in the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean, with both islands combined adding up to 261 square kilometers (101 square miles) and a population of just over 40,000. Basseterre is the capital of St. Kitts and Nevis. See Figure 19 for a map of St. Kitts and Nevis and its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2009).



**Figure 19. St. Kitts and Nevis map.**

St. Kitts and Nevis were British settlements and, eventually became associated states of the United Kingdom from 1623 until 1983, when they achieved their independence. Similar to many islands in the area, the official language of St. Kitts and Nevis is English, although an estimated 97 percent of the population also speaks St. Kitts Creole English, a variety of the widely-spoken Antigua and Barbuda Creole English. The economy of St. Kitts and Nevis is primarily driven by agriculture and tourism; the literacy rate is approximately 95 percent (CIA World Factbook 2009).

Harrington's (2004) deaf estimate calculates approximately 40 deaf people; Soper (2008) estimates around 100 signing deaf people in St. Kitts and Nevis. No information was available about any deaf schools, deaf social events, deaf clubs, or other meeting places for deaf people. The World Federation of the Deaf (2010) indicates that St. Kitts and Nevis does not have a national deaf association. A small chapter of the Board of Education does offer some special education options, including students with hearing disabilities in their classrooms, but it is unknown how many deaf and hard-of-hearing students are included in this program (St. Kitts and Nevis Ministry of Education n.d.).

A global survey taken by the Independent Living Institute (Michailakis 1997) reports that there is no officially recognized disability policy in St. Kitts and Nevis but that the government does provide sign-language interpreters to some degree. Although the specific sign language used in this interpretation was not indicated, the following evidence points to ASL being the probable sign language used in St. Kitts and

Nevis. First, George (2010), a contact from Antigua (located just to the east of St. Kitts and Nevis), indicates that deaf people in St. Kitts and Nevis use ASL. Second, a web posting by James (2003), a St. Kitts hard-of-hearing person, relates that she wants to learn ASL to communicate, not mentioning the use of any other sign language on the island. Finally, St. Kitts and Nevis' geographical location is close to and surrounded by other Caribbean islands that report the use of ASL.

# 21 Saint Lucia

Saint Lucia is located in the southern Caribbean, north of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and south of Martinique. Saint Lucia's capital is Castries, which is located on the northwest coast of the island; the country is made up of 11 administrative regions (called quarters). Saint Lucia's land area is 616 square kilometers (238 square miles). See Figure 20 for a map of Saint Lucia in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 20. Saint Lucia map.**

Saint Lucia changed hands between France and England 14 times before becoming part of the United Kingdom in 1814. Self-government began in 1967; Saint Lucia became a completely-independent state in 1979. According to the *Ethnologue*, primary languages are English and Saint Lucian Creole French (Lewis 2009); approximately 90 percent of the population is literate. As of 2009, Saint Lucia's population was 160,000, with approximately a third of the population residing in the capital. People who claim Saint Lucia as their home are typically called "Saint Lucians" and are predominantly black or of mixed heritage. The primary religion is Christianity, with over 67 percent following Roman Catholicism. Saint Lucia ranks 29th as compared to other countries, based on the percentage of a country's gross domestic product that is invested in education. The majority of Saint Lucia's economy is built on tourism, the banana industry, and foreign business and investment industries (CIA World Factbook 2010).

Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent calculation of deaf population would point to approximately 160 deaf people in St. Lucia, while Soper (2008) estimate approximately 300 deaf people who may use a sign language. In the 1980s, a rubella epidemic greatly increased that generation's deaf population (The Rotarian 1990). According to a 2007 report, of 40,000 Saint Lucians in school, only 253 children with disabilities (0.64 percent of the school population) attended one of the four special schools located on the north, central, and south part of the island. The four special schools are Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre, Dunnator School, the Soufriere Special Education Centre, and the Vieux-Fort Special Education Centre (Peter 2009). Students are referred to special schools by the Multi-disciplinary Team of the Ministry of Education and Culture after they exhibit significant struggles in mainstream education.

According to a report from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2009)/Education TV (2008), the deaf student population has significantly decreased over the last decade. From 1994 to 2008, deaf students attending Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre dropped in number from 34 to seven, at Vieux-Fort Special Education Centre from 13 to six, at Dunnotar School from one to zero, and there have never been deaf students at the Soufriere Special Education Centre, which focuses on blind education. This means that, as of 2008, there were only 13 deaf students attending any of the special schools (Olympia 2009). It is possible that there are more than the 13 deaf students attending special schools in Saint Lucia, because of the move toward inclusive education, but no data was found about integrated deaf students. Although there is no specific mention of what sign language is in use in Saint Lucian schools, manual communication is reported.

The Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre, formerly Saint Lucia's School for the Deaf, until it was renamed in 2003, was founded as the first deaf school in 1994 and is located in Ciceron, in the southern part of the capital city of Castries (SLucia.com 2010). However, with dropping numbers of potential deaf students, the school expanded to include other students with special needs. Their motto is now: "Creating a Rainbow of Opportunities for Children with Hearing Impairments and Special Educational Needs" (East Caribbean Financial Holding Company Limited 2007). The Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre offers an inclusive educational program, focusing especially on life skills, because of the close proximity to one of the major secondary schools that educate the mainstream population. Vieux-Fort Special Education Centre, where the other half of the deaf student population attends, is located in Vieux-Fort on the southern tip of the island. Deaf students in Saint Lucia's special schools are educated through sign language in smaller classrooms. In addition to 11 teachers at Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre, there are three deaf teacher's aides (VP The Voice 2009). There are 14 teachers at Vieux-Fort Special Education Centre, but it is unknown whether any are deaf (Olympia 2009). In 2006, Saint Lucia adopted a Universal Secondary Education policy but many students with special needs are not yet able to access support services at the secondary-education level (Weekes 2007).

There are a number of sources that point to the use of ASL in Saint Lucia. In 2002, Denis Brown from Allentown, Pennsylvania, a graduate from Gallaudet University, went to Saint Lucia to be involved in deaf education (Wells 2002). Dhanoolal (personal correspondence 2008), a deaf Trinidadian, indicated that, on a trip he took to Saint Lucia, Signed English and/or ASL was used by the deaf people with whom he interacted. George (2010), a contact in Antigua and Barbuda familiar with the surrounding area indicates that Saint Lucia uses a variety of ASL. According to a deaf contact in St. Vincent, during our survey fieldwork there in June 2008, deaf people from Saint Lucia are involved with the Caribbean Christian Centre for the Deaf camps that are held annually. At these camps, ASL and/or Jamaican Sign Language are used. There are no known interpreters, deaf associations, or deaf clubs in Saint Lucia.

# 22 Saint Pierre and Miquelon

Saint Pierre and Miquelon is a French-dependent territorial collectivity comprised of eight islands that lie south of the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador and northeast of Nova Scotia. The main islands are Saint Pierre and Miquelon-Langlade; the capital is Saint-Pierre. The total area of the islands is 242 square kilometers (93 square miles) (Wikipedia 2009). See Figure 21 for a map of St. Pierre and Miquelon and its geographical context (License Plates of the World 2009).

**Figure 21. Saint Pierre and Miquelon map.**

The Europeans who first settled on the islands were among some of the first colonizers in North America; by the mid-17th century there were permanent French residents in Saint Pierre and Miquelon. For the next few centuries, the French and the British took turns owning the territory until 1815, when France permanently claimed it. Currently, Saint Pierre and Miquelon is the only portion of New France (the former French colonies of North America) that remains under French rule. Though the territory's economy has historically depended heavily on cod fishery, overfishing has prompted Canada to place a ban on this industry. The French government is now working on boosting the territory's economy through tourism, fish farming, crab fishing, and agriculture. The current population of Saint Pierre and Miquelon is approximately 6,000; the majority of residents are either of French (Basque or Breton ethnicity) or Canadian (coming from the nearby province of Newfoundland and Labrador) descent (Wikipedia 2009). While the official language is French, about 200 Saint Pierre and Miquelon residents speak either English and/or Algerian-Spoken Arabic (Lewis 2009).

The ordinances that Saint Pierre and Miquelon's local government follows for disabled people are generally decreed by the French government. A number of steps have been made to legally address the needs of the disabled population of Saint Pierre and Miquelon. A law mandated equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities, as of February 11, 2005, and formed a House of Handicap and commission for the rights and autonomy of disabled people (L'Etat et Vous 2006 and Recueil October 2007). In 2006, the French government passed an ordinance asking for the designation of a representative to the branch of the Saint Pierre and Miquelon territorial government focusing on disabled people. The director of this branch is permitted to call on other professionals and experts outside of the collectivity to serve the needs of disabled people. In addition, several members of different governmental ministries and representatives from disability organizations have been commissioned to work together for the rights of disabled people in Saint Pierre (CIS Aquitaine Décret 2006).

In 2004, 2007, and 2008, the government called for the establishment of better medical and social services for disabled people (Recueil 2004, Recueil June 2007, and Recueil 2008). According to French law, for any locality with 5,000 residents or more (which applies to Saint Pierre and Miquelon), a community commission must be created to focus on public accessibility for disabled people, drawing out representatives from the local community, associations focusing on disabled people, and other related groups (CIS Aquitaine Articles 2006). As of 2008, the deputy of Saint Pierre and Miquelon was working on establishing laws in the French government's House of Handicap (presumably under the Ministry of Health, Family, and Disabled Persons) to extend to Saint Pierre and Miquelon (Girardin 2008).

Within Saint Pierre and Miquelon, local and French laws have been established which relate to disabled people's access to work and education. A special work contract, "le contrat d'accompagnement dans l'emploi" enables disabled persons and others having difficulty obtaining work to find employment, usually for 20 or 26 hours weekly with terms lasting from six months to two years (L'Etat et Vous 2006). Another similar work contract, "le contrat d'access à l'emploi," provides employment access to people who have difficulty finding work. In this contract, there is a minimum requirement for work and several financial benefits to the employers (Ministère du Travail 2008). An organization, "Restons Chez Nous," serves the disabled population by providing auxiliary services such as social opportunities, delivery of food, wearable alarm buttons, and other services (Recueil December 2005). There is also a center for disabled persons aiding them with work issues established by l'Association d'Aide aux handicaps, partly funded by the Ministry of Health. In 2006, 16 disabled people were being served by the center, working at tasks such as gardening, painting, and clothing care. Workers receive their salary both directly from their work and the government (L'Etat et Vous 2006).

The commission technique d'orientation et de reclassement professionel (COTOREP) was created on April 25, 1996 in Saint Pierre and Miquelon under the Work, Employment, and Professional Development Service. This commission serves disabled workers by surveying their work quality, helping them with job orientation and placement, and providing them with aid. By the beginning of 2004, there were 131 cases on file and 94 known disabled workers (61 working in regular jobs, 29 working for companies, 13 employed by the government, and 19 beneficiaries of special work contracts) (L'Etat et Vous 2004). Disabled workers get financial aid at the beginning and end of their work and during their apprenticeship and there is reimbursement for travel-related costs (Recueil 2000). In addition, the commission des droits et de l'autonomie des personnes handicapées was established in 2005, sharing goals with COTOREP (Recueil October 2007).

No specific information was found about deaf demographics, schools, organizations, or groups in St. Pierre and Miquelon. However, if Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent estimate is applied, St. Pierre and Miquelon's deaf population would be only six people.

There are several educational institutions in Saint Pierre and Miquelon, including six nursery schools and elementary schools and four secondary schools in the capital city of Saint-Pierre (Mairie de Saint-Pierre 2009). However, there are no known deaf schools or classrooms specifically for deaf children in the territory. A territorial commission on special education was founded by a June 1975 law to address educational needs in the disability community. In Saint Pierre and Miquelon, it appears that each disabled student is integrated into ordinary classrooms. An individual school integration project, which is reviewed annually, is maintained by the school director and student's parents; the Pedagogy Integration Unit focuses on older disabled students (L'Etat et Vous 2006). French law states that if a schooling situation is rendered inaccessible by handicapped persons, the costs of going to a different school in a location farther away is the responsibility of the French government (CIS Aquitaine Articles 2006). By 1996, the Association d'Aide aux Handicapés de Saint-Pierre had received funds to create a special education framework. The same association asked for a special education unit to be formed at the Centre d'Accueil pour Handicapés Georges Gaspard, which was approved (Recueil 1996). However, as of 2006, the territory had no schools specifically serving disabled persons (L'Etat et Vous 2006). Legifrance (2009) indicates the presence of some deaf students by presenting the possibility of deaf students taking written exams for potential admission to one of seven deaf schools in mainland France.

St. Pierre and Miquelon is supported by the French government as an overseas collectivity and LSF is reportedly used by deaf people on the islands (Sourds.info n.d.). In mainland France, a national relay center is being designed to provide individual calls free of charge using simultaneous translation of written, spoken, or signed communication. LSF interpreters and spoken-language decoders would be on staff and the center would receive some financial support from the government. It is the government's

hope that this center will be in full effect by 2010 and that it will later apply to other French territories and collectivities, including Saint Pierre and Miquelon (CIS Aquitaine Lettre 2008).

# 23 Suriname

The Republic of Suriname is located on the northeast coast of South America, bordered by Guyana to the west, French Guiana to the east, and Brazil to the south. Suriname is made up of ten districts; its capital city is Paramaribo, located in the northern part of the country on the coast. Suriname's land area totals 161,470 square kilometers (62,343 square miles) and is the smallest independent state in South America. Land disputes with Guyana continue, so exact border locations depend on the perspective adopted. Suriname's country topography includes plains, jungles, and mountain ranges intersected by many rivers and lakes (CIA World Factbook 2010). See Figure 22 for a map of Suriname in its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 22. Suriname map.**

Suriname became a Dutch colony is 1667, gained independence in 1975, and is now an independent country with Dutch as its official language, although English and Sranang Tongo (Surinamese) are also widely spoken. Suriname is a very multilingual country with the *Ethnologue* listing 16 living spoken languages in use (Lewis 2009). Despite this multilingualism, Dutch is not only the official language but is also the language of education, business, and media; 60 percent of Surinamese use it as their first language, and the majority of the remaining population uses it as their second or third language. According to Wikipedia (2010), the only place Dutch is not found is in the interior of the country. Sranang Tongo is especially used in less-developed areas.

The total estimated population of Suriname, as of the 2004 census, was approximately 492,000. Approximately 90 percent of the Surinamese population lives in Paramaribo or on the 240 miles of Suriname coastline. 75 percent of the Surinamese population lives in urban areas. The second largest city is Wanica, with a population of approximately 86,000 people, and lies southwest of Paramaribo (Wikipedia 2010, Census Office of the General Bureau of Statistics 2004). The majority of the population is made up of 37 percent Hindustanis, 31 percent Creoles, 15 percent Javanese, and 10 percent Maroons (former African slaves who escaped to the interior). Approximately one half of the country adheres to the Christian religion (Catholic and Protestant), with 27 percent Hindus and 20 percent Muslims making up most of the rest of the Surinamese population. An estimated 90 percent of the population is literate. Education is required until age 12 and, in 2004, it was reported that 94 percent of school-aged children under 12 were enrolled. Ten percent of the population is unemployed. One 2002 estimate indicated that

70 percent of the Suriname population lives under Suriname's poverty line (CIA World Factbook 2010, Wikipedia 2010).

Although a 2003 census gathered information about people labeled as having disabilities, most of the specific information gathered in this census was destroyed in a fire. Based on statistics that were gathered in 1980 and 1986 and applying these numbers to today's population, the estimated Surinamese disabled population is approximately 12,000. A UNICEF survey conducted in 2000 found that 1.3 percent of children, ages one to eight have a disability. Another UNICEF survey, conducted in 2005, however, pointed to 20 percent of children, ages one to nine, having at least one disability; 3.8 percent of the Surinamese population in this age range have enough hearing loss for them to be considered disabled (Government of Guyana and UNICEF 2000). According to the Census Office of the General Bureau of Statistics (2004), there are over 100,000 children age nine and below. Applying the 3.8 percent estimate to this number would suggest that there are around 4,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing children under age 10. This number corresponds well with the *Ethnologue's* estimated deaf population of as many as 26,000. Soper (2008) estimates that there are approximately 900 deaf people who may use a sign language in Suriname; Harrington's 0.1 percent formula would suggest a deaf population of 490. A Dutch researcher, who has been working in Suriname since 2004, estimates a deaf population of about 600, with 125 of those being active members of the deaf cultural community (Van den Bogaerde 2010).

It is usual to find that disability percentages increase in rural areas with less access to health care, education, and increased poverty. The UNICEF 2005 survey points to this being the case in Suriname, as well. For example, according to the 2005 survey results, "the lowest prevalence of a child's disability is observed among the richest 20% of the households…" and, in general, disability population was inversely correlated with household wealth (UNICEF 2005, International Disability Rights Monitor 2004). The Suriname population with hearing loss may be increasing in rural areas due to the mining industry being the major employment option in the country with high levels of mercury in the gold mining "Greenstone-belt" area (the eastern part of the country). These high concentrations of mercury are leading to hearing loss in some of the workers. See Figure 23 for the area where increased percentage of hearing loss is currently being identified (Suriname Indigenous Health Fund n.d.). Van den Bogaerde (2010) reports that many deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Suriname do not have access to any language, spoken or signed, especially outside of the urban areas. Because most urban areas are found on the coast, this Greenstone Belt region likely has a growing deaf population with minimal language access.



**Figure 23. Greenstone region in Suriname: increased hearing loss.**

According to a World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) survey, deaf people in Suriname do not believe that they are considered equal in status by hearing people in their society. There is no government-established legislation protecting deaf rights in Suriname, such as ensuring that they have equal opportunity to obtain a job (even though most employment options are government-controlled). In the WFD region of Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (MCAC), Suriname has the lowest reported number of interpreters

(a total of two people), who obtained some training in the Netherlands (Van den Bogaerde 2010). There are no government-supported (or other type) official sign-language interpreter services or closed captioning offered on television programs. Should a national emergency or other important event take place, there is currently no system in place to help inform the deaf community (World Federation of the Deaf 2009, International Disability Rights Monitor 2004).

The Ministry of Social Affairs is the primary place for the development of disability policy and planning and has established a National Board on Disability. In addition, the Ministry of Education is responsible for special education and the Medical Education Bureau is responsible for health care related issues. These three ministries do not appear to be working in a coordinated effort or actively pursuing social change and the protection of human rights for the disabled and deaf communities. According to the International Disability Rights Monitor (2004), "Disability rights are not high on the political agenda in Suriname. The development of services for people with disabilities has stagnated. The government lacks policy initiatives regarding this group and expresses limited support for initiatives by NGOs."

There is one deaf association present in Suriname: Surinam Doven Beweging (Suriname Deaf Movement - SUDOBE). SUDOBE was founded in 2008, making it the newest association in the MCAC region. According to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) (2009), this association is considered a "not ordinary member" of the WFD. Usually this classification is used for deaf associations that lack a strong infrastructure or those whose primary leadership is not deaf. According to the WFD, of 12 respondents in the MCAC region, the deaf association in Suriname is the only association that is not recognized by the government as representing the deaf people of that country and does not seem to have any type of relationship with the current government (WFD 2009).

According to the Ministry of Education's Planning and Research Division, 90 percent of children with disabilities who are enrolled in school are placed in special schools. Inclusive education rarely happens and is most common in areas outside the major urban centers where special schools are not available. According to the International Disability Rights Monitor (2004), "Very few children with disabilities advance to the high school level." In addition, "no known programs integrate family into the education of children with disabilities. In many cases, children are placed outside of the home if families can find placement."

Suriname has only one all-deaf school: the Kennedy School for Deaf Children (KSDC), also called the Kennedy Foundation. Founded in 1947, KSDC is located in the capital city of Paramaribo. According to the Sladechild Foundation, which has worked with KSDC from 1990 to the present, KSDC offers both traditional academic and vocational training, such as woodworking and sewing (Sladechild Foundation Charitable Trust 2008). Suriname's Ministry of Education indicates that the Kennedy Foundation offers Roman Catholic education to deaf and hard-of-hearing students ages, six to 23, and is managed by the Roman Catholic Extraordinary Education Foundation which is "very prominent in Suriname" (Ministry of Education and Community Development. 2008:9).

According to Van den Bogaerde (2010), the Kennedy School adopted a brief time of Total Communication in the 1970s but has primarily functioned as an oral school, with ties to an oral deaf school in the Netherlands. Van den Bogaerde indicates that there were some older models of hearing aids used by hard-of-hearing people during her visit in 2004, but newer hearing aid models and cochlear implants are scarce because they are too expensive for the average Surinamese person. In the 1990s, KSDC increased acceptance of sign language use in the classroom. Some deaf students from Suriname went to the Netherlands for school, including one student who attended the Netherlands' Groningen school for the deaf (H.D. Guyot school). This student brought the SLN (Nederlandse Gebarentaal (NGT)) materials back to Paramaribo with her from the Effatha and Guyot schools. She taught NGT signs to the teachers and students at KSDC and now serves on the board of SUDOBE. There has also been some

contact with sign varieties in Cuba. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website in Cuba, students from KSDC visited Cuba in 2007 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba 2007). As of 2008, there were 45 full-time students who boarded at the school and an additional 88 who were day-students in the available pre-school through junior high classes (a total of 133 deaf students) (Sladechild Foundation Charitable Trust 2008). According to Van den Bogaerde (2010), there are currently approximately 65 deaf students attending the Kennedy School.

KSDC has very limited access to books or other educational resources and have recently started to use deaf-education resources from the Netherlands. In 2004, Van den Bogaerde visited the Kennedy School and found teachers and staff very eager to learn and use NGT. She believes that this eager acceptance of outside materials was primarily due to the increased openness and desire to use sign language in the classroom but there is limited funding for special education within Suriname and limited resources of any kind. Because Dutch is the language of education in Suriname, Dutch and NGT materials were greatly appreciated by educators in the deaf classrooms of Suriname. The students at school, however, have their own sign language that they use among themselves. So, while teachers were using NGT or Sign Supported Dutch (SSD) in the educational context at the point of Van den Bogaerde's visit, the students were using indigenous Surinamese signs of their own among themselves.

Van den Bogaerde (2006) reported a unique signing situation in the small village of Kajana, located in the rainforests of Suriname, on the Gran River, about 225 kilometers from the capital. In this small Maroon community, with a population around 1,500 people, there appears to be higher-than-average deafness, leading to the creation of a sign system unique to the area as deaf people work together with each other and other hearing people in the village. Van den Bogaerde first identified this unique sign language in 2004. It is unknown how developed this sign language is, but it appears that it could be a village sign situation with a unique indigenous sign language. Three deaf and three hearing users of KSL have been filmed. According to Cokart (2010), the Kajana deaf people appear to have no contact with other deaf Surinamese; KSL shares common characteristics with other village sign languages and is in its early stages of development.

Other than this village sign language situation, the Suriname deaf community now appears to use three signing varieties: their indigenous Suriname signs, NGT, and SSD. SUDOBE is currently recording a dictionary of 500 Surinamese signs that are indigenous to the local deaf community but Van den Bogaerde (2010) was not sure if they have developed a unique name for their sign language. Two interpreters from Suriname went to an interpreter-training program in the Netherlands and have returned to serve the local community. In addition, some training has been offered to judges, police officers, and other members of the legal community in Suriname about deaf issues and interpreting practices in 2006.

It appears that the Suriname deaf community has had their own sign language, possibly developing with the founding of the first and only deaf school, The Kennedy School, in 1947. The current sign language situation is experiencing a shift with the increased openness to sign language in the deaf schools and the introduction of the Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT) and the use of Sign Supported Dutch (SSD) in educational contexts. The recent establishment of the deaf association, SUDOBE, shows that the deaf community is both aware of each other as a cultural community and their efforts toward documenting their local Suriname signs shows that they have positive attitudes toward their own indigenous signs.

It is probable that Suriname's increased contact with the interpreting and deaf community of the Netherlands may lead toward increased use of NGT in Suriname. At the same time, however, the community is showing agency ("personally becoming involved and working toward changing the situation themselves") in maintaining its indigenous signs. Van den Bogaerde (2010), who is involved in the Dutch deaf community, also indicates that there are cultural differences between the Dutch and Surinamese deaf contexts. In addition, KSL appears to be used as a village sign language in Suriname's

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interior. To this point, however, it has been fairly isolated and increased mobility and activism by the Paramaribo deaf community may affect KSL's vitality.

# 24 Turks and Caicos Islands

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) includes 45 islands and cays in the North Atlantic Ocean, eight of which are inhabited, with a total population of approximately 33,000 (Department of Economic Planning and Statistics 2009). The capital city of Cockburn Town is located on Grand Turk Island, with a population of approximately 5,000. According to the TCI's Department of Economic Planning and Statistics (DEPS), two-thirds of the population lives on Providenciales Island. Turks and Caicos Islands lie north of Haiti and southeast of the Bahamas and have a land area of 500 square kilometers (193 square miles). See  for a map of the Turks and Caicos Islands and its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2009).



**Figure 24. Turks and Caicos map.**

The Turks and Caicos Islands were a part of the United Kingdom's Jamaican colony until 1962; now they are an overseas territory of the United Kingdom. Ethnically, TCI is approximately 90-percent black and most adhere to protestant Christianity. Its official language is English, but the majority of the population also speaks Turks and Caicos Creole English. The economy is based on tourism (the majority of which is from the United States), off-shore financial services, and fishing (CIA World Factbook 2010).

A United Nations review of methods for assessing disability demographics in ten developing countries indicates that a national census took place in TCI that may have gathered specific numbers related to disability and deafness in 2000 (Mbogoni and Synneborn 2003). Although no specific numbers could be found online, Department of Economic Planning and Statistics (DEPS) (2009) did report that 40 people are receiving social welfare payment because of their disability. DEPS (2009) also reported that, as of 2001, 43 percent of the population ten years and over had received some primary education, 22 percent had some secondary education, and nine percent had some university education. In TCI, there are 13 primary schools (nine of which are public), six secondary schools (four of which are public), and one community college (TCI Mall 2009).  None of the individual school's webpages listed any type of services for deaf students.

No information was available through the internet about deaf schools, deaf associations, or religious deaf groups in TCI. It is probable that, with such a low total population, there are very few deaf people. Soper (2008) estimated that there are less than 100 deaf people who may use a sign language; no specific deaf

population figures were found. Harrington's (2004) calculation of deaf populations would suggest approximately 30 deaf people in Turks and Caicos Islands.

Turks and Caicos Islands deaf population is probably exceptionally small and no sociolinguistic factors point to an indigenous sign language having been developed. It is probable that any signing deaf people in the Turks and Caicos Islands use BSL (because of its political ties) or ASL (because of its geographical closeness and the widespread nature of ASL in the Caribbean).

# 25 United States Virgin Islands

United States Virgin Islands (USVI) are located in the Caribbean just east of Puerto Rico. This is a group of islands that are part of the Virgin Islands archipelago. The three main islands, Saint Croix, Saint John, and Saint Thomas make up a total land area of about 346 square kilometers (134 square miles). In 1917, the United States purchased the islands from Denmark. In 1927, United States citizenship was extended to the island dwellers, but they cannot vote in the presidential elections. See Figure 25 for a map of the USVI and its geographical context (WorldAtlas.com 2010).



**Figure 25. United States Virgin Islands map.**

The 2009 population was approximately 110,000, with the majority being of African heritage. Charlotte Amalie, the capital city on St. Thomas, is the largest city with a population of 19,000. Christianity is the prominent religion (Baptist 42 percent, Roman Catholic 34 percent, Episcopalian 17 percent). English is the official language, although many islanders speak Virgin Island Creole. The literacy rate is between 90 to 95 percent. The USVI hosts about two million visitors every year, most of who come by cruise ship, making up about 80 percent of the USVI income. About six percent of the employable population is unemployed and almost 29 percent live below the poverty line (CIA World Factbook 2010).

Nearly 16,000 people in the USVI are identified as having a disability (Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands (DRCVI) n.d.). No information was found concerning a deaf population but Soper (2008) estimated the signing deaf population of the USVI to be around 200 people; Harrington's (2004) 0.1 percent estimate would suggest 110 deaf people. Barin (2005), a teacher of the deaf and adjunct professor of ASL at the University of the Virgin Islands, indicates that the language used in St. Thomas is Signed English, while ASL is predominant in St. Croix. There is an annual ASL deaf camp in St. Thomas. St. Croix and St. Thomas are about 40 miles apart; a flight between islands costs more than many in the local deaf community can afford, which limits mobility between the two locations. Barin also states that many deaf adults who live in St. Croix did not grow up with an established sign language because most are from other islands where no deaf education was available.

There is a self-contained classroom for elementary deaf students on both St. Croix and St. Thomas. In 2005, there were only two deaf high school students, both of whom were mainstreamed with a full-time interpreter. Some deaf students are mainstreamed in private schools with special accommodations. Harold (2007) taught deaf students on St. Thomas from 1974 to 1980 and indicates that, following his time teaching, some deaf islanders were sent to the Learning Vacation at Kendall School and Model Secondary School for the Deaf, which are both connected to Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. The USVI are part of the Postsecondary Education Programs Network (PEPNet), which is located at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in New York and has a network of colleges, secondary schools, vocation programs, community service agencies, and various organizations to assist the deaf community (Postsecondary Education Programs Network n.d.).

The US Virgin Islands are a United States territory and are required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). One of the rights for deaf people in the USVI is the right to interpreters for any governmental activity and closed-captioned programming. Any violation of the ADA can be reported to the Disability Rights Center on the Virgin Islands which will then be addressed by the Ad Hoc Committee, a group of people who regularly meet to address any ADA violations in the USVI (Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands (DRCVI) n.d.). Qualified interpreters are present on the islands but often have full-time jobs and are not readily available to the deaf community. Closed captioning is provided at a local movie theater and on one television station (Barin 2005). Telecommunication relay services in both English and Spanish are offered to the community (D'Iorio 2007).

All sources point toward the USVI deaf community using ASL and Signed English, with ASL classes being offered and encouraged in both hearing and deaf communities. The Department of Education encourages people to take ASL courses at the local university and provides some financial assistance. Deaf adults in St. Croix continue to develop and improve their ASL and English skills through the support of the Department of Vocation Rehabilitation, the University of the Virgin Islands, LaGuardia Community College (New York), the Deaf Coalition, and Work-Able. The Deaf Coalition of St. Croix provides interpreters and other services for the deaf community. Work-Able is an organization that focuses on helping deaf people find employment. They also assist in literacy and ASL training (Barin 2005). The Florida Outreach Project (2009) has also extended its resources to the USVI and focuses on the needs of individuals and their families who are deaf, blind, or both.

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