

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – Sept 20 – 24, 2010

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This is International Deaf Awareness Week (DAW). WSD celebrates this week annually with student assemblies featuring presentations by guests or teachers on historical topics of interest to our students and staff. We hold a De'Via Art (http://www.deafart.org/Deaf_Art_/deaf_art_.html) competition among our students. The winning piece of art is transformed and printed on our DAW T-shirts for the next annual DAW.

To honor Deaf Awareness Week, the DCQW address the Milan Conference.

What still in existence organization traces its history back to the conference held in Milan, Italy in 1880 that was responsible for the oral method of education rising to prominence in Deaf education for almost a century?

- a. Alexander Graham Bell Association
- b. National Association of the Deaf
- c. World Federation of the Deaf
- d. International Congress on Education of the Deaf

Scroll down for the answer.

Answer: “d” – The International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) was founded with the first conference held in 1878. The infamous Milan conference was the second one held in 1880. See this website for a list of locations where the ICED has held meetings continuously since 1878 (<http://www.iced2010.com/about-ICED.php>).

In 1880 the ICED declared that oral education was superior to education carried out through the natural sign language of the Deaf. This resolution profoundly affected educational practice all over the world. Educational programs which had educated deaf students using the natural sign language of their respective countries began to switch to the oral method (education carried out through speech and hearing with no sign language used). Deaf and hearing people who understand the power and importance of early access to a complete, natural language count the Milan 1880 conference of the ICED as a watershed event in the history of Deaf people.

In 2010 history is once again made. After 130 years at the Vancouver, BC meeting of the ICED a Statement of Principle and Accord for the Future was proclaimed. (Read about it here: <http://www.iced2010.com/index.php>).

This new resolution of the ICED unequivocally states the organization's regret for the resolutions made 130 years ago at the Conference of Milan which so profoundly affected the outcomes and life chances of deaf and hard of hearing people. This new Statement of Principle and Accord for the Future ushers in a new Era of potential collaboration between Deaf and hearing people, educators and families of Deaf children.

It will likely take time to heal this wound that has been felt so deeply within Deaf culture but let's all hope for a brighter future for our Deaf children built on collaboration and true inclusion at all levels of Deaf people in the institutions, policy boards and service corps serving Deaf children from birth to young adulthood and beyond.