

BARRIER-FREE LEGAL SERVICES

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CLIENTS

Ed Montigny



On December 14, 2012 the OBA hosted a public legal education event in collaboration with the Canadian Hearing Society and ARCH Disability Law Centre. This informative and engaging program provided insight into the circumstances and culture of the deaf and hard of hearing community. Attitudinal barriers, ableist and audist assumptions and their impact upon the life of a client were examined. The various models of disability and deafness as well as issues of terminology were explored.

The goal of the program was to provide legal service providers with guidance on how to provide barrier free services to deaf and hard of hearing clients, focussing on those whose language is a signed language.

Gary Malkowski of Canadian Hearing Society presented the program in ASL (American Sign Language). This provided an interesting contrast to the usual situation where ASL is provided to help deaf and hard of hearing individuals access oral presentations. In this case, oral interpretation of Mr. Malkowski's presentation was required as an accommodation for those hearing individuals who did not understand ASL.

The Ontario Bar Association made every effort to ensure that the event was accessible to all. The fees to attend the event were set far below the usual rates to ensure that cost was not a deterrent to attendance. More importantly, the OBA used technology to ensure the content of the program was accessible to as wide a range of audience members as possible, both in person and via web-cast.

Neeson and Associates Court Reporting and Captioning Inc., sponsored the event and provided "CART" services. CART provides a real-time text of the presentation for those persons who prefer to read rather than use ASL. This service was available to those attending in person at the OBA conference centre as well as those viewing via web-cast. This meant that all participants could access the content of the program using ASL, listening to the oral interpretation of the ASL presentation or by reading a text of the presentation. At the same time, people could also view the PowerPoint that accompanied Mr. Malkowski's comments.

People viewing the program by web-cast had the option of splitting their screen between a live video of the presen-



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tation itself, the CART text of the presentation and the power-points or enlarging either the video or the CART material depending upon what they found most useful.

The event provided a wonderful demonstration of what can be done to provide material in various accessible formats to automatically offer a range of choices as to how to access the content of a program. As new video technologies emerge it will become increasingly possible, convenient and effective to offer an increasing range of options to accommodate a wide range of preferences and needs.

The Equality Committee will continue to encourage the OBA to be as creative as possible when considering how to best make public legal education and other materials accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

Ed Montigny is a staff lawyer with ARCH disability law centre and a member of the OBA Equality Committee.



Forensic Accountants

MDD Welcomes New Vice President: **Rob Shull**



Rob Shull

CPA, CA•IFA
Vice President

MDD is pleased to announce that Rob Shull has joined the Toronto office as a vice president in the firm's Litigation and Government Services practice.

Mr. Shull has extensive expertise in assisting government, financial, legal, energy and manufacturing and processing clients. He provides forensic accounting services, specializing in litigation and class action support and investigations. Mr. Shull has assisted Fortune 500 corporations in investigating matters involving asset misappropriation, financial restatements and corruption, including investigations into employee misconduct, kickbacks, false transactions, cheque fraud and other economic damage assessments.

Rob is a Chartered Professional Accountant and is recognized by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants with a specialty designation in investigative and forensic accounting. He's also a registered Certified Public Accountant (Illinois).

Before joining MDD, Mr. Shull was a senior manager at a Big Four accounting firm in Canada.

You may contact Rob at **416.366.4968** or **rshull@mdd.com**.

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