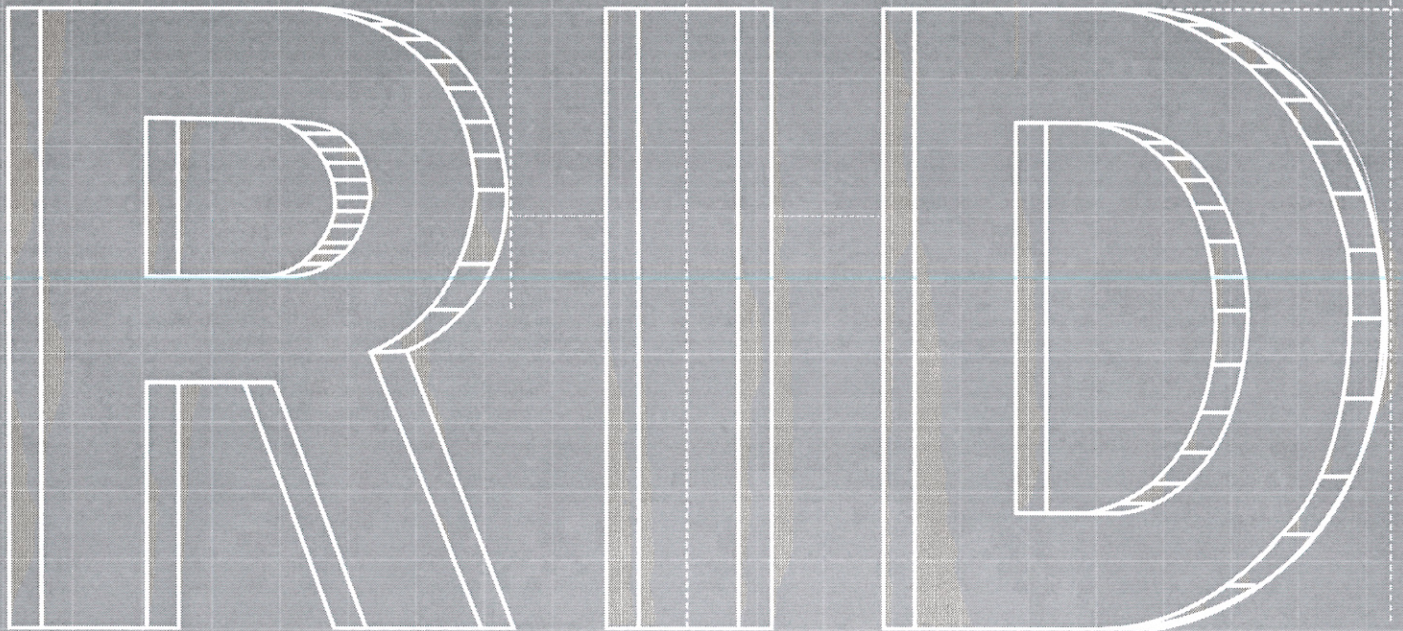


# VIEWS

Registry of Interpreters for  
the Deaf, Inc. - est. 1964

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2013-2016 strategic plan

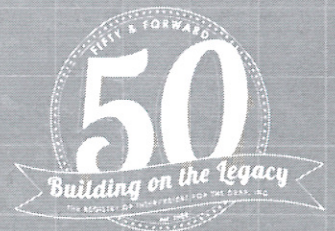


## Organizational Design

Strategic Building for the Next 50 Years

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## It Takes A Professional Community: A Case Study of Interpreter Professional Development in the Pacific Rim

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When people come together for a common goal and work collectively to improve a condition or a quality, the outcome most often reflects success. This year, RID is celebrating 50 years of service to the Deaf community. Fifty years ago, at Ball State, Deaf individuals, committed codas and others sought a better quality of communication access for the Deaf community. Today, thanks to the collective efforts of those pioneers, RID is a strong and effective organization and the Deaf community enjoys greater communication access. This case study is one example of what can be accomplished when a “village,” in this case our professional community, comes together to improve a condition and affect change.

The Western Region Interpreter Education Center (WRIEC) has been charged with increasing the number of qualified interpreters in the US areas of the Pacific Rim (Pac Rim) for a great many years. Because these territories are so removed from the Mainland, professional development for this interpreter community poses a number of unique challenges.

Consisting of Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Pac Rim represents a diverse community of Pacific Islander, Asian and Mainland American cultures. A snapshot of Guam and Saipan reveals a geographic area far larger than the contiguous United States, and an estimated deaf population of 130 served by 13 non-certified interpreters (Fejarang, 2009).

Guam and Saipan interpreters work primarily in educational settings but also with vocational rehabilitation consumers



*Faces of hard working partners, including Geraldine Songao, LaVona Andrew, Connie Olaitman, Terrie Fejarang, CM Hall and Guam interpreters.*

and Deaf and hard of hearing community members. They are challenged with the longtime absence of the distinguished job title of “interpreter,” putting them far behind their Mainland interpreter counterparts. Considered student aides, they earn \$8 - \$11 in K-12 settings and \$25/hour in legal settings. Consequently there is little incentive for individuals to become interpreters. Additionally, VRS and TTY relay do not exist and high-speed Internet is not widely available.

Interpreter education is only offered in Honolulu. Without a formal interpreter education program, interpreters are “trained” by their peers. Limited access to high-speed technology limits their ability to obtain education at a distance. Compounding the issue of technology is its geography. Guam and Saipan are approximately 5,850 miles from San Francisco—*that’s* several time zones and one International Dateline away. For those interpreters with access to high-speed Internet, challenge number two becomes one of “time zone math.” Without a connection to their Mainland interpreting peers to better understand interpreting industry standards, along with a lack of pay and a job description reflective of the Mainland, they often do not view themselves as professionals

in the same way as their “*off-Island*” colleagues.

While familiar with the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct, its purpose and function is often not in sync with Island life and culture. Most Island interpreters’ exposure to the Deaf community is confined to the Deaf community of Guam, which uses a system of ASL that is infused with Korean and Filipino nuances that vary just enough to be unique. As a result, they face strong test-bias both in the written and performance exams when they sit for national certification.

Travel to this area is very expensive. In the past, WRIEC provided week-long interpreter upgrading workshops in an effort to contain costs and be good stewards of public funding. Here on the Mainland, experience has taught us that short-term, one-time workshops often do not give us the long-term results we seek as educators. It is not surprising then that we did not see the results we sought when we applied this same approach to the Pac Rim, in particular the Outer Islands.

In 2009, to learn more about their unique community and culture, WRIEC staff traveled to Guam to meet with Island interpreters and the local Deaf community. During that time, CM Hall,

### The Professional Development Team (the Village)

WRIEC, University of Guam (CEDDERS), Guam and Saipan Departments of Education, Guam School Board, Kapiolani Community College, Washington RID, Idaho RID, Oregon RID, Sacramento Valley RID and San Diego County RID

Goal	Sharing Responsibility	
Create Change at System Level	WRIEC Responsibility	Partner Responsibility
Create new job title, job description and pay schedule. This activity is still underway.	WRIEC provided sample job titles, job descriptions and pay schedules.	University of Guam (CEDDERS) drafted documents and began dialogue with Guam DOE and Guam School Board.
Obtain administrative buy-in for the training.	Dialogued with Guam DOE and School Board regarding the importance of the training.  Worked collaboratively to design the training and share costs.	Guam DOE provided release time for interpreters and conveyed a set of expectations for the interpreters. Saipan DOE gave release time and underwrote travel expenses for two interpreters to travel to Guam.  CEDDERS provided venue for the training. Underwrote two of the four travel expenses of WRIEC staff.
Create Change at Individual Level	WRIEC Responsibility	Partner Responsibility
Provide additional support, resources and a sense of community.	Established a Resource Center that housed a library, high speed internet and webcam capability, along with a classroom.	University of Guam (CEDDERS) provided the space for the Resource Center.
Create a sense of professionalism and connection to the interpreting community.	Connected Island interpreters with their peers on the Mainland.	Five RID affiliate chapters came together to underwrite professional development and share resources.
Advance the knowledge and skills of the interpreters.	Provided four on-site trainings and approximately 15 small group and individual one-on-one video conferences.	UOG CEDDERS provided venue and underwrote two of the four on-site trainings. Saipan DOE covered all Saipan interpreter costs.
Demonstrate Impact.	Arranged for and administered EIPA testing.	EIPA tests fees covered by UOG CEDDERS and Saipan DOE. CEDDERS and Kapiolani Community College served as testing sites.

WRIEC Program Coordinator, provided two workshops (Team Interpreting and Ethics and Decision-Making). The interpreters were polite and eager to learn, but it became readily clear that the teaching style and the content came from a Mainland point-of-view. In listening to the community, we also learned that in order to obtain the results we were seeking (enhanced interpreting skill), WRIEC would need to take an approach that encompassed change at two levels: the system level and the individual level.

**At the System Level:** We felt that in order to achieve long-term impact, change had to begin at the system level with a shift in the perception of all stakeholders (including the interpreters) that interpreters were more than instructional aides charged with janitorial duties. We believed that recognition of interpreters as professionals had to be demonstrated at the administrative level and that this would be demonstrated, in part, by their active support for the WRIEC training. More importantly, interpreters would see a change in job title, job description and pay. To achieve this, we engaged the Guam and Saipan Departments of Education, the Guam School Board and University of Guam CEDDERS in dialogue around these topics.

**At the Individual Level:** Based on previous experience, dialogue and roundtable input, we knew the interpreters would require a training program of scope and sequence that infused Island values. The effort would entail the provision of additional support and resources, as well as a sense of community. They would need to move outside their comfort zone and commit to long-term training.

In response, WRIEC, in partnership with the above administrative stakeholders, designed an 18-month training program of scope and sequence that would prepare them to take the Educational Interpreters Performance Assessment (EIPA). Hall, the major mastermind behind the endeavor, created training incentives, defined achievement milestones, executed academic contracts and conducted one-on-one and small group check-ins from the Mainland. To create a sense of community, interpreters were given a dedicated resource center where they could view media, work together in small groups and have access to high-speed internet.

Over this 18-month period, Hall traveled to Guam to provide training to an initial group of 14 interpreters. Often, the interpreters used their holiday and summer breaks (educational interpreters work a 12 month contract) to attend the face-to-face trainings. Hall supplemented these trainings with approximately 15 one-on-one and small group check-ins from the Mainland, often meeting with the group very late in the evening and very early in the morning because of the time difference. The participants reviewed their work and shared successes and challenges of the trainings.

We knew, though, that training was only one piece of a bigger puzzle. In order for interpreters to understand and respect the profession of interpreting, they needed to be connected to “the profession.” They needed to feel welcome by their professional peers. So, in July 2011, Hall approached the RID Region V President's Council with an appeal: would the western region RID chapters consider sponsoring a Guam or Saipan interpreter to attend the 2012 RID Regional Conference

in Hawaii? These interpreters had never had a chance to attend a professional development conference for sign language interpreters and the conference in Hawaii was going to be as close to a chance as they may ever get.

The first chapter to agree was Idaho RID, who underwrote the entire conference cost for Saipan's Geraldine Songao, which was estimated at \$2,400. The second chapter to step up was Sacramento Valley RID, who provided a partial sponsorship that was then paired with San Diego County RID and Oregon RID contributions to help a second interpreter attend. All the Guam and Saipan interpreters were eligible but had to submit materials and share their steps toward professional development in order to be considered for the scholarship. The second interpreter selected was Connie Olaitiman, also from Saipan.

Connie reflected about the experience: *This month marked my very first ever RID experience, and I fell in love with everything! I was overwhelmed, excited, and amazed with everything all at the same time. Thank you to all for your faith and support.*

Holly Thomas-Mowery, Idaho RID President stated: *Idaho RID was thrilled to have the opportunity to support our brother and sister interpreters in Guam and Saipan. The Idaho RID membership voted to fundraise \$2,400, which was the estimated entire cost of one Pacific Rim interpreter to attend the RID Region V conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. We held several fundraisers, the most successful of which was a gold and silver drive. And best of all was meeting Geraldine and Connie in Oahu.*

Mala Poe, San Diego County RID President shared, *"...that is 7% of our budget, and I think it's worth every penny. This is an awesome idea - a way to give back to our community."*

However, the RID Region V affiliate chapters did not stop with conference support. They offered three Washington State RID memberships; free registration for Guam and Saipan trainees to all Idaho RID professional development webinars; and donated resource materials for a second lending library on Saipan.

To borrow from the African proverb popularized by Hillary Clinton, this endeavor really did "take a village" in the truest sense possible. Thank you, University of Guam (CEDDERS), Guam and Saipan Departments of Education (DOE), Guam School Board, RID affiliate chapters of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Sacramento, San Diego and Kapiolani Community College. Their collective efforts, as described below, have enhanced communication for the Islands Deaf community.

Since 2010, Hall has made repeated trips to Guam. In collaboration with all its partners and with strong support of Terrie Fejerang, Director of Guam CEDDERS, 14 Guam and Saipan interpreters began the training. The work culminated in June 2012, when Hall returned to Guam on her fifth trip, to administer the EIPA test to nine interpreters.

The great news that came as a result of their preparation and professional development is that many interpreters now have validated diagnostic feedback on their skills and their overall collective score averaged 3.4 on the EIPA.

The interpreters have been pleased with their test results.

One interpreter stated, *"I was surprised with my outcome. There were so many things I thought I would get so low in. Each and every score was higher than I expected." Another interpreter remarked, "I didn't think my habits showed up because I was very conscious of what I was doing, but it was good that they caught that. It's lucky for me that they caught it. It's something that doesn't surface in my brain that it will affect the whole message but apparently it does. But this was pretty good. It gave me so many things to work on. Not one person would notice all those things at once. It's a good baseline."*

No one was more excited with the results than Hall. Reflecting back, she states: *When I first knew I'd be working with the Guam and Saipan interpreters I was excited. Excited to travel for sure. I didn't know how different it would be compared to other trainings and workshops I'd given. I knew most, if not all of these interpreters had not had access to interpreter education trainings and had had minimal opportunities to advance their ASL skills when a course became available.*

*What I came to learn and what I loved was how everything I did know had to be reframed in a way that fit with these interpreters. Many had not ever used computers and if they did, the Internet speed was so slow they couldn't access YouTube vlogs easily. They didn't Skype. And for the Guam interpreters especially, without a standard interpreter job description, there was little motivation for them to continue their professional development when the non-interpreting hours during the school day were largely spent taking care of janitorial tasks.*

*What we helped foster in these interpreters was a sense of identity as interpreters, whether or not their school districts would acknowledge it. While a part of the US as a territory, they don't think of themselves as "Americans" and their cultural meme is collectivist, not individualist, so the idea of self-motivation above others is not a habituated concept for them.*

*I really love the interpreters I worked with who invested in this new way of advancing their professional development. I was as thrilled about their EIPA scores as they were. For them, it gave them validation that what they do, with the limited resources they have exposure to, has value and that it is progress.*

We are optimistic about these interpreters' prospects at achieving an interpreter job designation/description as a result of this analysis and their ongoing work to further their interpreting skills. ■

**For more information on this project, contact Pauline Annarino at [annarinopg@gmail.com](mailto:annarinopg@gmail.com) or CM Hall at [hallcm@wou.edu](mailto:hallcm@wou.edu).**

*The WRIEC is a proud member of the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC). The Consortium Centers are funded by the US Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration, CFDA 84.160A and 84.160B. Please visit [interpretereducation.org](http://interpretereducation.org) for information and resources available from the Consortium.*