

## Episode 12

### Everything Creative

#### MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ - ASL TRANSLATOR FOR THE BOOK OF MORMON

**NARRATOR:** Views and opinions expressed here are those of the guests and are not the official position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

**PRESIDENT DIETER F. UCHTDORF:** The desire to create is one of the deepest yearnings of the human soul. We each have an inherent wish to create something that did not exist before. The more you trust and rely upon the spirit the greater your capacity to create.

**NANCY HANSON:** I'm Nancy Hanson and this is "Everything Creative". This program explores a wide range of creative ideas, talents and experiences through interviews and group discussions.

[END MUSIC]

**RICH SUTTON:** Welcome back to "Everything Creative" my name is Rich Sutton. I'm here with Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz and it's good to have you with us today. So tell me about yourself and your background

**MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ:** Well if you want to know everything that will take quite a bit of time. I was raised in Idaho with eight brothers and sisters and I'm the oldest of nine. My parents are both deaf and my sibling are also deaf. Their levels of hearing are various, some can hear more than others, but they're all deaf. I was not raised with all of my brothers and sisters. By the time I went to Gallaudet University my youngest four siblings were only five, three, and one and the youngest one wasn't even born yet. In fact my youngest sibling was born my junior year at Gallaudet. Even though I didn't have a chance to live with them while I was growing up we did get a chance to see each other often. Anyway I went to Gallaudet University my entire college Career, and then I graduated. I worked for a while in Washington DC, and then I moved to Texas and worked at the small community college for the deaf called "Southwest Collegiate Institute for the Deaf". I worked there for three years, and during my time there I met my husband, we started dating and a year later we got married in the Salt Lake Temple. Then I began teaching ASL. I taught ASL for twenty-three years and retired two years ago. During thoughts twenty-three years I taught ASL to hearing and deaf students, deaf students would typically enroll in the advance level ASL courses. I also taught English to the deaf. I lived in Utah Twenty-two years now and today my husband and I are celebrating our twenty-first wedding anniversary.

**RICH SUTTON:** Wow Twenty-one years; that's awesome!

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I have three deaf children, the oldest is a daughter and she is thirteen and then my son, he's 12, and youngest is a daughter and she's almost eleven.

RICH SUTTON: Well that's great. So you taught for twenty-three years and man that's a long time. So from your experience did you prefer teaching ASL or did you prefer English

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I prefer teaching ASL, for several reasons, primarily because it is my native language and I love and enjoy Sign Language, Also my ASL students usually at the same level of signing ability and they could all progress together. However my experience teaching English was different, because the English abilities of all the deaf students were so varied and I had to adapt my lesson and find new material that could meet each of their individual needs. I usually taught remedial English so was expense that was always changing. For a few I taught English 101 and was able to follow the University Syllabus. That was difficult given the students varied English abilities, but I enjoyed it. I always wondered if it was worth it after the first semester though.

RICH SUTTON: [Chuckled] That's True. So okay you taught hearing students ASL and what are some of the experiences you had, with your students who probably have not had that much experience with ASL or deafness and then they meet you as your teachers and maybe a deaf person for the first time. What are some experiences you had with that?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well most of the time it was just fine. However, it important that I as a teacher set the right classroom environment from the first day. This includes that I wouldn't talk but only sign; and some gesturing and writing on the chock board. It was kind of a slow repetitive process but they eventually started to grasp the concepts, sometimes after class a few students would come up and communicate with me by writing notes and asking me if I was hearing or deaf. And I would tell them that; 'Yes I'm deaf'. I can't think of a time I had a real serious problem but I had many things that; have surprised me, but no real problems

RICH SUTTON: I can only imagine the shock of your students as you're not talking to them but you're using your hands and it just most have been something very hard for them at first but that something they maybe got use to.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: A person always learns faster from not using your voice in class, on things my students usually did get away with is when they would whisper in class. Sometimes I caught them but usually I couldn't see what they were doing or I would just ignore it because it wasn't worth my time to worry about it. I figure it was their choice and if they wanted to learn then the best way was to work with each other. By not talking, also when the time came to take a test they would be caught if they weren't prepared ahead of time, their performance would show it. I recall a few problems I had; one in particular was a girl from Japan. Who took my class; she was a very good signer but she couldn't read English very well because of that she couldn't answer the questions on the test so I had to try a different approach in testing her knowledge of ASL without using English and that was a challenge. Another problem I encountered was with a boy that had a learning disability. He could sign just fine but could not write English so he had to make some adaptations for him. I was never board with teaching there it's always been a pleasure

RICH SUTTON: Those are some great expenses. I kind of want to shift and talk about a new topic. We've talked about when you taught ASL, but when did you start translating from English to ASL? What were some of your experiences during that translation process.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well I probably started when I was in high school. Not that I was formally translating then but I would watch the interrupters knowing beforehand what the English sentence or phrase was and I would think of a way that the sentences or phrase could have been translated maybe different or better. I didn't use interrupters much while I was in college so I didn't think about it much then but when I started to translate the Book of Mormon which I was first called in 1989 I already knew how to do ASL gloss and during my early years of translation work on the Book of Mormon I realized glossing the translation would be difficult I started out glossing out the translation by hand and then giving it to a friend to type it out on the computer but that caused too many problems because the lines of my hand written gloss and her typed gloss wouldn't always match up. So I ended up just handwriting my gloss and keeping it in a linear fashion. I was initially called in 1989 but because of some challenges we really didn't get started until about 1994 no, maybe it was 1993 so there was a four year period where I struggled and modified and figured out what I was doing. During that time I worked with Jack Rose in the temple translation and that helped me a lot in my scripture translation work. Working with Jack Rose at that time was great because he was involved with translation work previously. And he had a lot of ideas and a lot of experiences that he shared with me and I learned from him. Having all that experience has really helped me. And we finally started to work on the ASL translation of the Book of Mormon. I was able to look at all of what each verse meant in English and think about how to translate that in ASL and then write it in a gloss format. So my formal translation really began in about 1991 or 1992.

RICH SUTTON: Wow, if you're just joining us this is the Mormon Channel and Everything Creative and I'm Rich Sutton I'm here interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz and she's deaf and Kim Day will be Interpreting for her so I would love for you to share with us some stories or experiences, anything you can think of that happened during your translation of the Book of Mormon that maybe gave you a different perspective.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well there were a few things for example translating is obviously a difficult process, and it's different than interpreting one thing I liked about translating is that I was able to get my own pace, and follow my own natural speed of the language and which is much different than interpreting where sometimes you have to hurry to match the pace of the speaker. However temple translation was an exception to that because you had to translate and then match the timing of all of the audio. With translating the Book of Mormon however, there was no audio involved and no timing so I was able to follow my own pace and the natural rhythm of ASL and I really enjoyed that. There were also some cultural things I had to take into account as I was translating. For example say there was a phrase in Joseph Smith-History where Joseph Smith writes "Moroni called me by name" first problem is that in ASL you don't have passive voice like English does. Well maybe that isn't a good example of passive voice but anyway I had to figure out why Moroni called Joseph Smith by name. Within deaf culture we do not use a person's name usually to get their attention we would wave at them to get their attention and unless they're

really far away or they're not paying attention we might ask somebody else to get their attention or we say Bob, you know, could you get his attention to look at me but we would never say Bob. So now with Moroni calling Joseph Smith by name I had to figure out how would deaf people call each other and combine it with what it literally says in English and knowing that deaf people call each other, by waving or I wanted to keep that translation as literal as possible without adding a lot of cultural translation, so I said He spoke my name then added a wave and that seemed to worked.

RICH SUTTON: Yea, that makes much more scene

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I did that to show that he said the name in order to call on him. That was one experience I had but there were several other that I had to really work hard to make sure the translation was literal and yet culturally understandable. One of my biggest concerns was the use of space for example when the Book of Mormon makes a reference of going to Zarahemla where do I point for Zarahemla is it north south east west I had no idea, the Book of Mormon really doesn't give directional references. Well sometime it does say a north or a south but most of the time it doesn't so I had to use a seminary map. It wasn't exactly the best visual aid but it gave us a reference so where we could point to a city like Ammonihah or Mulek and I struggled with the names of people and even the height of people I just assumed that for this purpose that they were all the same height. So I had to visually establish cities and people by using role shifting and then trying to converse between the people. As an example whenever a person was speaking to the Lord they always spoke to the right, and when the Lord would speak to somebody He would always look down from the left.

RICH SUTTON: Wow so you know the really interesting thing for me is that it took you ten years to finish the transition of the Book of Mormon, is that right

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Actually eleven years.

RICH SUTTON: Wow so eleven years to finish it. So during that time when you were working on the translation you had two children born right?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I had three children during that time.

RICH SUTTON: [Laughs] Three. Wow. So you had all three of your children born while you were doing the transition of the Book of Mormon. How were you able to make all that work.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well that was one of the reasons that took so long to finish the first four years I didn't get a lot done. My focus first shifted to the temple translation then my focus shifted to graduate school, and that lasted till 1993 but it was during that time that I started to understand my role as translator and how I was going to accomplish that. Also during that time I had a new Supervisor, Terry Morier assigned to me from the Translation Department and he really helped me out tremendously. It made a difference that when we were put into the right place and the right department and had the right supervisor he worked with deaf people before and he knew my father so that helped move the work forward, we finally started filming in 1994 and from that point forward the work progressed. My first child was born in 1995, and I also started a full time job that same year so it took a little longer than I thought to complete to completely focus on the

translation of the Book of Mormon there were times when I was completely focus on the work for a few months and then I would switch to something else and then I would come back to the Book of Mormon and then I would have another baby and then I would come back to translating [laughs]. This was the progress you know this was the process and we struggled during the entire time. Between all three of my children, work, and everything else the translation was finely completed during the Christmas Season of the year 2000. From January of 1989 until then, was almost exactly eleven years.

RICH SUTTON: That's so interesting to me so okay so during those eleven years did you complete translate it before you filmed it or did you translate a portion then film that portion and so on like that till you finish or what was the process?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well we tried to translate it all and have it all done before we started filming but that was just too much. In hindsight I guess we could have done it but it would have been too much. We had to translate a portion and then film it and we kept going that way until it was done. There were also other factors. First Nephi went great and I was ready to go and had I memorize and the filming went really well but as the project progressed, I was under more time constraints and then I would have to rush to meet the deadlines. There was time that in order to meet the deadline I would finish translating the night before we filmed. The problem was then to that the filming wouldn't go well and it would take longer It's also hard to describe facial expressions in ASL in a written form so I simply had to memorize the facial expressions that went along with what the written translation was. And that's how we, that's who we did it

RICH SUTTON: Wow, that's great. Well if you're just joining us this is Everything Creative on the Mormon Channel and I'm Rich Sutton and I'm here interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz and she's deaf and Kim Day is interpreting for her. Just a follow up question did you guys use a teleprompter during the filming process or how did what work?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Oh, yes, we had three cameras on in the center, and one on each side. And each of the three cameras had a teleprompter so I could see the teleprompter when I switch from side to side. If I would do it all again I would like to have nine Teleprompters.

RICH SUTTON: Wow.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Three in the center, one at eye level one above and below and then three on the right side eye level, above and below and three on the left side; one at eye level, one above and below. Cause with that setup then when I could shift I could be different characters and look where I wanted and be so limited. It would be nice to have the flexibility to look where I needed to but at that time we only had three cameras

RICH SUTTON: Wow this is so fascinating to me to hear that. Okay so you mentioned that before you really got started in 1989 to about 1993 you began to understand really what you were supposed to do. I just my question, what specifically did you learn that helped you in that process

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I think what I learned was the process of what I was going to be doing I really felt like we were trying to reinvent the wheel. We tried to set up a committee of

translators we tried sign writing which is what I think is cool piece of technology but it was to new at the time. So finally we went back to the traditional way of translating and we just kept it basic we began to ask Terry our supervisor what we supposed to do and what the processes that other that other languages followed and he told us step by step so we followed that process and things got a lot better after that. Prior to that time it seemed it like we were given that project then just left alone and we were on our own. We really struggled at first because we weren't sure what to do but after we know what we were supposed to do it got better and easier. One realization was that I had to become the head translator. This meant that I would do all of the translating and not try to have a committee. There really is not just one right way to translate. Everybody has their own style but it was decided that I would be the translator. It was an interesting process all in all.

RICH SUTTON: Okay so now that you are done with the project and your able to look back on the project, what's your experience like when you're watching the DVD and you see yourself

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Oh, I still can't watch myself

RICH SUTTON: [Laughs]

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: When I read the Book of Mormon I still find myself re-translating it in my head. It's been nine years and I'm still translating it. Even with the other books of Scriptures that I read like the Doctrine of Covenants or for example now I'm reading the Pearl of Great Price and I end up reading the scriptures then I think "how would I Translate that verse. Then I find myself translating it and signing the scripture back to myself, but anyway, back to your question maybe I have not tried to watch myself enough and maybe now I could began to watch myself and not feel funny about it. I would definitely see things that I would want to change or I'm sure I could find facial expressions or different things that I could do better.

RICH SUTTON: It's funny cause I always notice that when I watch myself signing I'm always criticizing myself. I was just wondering if you did the same.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: If people asked me if I'm content with my translation I would say that I'm about ninety percent satisfied. Even though it's not perfect, translating is really hard and it's hard to match the English exactly. So the Book of Mormon in English is the most correct book in the world and I tried to keep as close as I could to the English and I feel good because I knew that the sprit was there helping us. I know that it was not my work but it was the spirits work. There are many things that I could have done better or could have done by myself but there are few places where I could have been better but overall I'm very satisfied.

RICH SUTTON: If you're just joining we'd like to welcome you to the Mormon Channel and Everything Creative and I'm Rich Sutton I'm here interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz who is deaf and Kim Day is here translating for her. I Just feel really touched right now because I Heard the testimony from the translator of the Book of Mormon in ASL and just want to thank you for sharing that with us. Kind of on a personal note I know that my mom loves

the Book of Mormon in ASL and she's able to watch it, understand it and really truly enjoy it now in her own language now

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I saw your mom in church a few months ago and she was very nice to me and expressed her appreciation for the work that we did. A few people share similar fillings when they meet me and that's really gratifying.

RICH SUTTON: I'm sure it makes you feel good to know that even though it was a challenge I'm sure to translate, there are people out there that appreciate what you have done. So again I want to shift gears again and focus on your experience growing up deaf with deaf parents and in a totally deaf family and including attending schools for the deaf. All of the listeners that can do this radio program can obviously hear and so I want to ask you to share with us your experience in schools for the deaf and including Gallaudet University.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Ok well my experience at deaf schools when I was growing up was probably different than most other deaf students at the time because I was a day student. I commuted from home back to school and I never lived in the dorms. I was able to live at home or either ride my bike or walked to school cause it wasn't that far. In fact my father taught at the school so we lived in the same town. Most of my friends, though, lived at the dorms and I really felt like I missed out on that opportunity they had a lot of fun during the night. They would get together every night after dinner and had fun while I was at home. In fact I was not allowed to come over during the evenings to play with my friends in the dorms because I was home with my family

RICH SUTTON: Hmmm

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: It was hard because all of my friends were at school and I didn't have any friends at my house so. It was, it was strange.

RICH SUTTON: So, so was it your parents or the school that didn't allow you to come back to school at night

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well it was the school that wouldn't allow me come back after a while, though, they began to change the rule and the school allowed my younger brothers and sisters to go to school in the evening and they were much more involved then I was. But for me attending deaf school was like typical public school the only exception was what all my teachers signed the things that I learned in my school were the same as hearing students learned in their schools. I really learned a lot and was able to progress and grow. I still remember things from like the second and third grade. My teachers were great teachers. I remember one teacher I really liked. That she loved horses and taught us all about them. So I learned all about horses and the different breeds and the different gats, troughs and gallops and so on. It's funny the silly things you remember but it was because it was because of the excellent teachers I had. So that was my experience growing up. Now focusing sound and some of the uses of sound, there's a book titled Deaf in America that has a good chapter in that book, I think its chapter six, and I use that book a lot when I teach ASL. The book and the chapter explain the different perspectives on sound for example I remember when I was in school we would have track practice or it was cross country. I think it was track anyway when we were done, a group of us girls,

would go and shower and we had big open showers. The wall and the floors were all wet because of that it was a really good place to make noise.

[Laugh]

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: We found through the experience that the water was really good at carrying sound and it was really cool. We could yell, specifically, we yelled into the corners of the wet walls. For us, the louder the yelling meant the deeper the sound.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: We weren't as good as the boys were they could get the sound so loud that you could like feel it.

RICH SUTTON: [Laugh]

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: You have to understand we didn't hear anything with our ears we were feeling it the vibrations in our chest. We girls would only do it once in a while but the boys would do it all the time every day. We would yell in the shower and in the dorms and I missed out on the yelling and in all the dorms because I wasn't there. If you look at it from the perspective of a person you could hear they would think of that and view that as just awful behavior, but we weren't yelling for any real purpose, were just yelling for no reason. [Both Laughs] Just because it was fun. We would just scream AHHHHHHHHH and that was it. Our view or our perspective of sound was deepness of it we liked the boom like a base sound that is why we relate to rhythm we like the sounds with a strong rhythm. Like pianos and trumpets and other instruments like that don't really apply to the deaf because it's hard to feel the rhythm we do however like drums, electric guitars, and instruments that have a strong bass rhythm. Our school chairs in fact would be based on rhythm it's very common to have like a three part rhythm one, two, three or famous deaf rhythm is one, two, one two three. [Clapping our rhythm] that is basically what I discussed in my deaf music workshop or maybe we could call it deaf rap.

RICH SUTTON: [Laugh]

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Who Knows? Our school chairs were usually based on those rhythms when I went the Gallaudet the fight song had a little different rhythm it went like this. [clapping our rhythm] Everyone or at least almost everyone seemed to love the rhythm of that song and of the president's song. I discovered that many deaf schools have fight songs that are based on similar rhythms. Now what I'm trying to do is simply to apply that rhythm to a story telling

RICH SUTTON: Hm.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I love telling stories to children not so much to adults but telling children stories. The only problem is that the rhythm is a better fit with adults because children don't quite understand it yet. I really enjoy telling stories. Do you want me to show you an example of a story?

RICH SUTTON: Yes, Please.



MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Okay, it goes like this; “Now, time, story story story, story, what, Bear Bear Bear, There, House, Tree Tree Tree” so you see you start with the rhythm, one, two, one two three, and then I try to enjoy being creative and matching the stories to the rhythm. I have performed that story about three times and the response seems pretty positive. I’m trying to get the message out to the main stream. In fact, if you watch old deaf films you’ll see that they had and did use rhythm. I could go on and on about the history and all that’s involved but basically rhythm was used in the past and then it’s kind of stopped being used over time. One reason that happened was that the number of deaf schools has decreased and deaf students are being mainstreamed into public schools, another reason is that English is given the primary focus and we have lost the traditions of our language. I’m trying to bring some of that back and maybe even add some new ones. I think it’s really fun.

RICH SUTTON: That’s great. If you’re just joining us I’m Rich Sutton and I’m here interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz and Kim Day is interpreting for Minnie-Mae, who is deaf, and this is Everything Creative on the Mormon Channel. So you mentioned briefly the reduction in the number of deaf schools and more mainstream enrollment of deaf students in public schools and things like that and a greater focus on the English, what are your feelings about all of that?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well I think there are pros and cons to both sides of that issue. I was mainstream in the public school during the last three year of high school and I learned a lot from that and it was beneficial for me. I think I did so well because I already had a good foundation from growing up in the deaf school and I already had my identity established. I’ve seen many children though who grew up in mainstream their whole lives in the public school and they don’t have any identity, or know who they are as a deaf person. There are a lot of children who miss out on a lot things growing up mainstream such as social skills. This happens because they miss out on so much while growing up. We need to accept ASL and English both. Yes, English is important but we need both languages. Some public schools have large groups of deaf students and I think that’s fine but most public schools have only one or two deaf students in the entire school and they’re all alone and lost in a sea of hearing people. For deaf people their, for lack of better work, disability is not a physical thing yes it affects their ears, but their disability or their struggle that they face is not a physical one but it is a lack of communication. If you cannot communicate how are you supposed to learn and how do you develop your own identity and your own self-esteem. How do you develop relationships, the list goes on and on.

RICH SUTTON: That’s true and thank you so much for sharing that. Your focus was mostly on your experience at a deaf school you’re growing up. I’m curious to learn little bit more about your experience at Gallaudet, where you were in college I’m sure there weren’t many members of the church their and I’m curious what was your experience with the church and going to Gallaudet, things like that.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well for me coming from Idaho, a small town of only 3,000 people, a deaf school that only had 115 students say, and a public high school had about 350 students so it’s pretty small. Then going to Gallaudet where there were over 2,000 students it was a big change. During my first two years of Gallaudet I kind of got lost, I got really involved

socially and too busy on Sundays with going places and studying and being involved in so many different things. My first year I played around a lot and did a lot of different things but by my sophomore year I got involved with the SBG the Student Body Government, and I was the director of Student Welfare. Some of my duties included: cafeteria policies, parking, and other things that affected the lives of the students. During my junior year I became the editor of the schools paper, and I really loved that.

RICH SUTTON: Huh, What was the name of the newspaper.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: The Buff and the Blue [RICH SUTTON: Laugh] it was the school colors. Being the editor of the newspaper was fun for me. Then during my senior year I became RA the head RA for the dorms. And I was also involved on the yearbook staff. So I was involved in so many different things during my years at Gallaudet I really didn't go to church much during first two years but I did attend regularly my during my last two years. And yes you're right; there were not many members of the church there. In fact I think there were only five of us at the beginning that were LDS, that at least the ones I knew of, but that number increased my freshmen year to my senior year. So during my senior year a group was started the LDSSA. And I was one of the cofounders of that organization at Gallaudet. By the time I graduated we had about 35 members who were involved in the LDSSA. It was too bad I graduated by the time they got a bigger group. We were able to carpool for transportation back and forth to church, which we did not have during my first two years. So during though first two years I had to have a member of the branch come and pick me up and drive me back to church and then drive me back to school, and it was kind of awkward and sometimes they would come to pick me up and we would miss out on our timing and then it would all be for nothing, or some of the students wouldn't show up and it was just kind of tough situation but during my junior and senior year was really good after we established the LDSSA. I have heard that the number of LDS students has gone way down and now it's just a small group again.

RICH SUTTON: Humm

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: But they do have an Institute there for religion there now, which is great. We didn't have that during my time except starting my senior year we had an institute teacher who would come maybe teach us about once a week.

RICH SUTTON: If your just joining us this is the Mormon Channel, Everything Creative, and I'm Rich Sutton and I'm here interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz we have with us Kim Day who's interpreting for her because she's deaf. There's one thing I notice at deaf schools throughout the country and Gallaudet and that's the fact that sports are so important in the deaf community and I'm curious why you think that is.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well, I think it's just because sports are important, period. It's a way for us to get together and socialize with each other. As an example of that when I go to a basketball game or a tournament, I never ever end up watching the game. I'm always talking and chatting with all the people that I know who [RICH SUTTON: Laughing] are there. If you were to look at the audience they really watch the game. The only exception would be if it was my team playing, then maybe I would watch, Maybe.

RICH SUTTON: [Laughing]

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: So really I think it more of a social thing then a sports or an athletic thing. If you think about it we don't get together in many other settings and we don't get together for music or dances. It's not to say we don't like dances we do but we just don't get together as a group for that. The theater is great and we like to get together for that but there only a few places that have deaf theater. Maybe California, Chicago, New York, places like that. So sports are really important way for us in the deaf community to get together. If you go to a political conference like the NAD their bi-annual conference, usually see about two thousand people attend, however you take the bowling tournament which happens every year and you might see seven to ten thousand people attend.

RICH SUTTON: Wow.

[Both laughs]

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Bowling is big! The same applies to both softball, basketball, though both are really popular and usually you'll get three or four or even five thousand people show up every year. It's a good pace and in a good way to get together and socialize. People who will save their money, set up carpools, just to get to these events. It's really important for us in the deaf community.

RICH SUTTON: When in your life have your felt creative in what in your life makes your felt creative?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I think I feel the most creative when I'm trying to think of the stories in ASL and matching the rhythm that we talked about. I really enjoy that, and I feel creative when I do that and it's probably the only creative art that I have. In any other way I'm not really artistically inclined.

[Both laughs]

RICH SUTTON: Me neither.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Often when I teach ASL I have to be creative. Students will ask how I would sign this pacific sentence or phrase and I would sign something or maybe I something they wouldn't understand and don't tell them the word, instead I would try to think of creative ways to describe the word without telling them what it is. Sometimes we would just try for awhile and then I just have to give in and tell them what the word is because some words are just too hard and to try to explain it. Say for an example the word "abstract" I could sign the word abstract and then try to explain what abstract is. I would knock on my desk to show something tangible and say it's not that but that would be just too hard and that wouldn't make sense, so I would just tell them what the word is. But there are other signs that I can't think of right now that could cause me to be creative in how I describe what the sign is. I really enjoyed being creative while I was teaching ASL, and I really did fell creative in though moments.

RICH SUTTON: I'm Rich Sutton and this is the Mormon Channel and you're listening to Everything Creative and I'm interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz, who is deaf, and Kim Day is here interpreting for her. So do you find yourself being creative with your kids' kind of

staying on this creative topic? Do you use deaf music in your stories with them to be creative?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I don't like to.

RICH SUTTON: [laughs] Why not. Because you're their mom, or

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Because they're too young and the rhythm thing doesn't make sense to them yet. I taught a workshop about deaf music to a group of youth and it seemed that there were some who showed interest but other kids acted like so what [both laugh] after the workshop was over I asked my three kids what they thought of the workshop and they all said it was boring. [RICH SUTTON: laughs] there were other workshops before mine that was about mime, and that was much more exciting to them than mine was. It seems that the rhythm and the deaf music is a better fit for adults.

RICH SUTTON: So do you think it's because the adults have gone through deaf schools or maybe other situations where they had experience with deaf music and the rhythm that deaf people enjoy.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I don't know; some of the adults never went to the deaf school and more and more now they're from a mainstream background so I don't really know why. I have to look into it and analyze it some more but I haven't found an answer yet.

RICH SUTTON: That's really interesting. Okay so you grow up with eight siblings who were all deaf and you have three kids who are all deaf. So does that mean that your extended family such as nieces and nephews and everything are all deaf as well, or are there some in your family that can hear? I think that would be really interesting.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Yes, there are nine children and we're all deaf, I have sixteen nieces and nephews including my own four children only four of those can hear. All four of them are siblings and can hear because their mom married a man that can hear. It was, it's always made me wonder about them being able to hear and the rest of us being deaf. Even though we are all deaf there are varying levels of deafness in our family. With my three kids the oldest is really hard of hearing. Let me go off subject for a minute and talk about hard of hearing. From the perspective of a person who can hear, hard of hearing means deaf, it literally means a person who you might have a hard time communicating with or someone you have to yell at or speak up loudly to. But from the deaf perspective hard of hearing means that a person can hear or can hear pretty well.

RICH SUTTON: That's a really interesting explanation of the two different perspectives or two different sides of it.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well we're discussing hearing lost we are coming from the perspective of a deaf person so a deaf person has deafness at the center of their perspective. Then being hard of hearing is considered by a deaf person to be more towards being able hearing than to being deaf. A person who is hard of hearing can hear can probably talk on the phone and probably speak pretty well. Now from the perspective of a person who can hear, a person who is hard of hearing is considered more towards being deaf or like a person who can't hear. Anyway back to my point, my oldest daughter is hard of hearing and can hear

pretty well. The other two are totally deaf like me. My brother who has three kids as well also has one child who is hard of hearing and the other two are deaf. I have a sister who has two children one is hard of hearing on the other is deaf. And even though there is a variety of hearing loss, twelve are considered deaf and four would be considered hearing. The four hearing nieces and nephews can't sign very well because their mom can speak well enough and is also hard of hearing. It is an example of exactly what I was saying. Even though I said that all of my eight siblings are deaf some are hard of hearing and have a variety of hearing losses but all are culturally deaf and some can speak. My sister, who I mentioned before, she speaks with her kids and that's why they don't sign very well. However they all can sign well enough to communicate with their cousins.

**RICH SUTTON:** Humm, so that's interesting. It's just really interesting for me because I was raised as a Coda, a child of deaf adults, their times in my life where I could remember I felt like I was living in between two worlds like I didn't completely belong in a world that could hear or in the deaf world, just kind of somewhere in between. I could sign but I could also hear so it's interesting the many different situations that result in the deaf community. You know for me my parents were both deaf but don't have the genes to pass on deafness to future generations. So now in my life I can hear, both of my kids can hear and my wife can hear. So I just is just so interesting for me to see the different situations of people in the deaf community.

**MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ:** Well that makes me think of how it was different for me growing up in an all deaf family. There was a small group of us only about eight to ten percent of us. Most deaf people are born and raised by parents who can hear, and most deaf children are usually the only person in their family who is deaf. Where as in my family all of us are deaf and all of us sign. I have noticed a few differences from that for example if I fell down and started crying my mom wasn't going to come for me I had to go looking for her first and then I would start crying. In a family where everyone can hear, if a kid falls down and starts crying they can stay right where they're at and the parents would come running and get them and hold them. It was different in my family and probably same for you if you fell your parents, your parents weren't going to hear you, [RICH SUTTON: that's right] couldn't hear you, [RICH SUTTON: that's right] and wouldn't come.

**RICH SUTTON:** That's the same for me.

**MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ:** We couldn't call each other by yelling. We had to turn on and off the light or walk over to get their attention

**RICH SUTTON:** Or my favorite pound on the table

**MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ:** [Laughs] That's right, or pounding on the table, or go into another room to get their attention. Another example would be the door bell. In a house where people can hear the door bell can be heard in every room even in the bathroom, but in a deaf house the lights flash on and off when the door bell rings and sometimes you're in a room without the light so we don't know if someone's knocking at the door and never go answer the door.

RICH SUTTON: [laughs] That's so interesting so we talked a lot about the differences between hearing culture and deaf culture and about being deaf, and now I kind of want to just focus and talk about you I want to know what's your driving force and what motivates you in your life. I guess what makes you move forward.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: I think it's my family and my children. You ask me earlier how I am creative with my kids what I try to do is to be creative with things like family home evenings. I try to do something fun every week like a small outing it doesn't often happen but I try to focus on what my kids are doing. For example my daughter loves photography and here pictures are really good and she also excels when it comes to writing so I try to encourage her with her writing. Now she is struggling with school like everyone else her age and I try to encourage her to find something that she likes to do so she could be excited, and motivate herself. My son, the middle child, is fascinated by school, especially science. That is my favorite subject to because my dad taught science for thirty-seven years and I grow up with science. So whenever we are driving I try to point out different rock formations and the mountains and ask my kids why they look that way, and it makes my kids think about it. So I encourage my kids to use their head and try to analyze things in the world around them

RICH SUTTON: Hum

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: My youngest daughter, Isabel, is still pretty young and she's the clown [RICH SUTTON: laughs] and loves to be silly. My husband is involved in making movies and I enjoy watching him do that and supporting him. My thing is making Christmas ornaments every year. We all get together as a family and find things to make as ornaments and paint them and that is something that we do creatively together every year. This year I'm hoping to have a big Halloween bash. I want to involve the kids in finding things and planning it and I guess we better get started soon.

RICH SUTTON: That's true. If you're just joining us this is Everything Creative on the Mormon Channel and I'm Rich Sutton and I'm interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz and she's deaf and Kim Day is here interpreting for her. There's going to be many people in the deaf community who will watch this interview and also many people who can hear will listen to this interview on the radio. I'm curious what would you like to share with all of the people that will watch or listen to this interview.

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Maybe I could share a story that could help illustrate what I want to say. Being raised in a deaf family having gone to a deaf school gone to deaf church it wasn't a branch yet it just was a group but having some interaction with people who can hear I never really fully understand people who could hear. I always felt different, but then I got to high school. I decided to transfer into a public high school, and I was terrified and I was all alone I didn't know anyone for about the first three months it was just me and my books. I would walk around with my head down, go back and forth to class, watch the interpreter, and leave as soon as class was over.

RICH SUTTON: Hum

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: But then some of the girls of my class began writing notes to each other and that continued for a while and that's when I realized that people who could hear were normal. [RICH SUTTON: laughs] They were just like me. That's a story I often shared with my students in ASL classes because I want people to understand that we're all normal it doesn't matter where we were raised, whether on a farm or in a city or a big town or a small town. It doesn't matter if our skin is different colors, if we have different religion or if we have a disability, we're all normal, we're the same, and our internal needs, desires, motivations, our desires for relationships, that's all the same.

RICH SUTTON: I think it's, I think it's so fascinating how you talked about realizing that people who could hear were normal. I had the same experience with people who could hear meeting a deaf person for the first time so kind a the reversed, and they have the same experience and come to the realization that deaf people are normal and so it's just so fascinating to hear the reverse side of it, and maybe people who can hear wouldn't think that deaf people considered them different and abnormal. Once we interact with others we realized that we're all the same and yet is all unique at the same time

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: That's right. For many people who are deaf that are raised in families that can hear, their experience was completely different than mine. My experience with people who can hear was more limited while I was growing up. Many deaf people feel different when they grow up in a family that can hear. I felt normal. I had to go a really long way out of my comfort zone to relate to people who could hear. But that experience helped me with my relationships today. For example when I teach my classes in ASL I see them as normal I can relate to them.

RICH SUTTON: That's true. So as you're well aware in most languages, maybe all, except signing, the translator or interpreter translates or interprets and the people who read or listen never know who the translator or interpreter is. But for you, obviously, it's different cause people actually can see you and I'm curious if people who meet you recognize you?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well many people don't recognize me. It will take someone telling them who I am then, and then they're shocked to realize it is me. People just don't recognize me so it's not frequent that people come up to me. But also I feel like when you were watching the person on the screen, that's really not me because the spirit was involved and that helped so much that I have to feel that I don't have to feel complete and responsible. But don't get me wrong it was a big responsibility and I have to be careful of what I do and what I say but I'm not perfect. I don't want to have people be turned off by the Book of Mormon because of something I've done or if I've offended them. Most of the time it doesn't bother me to much because I know the spirit was there.

RICH SUTTON: If you're just joining us, this is the Mormon Channel, and you're listening to Everything Creative. I'm Rich Sutton and I'm here interviewing Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz and her words are being interpreted by Kim Day. Do you have any special spiritual experiences or anything that you like to share with us about your experience in translating the Book of Mormon? Anything that comes to your mind in particular, I'm really curious about that?

MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ: Well yes maybe in the beginning the translation is a very technical and kind of tedious process but generally you look at a phrase and you know how to translate it but

there were some special experiences. During the chapters of Second Nephi specifically the Isaiah chapters it was really hard. I would always pray before we started translating and even sometimes if I was struggling with a particular translation I would pray again and then everything would work out. It was never a big inspiration or a vision or anything but it was more of a daily, daily kind of working at it.

**RICH SUTTON:** Huh, let me be more specific and maybe that will help with the question, were there any specific words or sentences or phrases that you had to really work with or that you struggled with.

**MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ:** Yes, there were words like the word revelation there are many signs that the members of the Church have used for a long time but their based on the English rules so I had to think if that was accurate or not in ASL sometimes I had to break from tradition and sign it a different way. For example I had to change the sign for revelation that has been established based on the English rules but keep the meaning in ASL that God was informing man and instead of God and man were talking to each other. There were a few things like that and we had lots of tools to help us if the tools didn't answer our questions there where people we could call and they could help me with some of the questions or difficulties. I cannot think of a specific example right now but we had two wonderful committees one was the language review comity, and the other was the Ecclesiastical review comity. And they were there to review my work and make sure it was done correctly.

**RICH SUTTON:** So there's another thing that I want to ask you but it's kind of on a personal track so just bear with me. As you know my dad grow up in Idaho and attended the school for the deaf there that your father taught at and wail I was growing up I dad always talked about your father in fact my dad loves science because of your father and his teaching of my dad. And I remember always looking up to you as I was growing up because of the things I heard from my dad and I would just personally love to hear your testimony.

**MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ:** I know you probably hear people say this all the time but the foundation of my testimony is that I know Jesus Christ preformed the atonement for me. I felt when I was growing up that Jesus preformed the atonement for all of us but what about for me Minnie-Mae. That, I didn't know until later when I was converted despite having been raised in the Church. That part of my testimony has helped and influenced everything else. Once I know He had a personal knowledge of me, of my needs, of my thoughts and my concerns I could do what I needed to do. For example when I was working on the Book of Mormon I felt that he knew what I was doing and what I needed and that I needed help and that's specific sentence or that specific word he was always there answering me. With my own kids I'm still learning how to work with them, every time I lose my keys and I lose them a lot he know where my keys are not where every random persons keys are but where my keys are and I always find them and I have a personal testimony of that. I have a testimony of tithing. And I have testimony of Joseph Smith. I know he is a prophet, I know that because of the time in my life when I was a gospel doctrine teacher for several years I remember one specific lesson on Joseph Smith and I asked myself if I really knew if he was a prophet. I prayed about it, I studied my lesson and while I was teaching, I knew. I have a testimony of our current prophet Thomas S. Monson. I feel like I know him because of all of the other prophets I didn't know them as



apostles but I felt like I have known President Monson as a apostle and now he's our Prophet it's a great experience to see him as our prophet and somehow I feel like I know him.

**RICH SUTTON:** I just want to personally thank you for giving us some of your time for this interview and for our discussion. To be honest I really don't even care that there are other people out there who will listen or watch this because I really enjoyed setting here and talking with your and asking you questions and being able to hear your answers. I really, really enjoyed this time with you and want to thank you for your time and the sacrifice you made for the entire deaf community I'm sure few people realized how many hours and days, weeks and months and years you sacrificed to work on the Book of Mormon, temple projects other books and magazines and so many other things so that they have though things translated you sacrificed so much and for that I just want to say thank you and if I can include everyone else that would want to add their expressions of appreciation as well

**MINNIE-MAE WILDING DIAZ:** Hum

**RICH SUTTON:** Again thank you for listening or watching this interview my name is Rich Sutton and I've been here with Minnie-Mae Wilding Diaz who is deaf and also Kim Day who is been interpreting for her. And we want to thank both of them for their time. [Begin Music] Thank you for listening to Everything Creative on the Mormon Channel. To view this interview in sign language visit our website at [radio.lds.org](http://radio.lds.org).

[End Music]