

# FHL 2010 Program Key Outcomes and Feedback

FHL: Football Hockey Link Society is a non-profit organization that supports the successful integration of culturally diverse children and youth by introducing them to Canadian football and hockey and linking them to mainstream sports associations. This program started in 2009 as a pilot project.

For 2010, our barrier free, initiation hockey and football program was delivered to 47 immigrant children and youth between the ages of 8 to 16, from the following cultural backgrounds: Darfurian, South Sudanese, Mexican, Pakistani, Filipino, Korean, Afghani and Tunisian.

Thanks to tremendous support from community partners, we offered our participants football and hockey training that incorporated a two day football foundational camp, a field trip to McMahon Stadium to watch a professional football practice, and 9 ice-times/skill development hockey sessions which included a practice held at the Calgary Saddledome.

Specifically, the following community support was provided to facilitate the implementation of the program:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Student Transportation donated a school bus, driver, and gas for all outings.
- Hockey Calgary donated ice time and coaching.
- The University of Calgary Dinos Football Team contributed field time at the university and coaching/mentorship by the team members.
- Calgary Stampeders' donated 100 tickets for participants and their families to attend a Stampede game and provided a tour of McMahon stadium.
- Max Bell Arena and the Calgary Public Library, Forest Lawn branch provided meeting space.

As a result of the program, FHL has been able to follow up and link 10 of our kids to mainstream hockey associations and 3 kids to football associations.

We have learned many things through running this program:

- We found that not only are the kids happy for the chance to play hockey and football, but the parents too really appreciate being given an opportunity to have their kids try these sports and feel part of Canadian culture. Parents have expressed that they wouldn't have known how to get involved in the sports if it weren't for the program.
- We have learned how to work with a large group of children/youth, diverse in age and culture, and create an environment for them to feel good about themselves and succeed.
- We have identified that in order to reach our ultimate goal of supporting kids into the mainstream associations, the relationship we build with parents is essential. We need to have open communication with the parents so we can properly orient them to the systems here and expectations if their children register in the mainstream programs.
- We have also realized how receptive the larger community is towards our initiative as demonstrated by the donations/support provided, noted above.

**The children and youth who participated in our program have been grateful for the opportunity to participate in the FHL program and they speak to this appreciation with the following comments:**

- "This was my first time [playing hockey], and I love it."*
- "My best memory was when our team beat the other team badly."*
- "I always wanted to do a sport on ice."*
- "I have never played hockey or football before because it is too expensive."*
- "The best part was playing with the Dinos and skating."*
- "My best memory was having my first ever live football game."*
- "My best memory was playing hockey with new friends."*
- "The best part for me was when we did the real hockey games."*

It is also important to note that the participants had never played hockey or football before. Some had played floor hockey or tag football at school; however, 82 % indicated that they had never tried these sports before.

**Parents also expressed their appreciation for the opportunity as reflected in the quotes below:**

- "My son always wanted to try football and hockey but I don't have the resources and the contacts."*
- "I wanted my children to be introduced to Canadian sports and be part of it."*
- "Without this opportunity I don't think my children will ever be able to play either hockey or football."*
- "The program helps us a lot. I mean my children and myself. It gave them something fun to do and it gave me hope that there are good people out there who are willing to help and bring joy and laughter to our family."*
- "It gave my child confidence and he's been active. He also made friends and wants to play everyday."*
- "We really appreciate the effort that has been made to make us and our children happy."*
- "I'm sure one day all new immigrants will participate in your program or other programs like yours and at the end Canada will be #1 in hockey as it is now."*
- "As a family it gave us a great opportunity to get to know Canadian sports and enjoy it."*

These quotes were captured through an evaluation we conducted. However, there is no better evidence of the impact of the program than being witness to their beautiful faces and smiles.

