

Six Month Update

September 13th marked the 6 months since landing for our Newcomer families, or to put it another way we are already ½ way through our sponsorships.

Schools returned last week and all of the children are now enthusiastically engaged in learning, playing catch up for lost years of education. Asma the eldest at 19 is now attending Coquitlam College on a full scholarship to re-sit her high school diploma, which could take up to 3 years to gain sufficient credits for university entrance. Lava will likely have to follow her there as she will get insufficient credits from only Grade 12. Mava and Yousif have moved school closer to home which allows mum Slama to attend English classes she is improving greatly, Badran makes good progress in his English.

We hope all of the other children will graduate from High School with their peers, but it will take hard work and perseverance to make up for 2+ years of lost schooling.

Parents are once more engaged in attending their own English classes and are slowly becoming more confident in speaking short simple sentences. As yet their English is inadequate for job searching or taking courses to help secure better paid work.

On Saturday 9th September a mini-bus was hired from West Vancouver Community and we picked up the Ali Fandi family (sponsored solely by West Vancouver United) then the Kawa Mohammad family and finally the Badran Mohamad family, despite one of the little girls feeling motion sick, the trip was a fun one to Fort Langley. The drizzly weather ensured that we had the place almost to ourselves and the children enjoyed the freedom to run around and play. Fort Langley has lots of display items but also many interactive things to play with and the boys enjoyed opening all of the hatches in the guard towers, watching the blacksmith make a hook in the fire, 'trading' their salmon and furs and cranberries for salt, flour and boots etc. They enjoyed feeding the sheep and goats, panning for gold, building a new cabin and trying to make barrels in the cooperage.

New friendships were born as the children interacted and young Mohamad (Mohamad is both first and last name for Badran's eldest son – his teachers call him "Mohamad squared") and Alexander, son of John and Victoria Mendes of WVUC, two lovely young gentlemen reaching out to each other. We all enjoyed our packed lunches in the warmth and shelter of the café kindly arranged by Lea Borlick and the young first nations gentleman running the café was most hospitable to the party. A lovely day all round.

While budgets are reasonably healthy we did, at the outset decide that we wished to ensure that neither family were burdened with the debt of their travel loans. Both family's loans amount to \$10,000 each. We still have several thousands of dollars to raise which was the reason behind the Celtic Music & Dance Event at Highlands Church on November 4th.

From a paperwork perspective, I have succeeded in getting Badran's family onto the BC Housing Registry as they are deemed to be 'overcrowded' with the children all being older and the 4 girls squished into one bedroom. Rule of occupancy for BC are 2 children of one sex per bedroom, if the elder children are 19 or older. Asma is approaching 20 and Lava nearly 19. We will have a long wait for a 4 bedroom low cost apartment for them as they are like gold dust!

We continue to pray for this family as they adapt to their new life in Canada. We are so grateful for all the support from our North Lonsdale United Church family.