

NEWSLETTER

HELPING FAMILIES ACCESS RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING



We all know that recreational programs are a great way for kids to build self-esteem while developing cognitive and physical skills. Unfortunately, low-income families face multiple barriers when it comes to accessing these programs.

Christie Lake Kids helps families overcome barriers to accessing recreation

For a family living on income subsidies through the Ontario Works Program, they will have (on average) just over \$200 leftover per month for remaining expenses after paying for food and housing (data from Ottawa Insights). Nearly 70% of the families registered within our programs rely on subsidized income for their main income source. More than half (55%) of the families that Christie Lake Kids works with identified that they faced more than one barrier when registering in recreational programs. These barriers can be large obstacles towards their children participating in activities. By working with families to reduce or eliminate identified barriers, we ensure that kids are not denied exceptional recreation opportunities due to economic disadvantage.



One of the largest barriers to accessing recreation is the **registration** fee for programs. Statistics Canada data shows that children from low-income families are significantly less likely to participate in organized recreational activities. CLK eliminates this barrier by ensuring that every single program offered, including summer camp, is fully subsidized for participants under the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO). Other barriers include like **Equipment costs** can also be exclusionary factors. For every program delivered by Christie Lake Kids, all personal supplies and equipment is provided at no charge. For example, our hockey program supplies all children with equipment including skates, sticks, helmets and protective gear; while our camp programs supply extra clothes, sleeping bags, shoes and toiletries. **Transportation** is another barrier that prevents many families from getting their kids to programs. Few families living under the LICO have access to a private vehicle and even getting children on a bus to recreation centres across the city can be prohibitive due to time and the cost of bus passes. CLK offers community-based after school programs in centres located in the neighbourhoods in which our participating families live. For weekend and summer camp programs, we supply a bus service to pick up kids in the neighbourhoods they live and deliver them to programs.



Navigating systems of support for LICO families can be difficult so CLK works to maintain strong ties with the communities we serve, **creating awareness and overcoming stigma**. Various subsidy programs require large amounts of paperwork, and parents may not be fully aware of the programs available to them. Parents may also be impacted by strong negative stigmas associated with poverty, and may not feel comfortable asking for assistance. Through our Active Pursuit model, we follow-up with each family to see if their children would like to return to our programs each term, and call each family to remind them of times and offer additional supports to ensure their children can continue to attend programs. Holding our programs to a high standard and treating every child or youth with respect is paramount towards reducing stigma associated with participating in programs.



The children we serve are exposed to higher rates of stress that come with living in a low economic bracket and this can negatively impact their **behaviour**, thereby creating a potential barrier to participation. Many LICO children lag behind their peers in the development of pro-social skills like communicating their feelings and resolving conflict. As a result, these children are more likely to be disruptive and aggressive. Some recreational programs cannot accommodate for these behaviours, leading to removal from mainstream programs. All CLK programs feature intentional structure to ensure children remain engaged. In addition, our programs have a very concentrated focus on supporting the individual skill development of participants. We maintain high volunteer to participant ratios, and deliver intensive training for staff and volunteers that focus on supporting children and youth to develop the social skills that will allow them to participate in group activities.

With the help of our generous supporters, Christie Lake Kids will continue to strive to reduce or eliminate barriers so that children and youth from low-income households can access quality, enriching recreational programs.

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