



THANK YOU - CANUCKS FOR KIDS, RAISE A READER, BIEKSA AND BUDDIES, MICHAEL BUBLE AND EVERYONE INVOLVED IN MAKING THIS DREAM COME TRUE

### **THE HERNANDEZ FAMILY – A HAPPY ENDING**

For the past number of years Claveina (Margarita) Hernandez de Diaz has attended English upgrading classes through our Partners In Education program at Britannia Community Centre in Vancouver. When Claveina first came to us she was a shy and withdrawn woman, she felt lonely and isolated because of the many challenges she had to endure in El Salvador. Due to the dangerous conditions in her home country she was forced to escape and flee alone, on foot, looking for refuge from this intolerable situation.

Leaving her 3-year-old son Mariano and mother Cristina behind was probably the most difficult life decision she had to make, but she knew he would be loved and well taken care of until she could obtain permanent residency (PR) in Canada.

Claveina had a daughter, Eleny, last July after two miscarriages, which she believes were brought on as a result of the trauma she experienced in El Salvador and the uncertainty of her status in Canada. However, she recently told us that she is happier now and that her daughter is their miracle baby and when Mariano finally comes to live with them in Vancouver the picture will be complete – a second chance for a happy family life together.

This process has taken a number of years and her son is now 9 years old. Claveina and her husband Carlos have worked very hard to fulfill the many requirements to stay in Canada, and now finally with their PR status confirmed they would soon be reunited with their son in Vancouver. This was wonderful news, but it also came at a cost to this little boy and his grandmother. Mrs. Hernandez has been the primary caregiver for Mariano since he was two and a half years old, and a consistent strength in his life. We believed it was of paramount importance for his future well-being and success that he traveled to Canada with his grandmother Cristina.

We appealed to the Canadian government (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) for humanitarian and compassionate reasons to grant a Visitors Visa to Mrs. de Hernandez (she was declined twice in the past), so she could accompany her grandson on his journey home to his parents. We believed that this would ensure as smooth a changeover as possible for all who have been impacted by this unfortunate and heart-breaking situation. We also worked with the Burnaby MP, Peter Julian's office on this appeal (see picture below).

It was/is the love and close family bonds that have helped this extraordinary family survive where most would not. It was also their unwavering belief that Canada is a safe and caring nation, which they embrace and are thankful for.

The good news is that Mariano now has permanent residence status in Canada and Mrs. Hernandez was granted a one-year visitors visa (in record time) and on July 29<sup>th</sup> we welcomed Mariano and Cristina to Vancouver (pictures below). In the coming months we will follow Mariano's adjustment to Canadian life. He will attend Edmonds Community School, where we operate the PIE Plus program.

CFEC can assist him, his parents and the school in this important transition. Mariano does not speak English, so there will be many challenges for him in school and the community.

This happy ending is only possible because of the continued financial and other generous support we receive from our partner organizations.



MP PETER JULIAN AND MLA RAJ CHOUHAN MEET THE HERNADEZ FAMILY





GRANDMA CRISTINA BRINGS MARIANO HOME AND MEETS HER NEWEST GRANDCHILD, ELENY