



## FINDING A FAMILY IN HOCKEY – Pat Lam

Pat Lam has held almost every minor hockey team role there is - head and assistant coach at house league and competitive levels, trainer, manager, goalie coach and parent fan in the stands. Lam even serves as the Vice President of Operations with Nepean Minor Hockey Association (NMHA). With all that experience, it's hard to believe that Lam did not begin playing hockey until later in life.

Lam is a Korean adoptee, raised by a Filipino Mother and a Chinese Father. According to Lam, his parents did not believe in team sports, only scholastics and music. "They did not view hockey as something that would help me conquer the challenge of life, so therefore I did not play minor hockey at all growing up", says Lam.

Despite not being allowed to play hockey, Lam learned to love the sport through watching the likes of Gretzky, Yzerman, Kurri, Bourque, Lemieux and Roy on his TV every Saturday night during the 1980's. "I loved the energy, speed and just the passion that those around me had for hockey".

Once Lam got to university, he began teaching himself how to skate on the Rideau Canal and at public skating rinks. Once he became a strong enough skater, he would volunteer to help his 'Junior B' playing neighbour get some extra shooting practice by "donning some goalie pads and becoming a moving target at our local outdoor rink", jokes Lam.

Lam did everything in his power to become a better hockey player while in his late 20's. He attended adult hockey camps and sharpened his skating skills with lessons from figure skating instructors. He has since been playing goalie and defence in local leagues around Ottawa. Even with only having joined the sport as an adult, Lam could feel the positive impact hockey was having on his life and vowed that if he ever had kids, he'd make sure they would have a chance to play if they wanted to.

Fast forward a few years, and now the father of two hockey playing boys, Lam knew he wanted to help out on the ice as much as possible. Starting in house league, Lam was able to become his eldest son's first ever hockey coach. From there, he began helping out at a league level as a Director of a House League Division and also experienced his first stint on the NMHA Board. Once Lam's youngest son was old enough to play, he was able to coach him at the competitive level for two years. This past year, Lam was elected to his Vice President of Operations role with NMHA. Lam states, "I am so honoured to have the opportunity to make a difference at the Association level".



Having grown up in a household that didn't view hockey as a beneficial past time, Lam has learned just how impactful the game can be and wants to ensure other parents realize so too. "Hockey teaches those involved that we are helping to shape the future of kids in hockey and in their lives. Making sure that we give them the confidence to compete, to understand the concepts of winning and defeat, how important team and teammates are, and ultimately that any progress and success does not come without effort and setting goals, are critical to the hockey experience. These may only look like hockey goals, but they always translate into real life".

Lam also emphasizes the importance of getting involved if you can. "It is so important that anyone who has the ability to help shape their hockey association, do everything they can to ensure that the coaches we provide for our children are properly trained and guided with the latest standards and coaching methods, to ensure our players are given every chance to learn all these hockey and life lessons".

Lam provides a unique perspective on the game. When asked what advice he would give to a family looking to get involved in the sport, he reiterated again the importance of getting involved, "Get involved and volunteer! Hockey is a community. The more you are involved, the more you will appreciate how fun this game is and what a hockey family will mean to you every year".

Lam also provided some advice for Asian families that may be new to the sport and a little unsure if hockey is suitable for their child. "If your child wants to play hockey - let them. Learn about the sport and know it will provide your child with many social and physical benefits that will help them now and later in life. Socialise and interact with your new hockey family, even if it's not comfortable or normal to you. Yes, there will always be some people who may have difficulty embracing Asian cultures and our communication and personality differences, but the vast majority are great and will accept you and your kids in hockey".

When asked how the hockey community could work on becoming more inclusive, Lam stated how important representation is. Whether it be community role models like coaches and volunteers, board members to help represent persons of various identities and ethnicities or having representation in the media, it is important that children can see someone that looks like them, "to help show our youth that this game is for all of us".

He also believes that hockey associations should be targeting Asian communities where hockey may not be a typical consideration of a sport to join. "As a hockey community, we should try to help change the narrative, given hockey's great impact on one's social skills and overall development. Social interaction,



team and teammates are so important to ensuring that your child becomes a well-rounded adult and helps them prepare for their future away from the protection of a family”.

Having been raised in a family that did not believe in team sports, Pat Lam has clearly established himself as a vital member of the Nepean Minor Hockey Association family and is so grateful and appreciative to be a part of such a great hockey community.