

**Application to Join the  
East Central Female Hockey  
League**

**Wood Buffalo  
Female Huskies**



# Our journey to success....

## 2013-2014:

*At first we failed our girls...*

The Wood Buffalo Minor Hockey Association had an active female program about 7 years ago that failed for many reasons

- There was a lack of commitment and interest
- Wide spread of talent across the girls but with small numbers
- Lack of knowledge from coaches and executive on the difference between the development of male and female players.



**Pee wee Huskies**

## 2018-2019:

*We corrected a few of our earlier mistakes and had little success but we also had some major learnings ...*

- The executive created a female development director role – dedicated to growing our female program.
- We held our first all-female event to celebrate *World Girls Ice Hockey Weekend* - more than 40 girls participated.
- With the input from our girls we created our logo which gave it its own identity in our community and reenergizing our older female players.
- With approval from Hockey Alberta we sent an atom team to Wickfest. They were at a competitive level of play in the lowest tier, but did not Medal.
- We started holding female only practice times once a week, to give the females in our league some extra ice times and development opportunities.
- In this season the girls received exposure and became more comfortable playing with and against females. We considered the season a success, but we still needed to find solutions for the following issues:
  - **Time Commitment - Girls were essentially trying to manage two teams**
  - **No dedicated Head Coach**
  - **No games**

## 2019-2020

Building on the successes of the previous season we continued to grow our program by:

- Celebrating our second World Girls Ice Hockey Weekend with 60 girls participating.
- We rostered two sanctioned teams (peewee and atom) that would compete in our Wood Buffalo Hockey League
- We had qualified, and dedicated coaches who went through our Elite selection process
- Both teams attended Wickfest and various other all-female tournaments where they proved they could compete in middle tiers
- We held a successful “Girl Power” development camp, where we seen the interest growing in our u7 girls
- We entered a partnership with our Keyano Huskies Female Basketball team to become mentors to our young female athletes
- Our peewee team had 5 overage players



**Atom Huskies**

## We want to continue to build on our successes

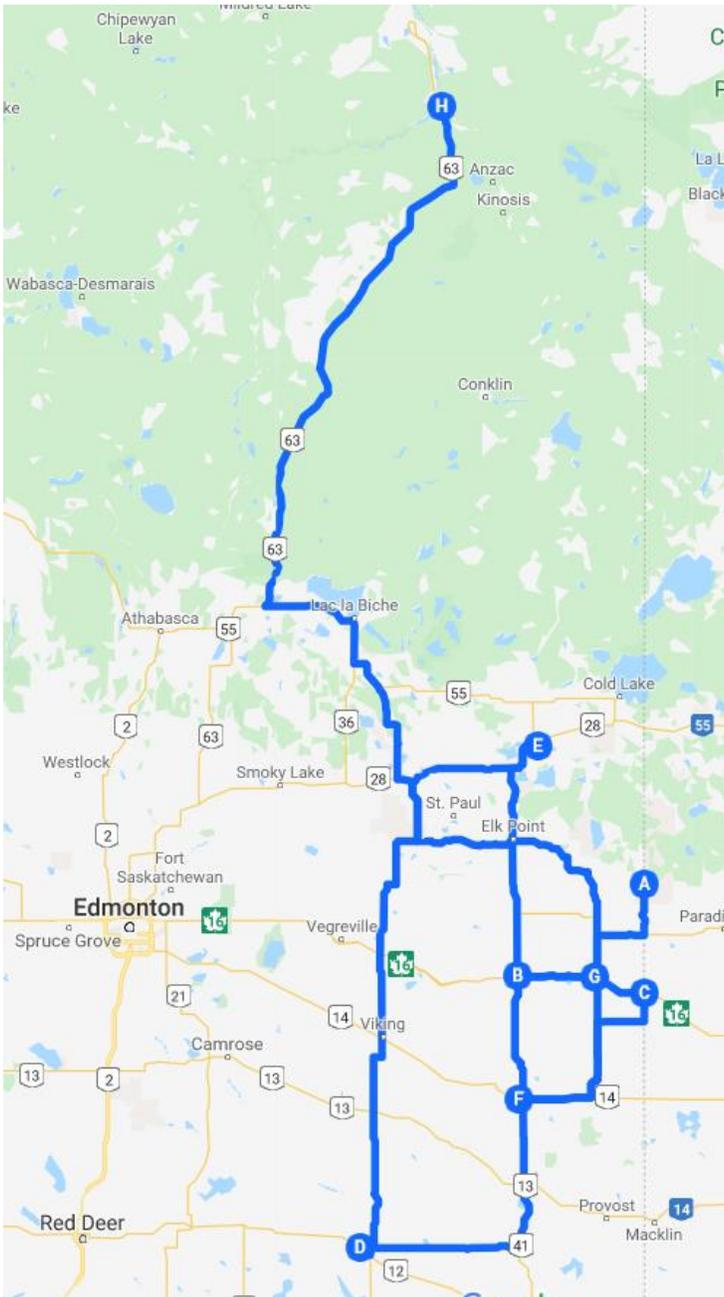
Coming into the 2020- 2021 season we want to continue growing our girls programs and build on this on going momentum:

- The interest from many females who have left the game from other sports such as ringette and are returning to minor hockey. We had 9 atom girls return last season but our female team was so full they were placed on mixed teams. We feel we may be able to have 2 atom teams next season: one team that will play as a travel team in an all female league and the other who will develop and play in our WBHL mixed league.
- Our midget girls have shown an interest in the Jr Coach program and we had one coach who was very dedicated to our Atom girls, Keeping with our mission of “Hockey for Life”. We would look to ensure each of our midget girls had an opportunity to be a part of the female program.
- Building on the attention of future female coaches: such as female police officers who want to be involved and help develop the female program; they as well want to return to the game.
- We have caught the attention of various sponsors who are interested in helping to bring development partners into our community.

We feel that if our application is accepted, our girls will overcome barriers that they face locally and would be given more positive opportunities in a female league.

- Currently, our girls struggle to find the right place to play locally, as some do not “fit” in a correct or specific level of Play. For example, our atom team dominates our lowest level of play in WBHL (a tier 6 on Alberta one system) but cannot touch the puck in our next level (a tier 4/5 on Alberta one tiering system) . Whereas, our peewee girls team could not compete in our lowest level of peewee last season.
- Coaches reported that our girls play the game differently against female teams vs male teams. Female vs female they play strategically and playing against the male teams, they play defensively.

## Team Travel time to Fort McMurray



We understand that our biggest obstacle in joining your league is travel.

- A – Onion Lake (5 hrs 10 mins)
- B – Vermillion (5 hrs)
- C – Lloydminster (5 hrs 40 mins)
- D – Battle River (6 hrs)
- E – Lakeland (Bonnyville) (4 hrs)
- F – Wainwright (5 hrs 40 mins)
- G – Kiscoty (5 hrs 25 mins)
- H - Fort McMurray

We face this same issue with our male teams, and are willing to work with the league to ensure we bring value.

- Hosting and/or facilitating showcase weekends
- Different travel ratio – to ensure our girls can have games, we are willing to do more travel than other teams if necessary
- We are open to hosting playoffs in a tournament format to cut down on Travel.

**“If we work together, we can find a solution.”**

First and foremost, geography is our biggest obstacle into being accepted into any league. We recognize that coming to Fort McMurray for one game is a task that many organizations may struggle with.

We would like to offer the following solutions:

- Fort McMurray would be willing to host a couple of “Showcase” weekends. For example, if we look at the peewee division, these weekends would see Fort McMurray host 4 teams over a weekend. This would be an 8 game (total) schedule in the 3 days. Each of the traveling teams would get to play the host team once, and two of the other traveling teams over the weekend.
- FMMHA would be flexible with our ice schedule and work with the league to select weekends where travel may not generally be affected by the weather, and where teams may have an extra day on their side for returning such as no school Fridays. Our organization will budget the cost of the ice and referees for all games.
- FMMHA prides itself in going above and beyond when we host because we understand the sacrifice teams have to make to travel to us. We ensure that our host teams have a wonderful experience, we ensure games are scheduled in our best arena’s, we work with local hotels to find the best deals, we contact local businesses to provide office opportunity’s for teams, and we provide music and MC for all games. Our managers make it their responsibility to be available and an extra set of hands for any questions to visiting team managers.

Our association and our community are committed to growing female participation in sports, while focusing on Hockey. Our female numbers have grown significantly over the past couple of years, and the success of our program this year has us forecasted to grow from 2 teams to 4 teams.

We are requesting the approval of 2 teams to be accepted into East Central Female Hockey League at the U11 and U13 age groups.

We feel that we are a great fit for your league, in turn this helps your league grow and will give our girls a competitive place to play and will increase female vs female play exposure. This, in turn, is only going to help our game grow even more.

**If you welcome our Wood Buffalo Huskies into the membership, we are committed and will ensure the factors below.**

- FMMHA would shift these teams under our “Elite Stream” umbrella to ensure they would have the right opportunities, support, and resources to succeed in the demands of playing in a league such as like this.
- We will make the drive worthwhile
- We will commit to/by all *ECAFHL Operational Regulations*, and *FMMHA will be a supportive member*.
- We will be flexible and will actively participate in working towards solutions to obstacles the league faces, such as travel length and play offs for teams.
- We are focused on the development for our females - not winning hockey games. We are looking for competitive play at what ever tier the league deems a good fit.
- We will grow responsibly so we can sustain this commitment.