



Huellas: “Documenting our Rootprints”

HUELLAS is a multimedia, culture, identity and arts, violence integration/prevention project for Latino(a)/Hispanic Youth in Toronto funded by The Challenge Fund, hosted by the Hispanic Development Council supported by the Toronto Catholic District School Board, facilitated by aluCine media festival and in collaboration with CasaMaiZ. Huellas is a three-year social participatory research program that focuses on the arts as the tool to communicate and understand the reality of Latino/Hispanic youth’s lives in Toronto

About the Program

HUELLAS phase I is a socio-cultural arts program where 13 Latino/Hispanic youth documented their lives using video, script-writing and photography. From March to June 2008, thirteen youth from six different schools and three different community organizations, gathered in CasaMaiZ, a community-arts centre in the heart of the Latin American community at Keel and Finch Ave. HUELLAS I was created in order to challenge the social stigmas and stereotypes that mark our young Latino/Hispanic community. In addition, HUELLAS I was aimed to provide a safe space where youth could creatively express themselves about what life is like in Toronto for Latino(a)/Hispanic youth.

The thirteen participants of HUELLAS I, were selected by a committee out of a group of close to one hundred youth that applied to HUELLAS. The Youth Engagement and Culture Program outreached to six Catholic schools, four local organizations and seven community centres. The creation of HUELLAS, was aimed at integrating Latino/Hispanic Youth (professionals, trades, students, entrepreneurs and unemployed youth); using video, photography and script writing as alternative research tools to document, interpret and reflect on their lives as Latino/Hispanic/Canadian youth living in Toronto. On June 13, 2008 we screened HUELLAS I at Madonna Catholic School where parents, teachers, friends and the media came to support the work of the participants of HUELLAS I. The screening was a historic event for the participants. Besides the success of creating the film shorts, the documental and the photo exhibition, two of the participants were awarded an honorarium which was presented by the president of the Hispanic Development Council. “I never imagined that other youth were facing the same problems as me, I am very happy to have met a group of people that have become like a family” –Daniela Velecela, Age 15. HUELLAS I is a confirmation of the talent and aspirations of the youth in our community. Our role as community developers, teachers, family members, funders, friends and role models is to ensure that more spaces are created where youth are given the opportunity to express themselves.