

The Needs and Challenges of the Chinese Community in Peel Region



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United Way
of Peel Region

The Chinese Advisory Council of
United Way of Peel Region

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This report was prepared for United Way of Peel Region by the writing group of the Chinese Advisory Council: Josephine Bau, Man Yee Ling, Simon So and Jenny Qin.

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The Chinese Advisory Council (CAC) of United Way of Peel Region (UWPR) was formed in 2006. In its first year, the CAC conducted a literature review of the needs of the Chinese community in Peel Region. After the official launch on May 31, 2007, the CAC decided to present the findings of the literature review to Chinese community leaders and service providers in Peel for discussion and input. A community forum was organized to further explore the community needs and the challenges faced by both the Chinese community and the service providers, and to work out a follow-up plan with the participants.

A working group comprised of CAC members Josephine Bau, Simon So and Jenny Qin was subsequently formed. It was decided that a collaboration with Peel Chinese Inter-Agency Network (PCIAN) would bring better insight to the topic and more resources to the forum.

The community forum took place on December 14, 2007 and was opened by the Honourable Michael Chan, Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The forum was attended by approximately 100 participants representing the three levels of governments, UWPR, the social services sector and the Chinese community in Peel Region.

The Chinese Advisory Council of United Way of Peel Region invites participants in this study to review this report and share the findings with the management of their organizations for future service and human capital planning.

This project was made possible by a grant from Heritage Canada.

Findings

The top five needs and challenges of the Chinese community that were identified in the literature review were validated, in no particular order, by participants at the Chinese Community Forum on December 14, 2007, (see Appendix 1 for details):

- Employment
- Language barriers
- Supports for seniors
- Child care
- Parenting skills

Through group discussion, we identified additional needs and challenges of the community, as well as those faced by the service providers due to increased demand for services. Peel received 118,220 immigrants between 2001-2006. Of all immigrants arriving in Peel during 2001-2006, 7.8 percent came from East Asia.

While there are many areas where we can help newcomers integrate efficiently to the mainstream, there are also many ways newcomers can be empowered to help themselves.



Executive Summary and Recommendations continued

Recommendations

1. Provide pre-settlement and post-settlement orientations.
2. Improve access to information regarding the school system, early learning and child care, and the legal system and community services for newcomers, by setting up one-stop centres for services and referrals. Promote 211 and the immigration portals.
3. Offer networking, mentoring and volunteering opportunities to new immigrants (in some regions of East Asia, the concept and practice of mentoring and volunteering are almost non-existent; some newcomers may need to be educated about the mutual benefits).
4. Offer language and culture specific services to newcomers.
5. Implement new programs such as outreach programs, emotional support programs, integrated bridging programs and community kitchen/luncheon programs.
6. Lobby for more government funding to sustain existing programs, develop new programs, and to reduce the long waiting periods for affordable housing and other social services.

Discussion Process

At the community forum on December 14, 2007, participants were divided into seven groups to discuss the following questions and report back to the large group:

1. Are the results of the Literature Review your experience?
2. Identify other needs of the Chinese community.
3. What are the service gaps?
4. How can we help newcomers integrate more efficiently to the mainstream?
5. How can we encourage newcomers to help themselves?

It was agreed that the CAC would summarize the discussion in the format of a written report and distribute it to all the Forum participants and the community at large.



Detailed Findings

1. Are the results of the Literature Review your experience?

All the participants validated, in no particular order, the following as the top five needs/issues of the Chinese community:

- Employment
- Language barriers
- Supports for seniors
- Child care
- Parenting supports

2. Other needs of the Chinese community

In discussion, the following cultural challenges were revealed:

- Conflicts of parenting and lifestyles of eastern and western cultures. In eastern culture, there is little time for children to play. Parents' expectations are high. Physical punishment is allowed. In school class sizes are often huge, and children pushing each other is not considered bullying.
- Cultural taboos of Chinese, e.g. not disclosing problems or asking for help. Traditionally, Chinese do not want to challenge the system and do not want to reveal domestic problems to outsiders. Family problems such as domestic violence and abuse of women are prevailing but not acknowledged as an issue.
- Youth integration in the school system is another concern.
- Language barriers hinder Chinese immigrants in their attempts to match their professional abilities to appropriate employment, resulting in many being under-employed.
- In order to integrate into the mainstream efficiently, they need to understand how the Canadian social, political, legal and educational systems work. There is insufficient publicity about immigration portals where potential newcomers can find online information to help them prepare for their new life in Canada before they arrive.
- Language and culture specific services are needed in areas such as: medical services (family doctor), social and community programs, government services, emotional support, etc.
- Overall, Chinese immigrants need to be empowered to speak up, ask for help and take on a leadership role.

3. Service gaps

- Lack of needs and credential assessments prior to arrival of new immigrants.
- Access to information and services not publicized. Newcomers need to know where to go and who to talk to. Better communication among agencies and from agencies to new immigrants is needed.
- Help for immigrants to learn to use new technology, such as online job searching, electronic library system and online program registration, etc.
- Need for mentors.
- Housing needs are not adequately addressed. Many Chinese immigrants still live in basement apartments; multi-generations living under the same roof is common. They feel too embarrassed to ask for help.
- Need for early years and child care support including fee subsidies. Newcomers need child care to free up their time for job searching, learning English and meaningful networking. Currently, some LINC classes provide child care, however it is unlicensed care.
- There is a lack of after-school programs for elementary students. Parents need someone to look after their children so that they can work.
- Mental health issues are common due to the high rate of unemployment or under-employment and the resulting marital problems. There are very few culture specific services for the mentally challenged in the Chinese community.
- Need for relationship counselling and senior supports in dealing with sense of isolation.

Detailed Findings continued

3. Service gaps continued:

- Elder abuse is overlooked due to the lack of ethno-specific senior programs and services.
- Not enough help for families and children with special needs.
- Lack of affordable housing for newcomers, seniors and families in crisis.
- Long waiting lists for social services programs.
- Lack of funding to: sustain existing programs, develop new programs and provide cultural competency training for staff.
- Lack of government initiative to bring the Chinese community (as well as other ethnocultural communities) and service providers together for service planning and improvement.

4. How we can help newcomers integrate?

- Empower newcomers to help themselves.
- Provide pre-settlement and post-settlement orientations.
- Provide cross-cultural training to raise awareness of other cultures.
- Suggested programs:
 - Outreach program to help isolated newcomers
 - Emotional support program
 - Integrated bridging program
 - Community kitchen/luncheon program
 - Services in different languages
- Set up a centralized community centre or hub with multi-disciplined services for Chinese newcomers. Staff at the centre can provide guidance and referrals to appropriate agencies and services.
- Provide networking and connecting opportunities to newcomers by forming different help groups. Involve successful immigrants to help newcomers.
- Provide information to help newcomers understand how all levels of government work, how the school system works and how the legal system works.
- Get more volunteers to help newcomers.
- Lobby for more government funding for increased services and sustaining existing programs.
- Mentoring is a very powerful tool. There is a need to attract more mentors to join programs, e.g., government incentives to mentors and programs in the workplace.

5. How can newcomers help themselves?

- Maintain a positive outlook.
- Be willing to work your way up in a company and continue to build up a job portfolio.
- Connect with community groups and successful immigrants for networking, information sharing, mentorship and help accessing community resources and programs. Participate in community activities and get involved in local events.
- Upgrade job skills and learn new technology.
- Work as volunteers to get initial Canadian experience.
- Take an active approach to improve language and communication skills.
- Learn about Canada before applying for immigration. Get a realistic picture of the labour market, the economy, potential language challenges and the cultural differences.

Conclusion

The Chinese community in Peel is very diverse in terms of cultural background, language, faith, socio-economic status and the duration of residence in Canada. One cannot assume that the Chinese community is self-contained and self-sufficient, and therefore, needs fewer resources to support the successful integration of its members to the mainstream. The lack of awareness of available social supports, language barriers, common fears among visible minorities of non-acceptance by society, and the pride instilled by the deep-rooted Confucianism, all prevent many needy newcomers from seeking help.

Due to improved funding from the government, many service providers have strengthened their programs and services. However, due to the lack of a region-wide inventory and a concerted effort, there may either be duplications of efforts in the same neighbourhoods or a lack of awareness of new programs and services for client referrals.

Authors of this report want service providers in Peel to realize that the Chinese community is not an outspoken community due to the immense differences between eastern and western cultures. To adequately meet the needs of this community, service providers need to be more actively involved in their outreach and provide language- and culture-specific services.

Like immigrants from other ethno-cultural groups, Chinese newcomers bring a wealth of talents and skills to Canada. The sooner newcomers integrate to our society, the faster they can contribute to the socio-economical well-being of Peel.

CAC is proud to host a Chinese community forum, the first of its kind in Peel. We appreciate your ongoing support of our work, now and in the future.



Appendix

Summary of the Literature Review Conducted on the Needs of the Chinese Community in Peel Region

A. BACKGROUND

Statistics Across Canada

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of people who said they had Chinese origins rose by 18.2%, while the overall population grew by 5.4%. At just over one million people, the Chinese community is the second largest non-European ethnic group in Canada.

Peel Data

There are more than 93 distinct ethnic groups in Peel and over 60 different languages spoken by Peel residents. Peel is comprised of 561,240 immigrants who make up 48.4% of its total population (2006). According to Statistics Canada 2006 Census, the Chinese population in Peel is 54,285, making it the third largest visible minority in Peel Region.

United Way of Peel Region

The Mission Statement of United Way of Peel Region is “To engage with our community, through partnerships, to ensure people are cared for, connected and included.” Strategic Direction #3 states: Strengthen the capacity of the human service sector, Strategic Objective #2; Recognize and promote the value of diversity of the people in our community through United Way’s internal diversity initiative and external outreach. To this end, the first ever Chinese Advisory Council was established for United Way of Peel Region.

Chinese Advisory Council of UWPR

The Chinese Advisory Council (CAC) of United Way of Peel Region (UWPR) is a voluntary community advisory body. Its purpose is to assist and provide recommendations to UWPR in engaging the Chinese leaders and residents of Peel in the activities of the organization. It establishes and cultivates a relationship with leaders from the Chinese community to build and strengthen a mutually beneficial relationship with UWPR.

Reason for a Literature Review

At this time, Peel Region doesn’t have a complete needs assessment targeted for the Chinese community. Therefore, a study to review the needs is necessary for future service planning. Through a series of meetings, the CAC developed a quasi-formal strategic plan for the group in alignment with the overall organizational mission and goals. One of the components of the plan was to identify the strengths, needs, challenges, and issues of the Chinese population in Peel. To this end, a review of existing reports and literature on the Chinese community in Peel was conducted as a first step in informing the strategic direction and plan of action for the CAC in partnership with UWPR.

The following is a summarized version of the reports reviewed for this purpose, which forms the basis of this document.

B. METHODOLOGY

In order to create a sense of teamwork and ownership, CAC members were asked to share any research reports they had access to within their own organizations. Members were also asked to refer other sources of information to UWPR's Community Outreach Co-ordinator to be compiled. In addition, websites and sources specific to the Chinese community in Peel were sought. The following materials were reviewed for content, relevance, timeframe and most significantly, recommendations for action:

- *Profile of the Chinese Population in Peel*; The Social Planning Council of Peel
- *Peel Cultural Diversity Project*; Peel Community Connections
- *Ethnic Markets Research Project*; United Way of Greater Toronto
- *Public Health Services Focus on Tuberculosis*; Region of Peel Health Services
- *The Bridging Project Needs Assessment Survey*; Peel Region One-Stop Access Bridging Project
- *Report on the Services and Needs of the Chinese Community in Peel Region*; Peel Region One-Stop Access Bridging Project
- *Executive Summary of the Leading Ethno-racial Access Dialogue (LEAD) Report*; United Way of York Region
- *Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada: The Chinese Community in Canada 2001*, Statistics Canada
- *Group Discussion Summary Notes of Immigration Planning and Visioning Day*, February 7, 2006; United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel
- *Summary of Services* of The Cross-Cultural Community Services Association

C. RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES OF INDIVIDUAL REPORTS

The following is a profile of the Chinese community in Peel and a summarized version of the recommendations and outcomes from each report reviewed.

Profile of the Chinese Population in Peel by The Social Planning Council of Peel

- A high proportion of elderly people in the Chinese community
- A low use of, and familiarity with, English language, plus an accent barrier
- High disparities in education
- High disparities in income
- Foreign qualifications
- Cultural differences
- Youth employment is a concern

Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada: the Chinese Community in Canada 2001

- The majority of immigrants of Chinese origin arrived in Canada relatively recently; 72% of Canadians of Chinese origin were born outside of Canada
- 45% of foreign-born Canadians of Chinese origin were born in the PRC, 30% in Hong Kong, and 10% in Taiwan
- 47% of Chinese live in Ontario, 34% live in British Columbia
- The trend for Chinese people to concentrate in Toronto and Vancouver is likely to continue in the future as recent immigrants have tended to settle in these two census metropolitan areas
- 85% of the Chinese community said that their mother tongue was a non-official language; in fact, Chinese, including all dialects, is the third- largest mother tongue in Canada after English and French
- A relatively large proportion of the Chinese population in Canada are recent arrivals who, in many cases, are still adjusting to life in this country

Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada, the Chinese Community in Canada 2001 (continued)

- Both men and women of Chinese origin were less likely to be employed than their counterparts in the overall population
- In 2000, the average income from all sources for Canadians of Chinese origin aged 15 and over was about \$25,000, compared to almost \$30,000 for all Canadian adults
- Over a quarter of all Canadians of Chinese origin have incomes that fall below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs
- Chinese seniors living on their own are particularly likely to have low incomes

The Cross-Cultural Community Services Association Report:

- Newcomers require settlement services and assistance in integrating into the Peel community
- Access to services to overcome the language and cultural barriers
- An appreciation and understanding of the Canadian culture
- Support services for seniors and women
- Youth leadership and self development
- Parenting support

Bridging Project – Community Partner Focus Group

- Information and promotion of Chinese community services
- Linkage with the school boards

Bridging Project – Needs Assessment Survey

- Access to information and referral services
- Access to and support with employment services
- Services for seniors
- English language training

Public Health Services Focus on Tuberculosis

- Increased public awareness and information and on health issues, e.g. Tuberculosis

Immigration Planning and Visioning Day Notes – February 2006

- Newcomers should be welcomed to Peel Region; welcome to include support with living issues.
- The number one issue affecting newcomers is employment; cultural barriers are second; systemic issues and barriers to information are third.
- Other needs identified include language, financial adjustment, isolation and lack of networks, dealing with disappointed expectations, health, mental health and health care, racism and discrimination, and refugee issues.
- Struggling to work in their profession

Ethnic Markets Research Project; United Way of Toronto

- Youth issues: helping at-risk youth, job training and education
- Services for seniors
- Immigration

Leading Ethno-racial Access Dialogue; United Way York Region

- Employment, language barriers, childcare, family issues, children with special needs, seniors and people with mental health issues
- Chinese from Mainland China need practical orientation to the intricacies of the Canadian and western education, health and legal systems

Peel Cultural Diversity Project

- Arts and heritage is not an immediate priority for newcomers
- Culture can play a valuable role in social integration
- Barriers to participation by individuals are systemic and not limited to arts and heritage offerings

Study of Service and Needs of Chinese Community in Peel Region

There is a lack of settlement services provided to the Chinese community; therefore, there is a need to provide settlement and counselling services to Chinese in the community.

- 60 % of agencies need help from other community service agencies with the following:
 - Newcomer day programs, translation and interpretation services, settlement and immigration services, transportation and escort services, employment and education services, and health care services
- More social and learning opportunities
- Education and support
- Culturally sensitive services
- Prenatal and parenting information
- Language training programs
- Cultural differences (cultural shock, integration issues)
- Translation services
- Settlement services
- Health services and Meals on Wheels (Chinese)
- Long-term care
- Employment
- Cross-cultural communication
- More exposure to English language
- Supportive housing

Religious perspective

- More participation in mainstream activities
- Family services and counselling services, especially a Chinese counselling centre
- Grocery delivery service
- English language skills
- Job opportunities
- Knowing the salvation of Jesus is among the major concerns of the Chinese population in Peel Region
- Access to information

D. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The conclusion and summary of the literature review conducted on the Chinese community in Peel found there was a common thread in the recommendations provided by the various studies. This committee has narrowed down the top five needs and challenges of the community:

- **Employment** – the employment needs of the Chinese community in Peel are job searching techniques, a need to work in their chosen profession, networking opportunities, professional recognition and accreditation of their education and job experience;
- **Language barriers**– English language ability is a barrier for Chinese immigrants. Most of them speak only Chinese at home and seldom seek or know of opportunities to practise speaking English. This increases the length of their settlement process and integration;
- **Support for seniors** - the barriers for seniors in the Chinese community are language, transportation, cultural differences and isolation. Seniors are dependent on their children for their livelihood and integration;
- **Child care** - most Chinese families have two incomes; however, if both parents have to work, affordable child care is mandatory. Senior parents are brought in to take care of the grandchildren or sometimes the children are sent back home;
- **Parenting supports** - the concept of parenting in the western context have created some conflicts.

The Chinese Advisory Council, in partnership with the Peel Chinese Inter-Agency Network (PCIAN), will hold a community information session to share and validate the findings of the literature review. From that session an action plan for next steps will be formulated.



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