

ANGELA KAN, VANCOUVER

“Without English language skills, our immigrants can get caught in a situation of low paying employment which can last for the rest of their lives.”

“The most difficult employment problem for many Chinese immigrants arriving in Vancouver is the lack of English language skills. This makes their task of getting a decent job almost impossible. What happens for some individuals is that they must immediately take low paying manual labour employment, which leaves them no time, money or energy for language classes. They are caught in a blind alley of little money and no skills which can last for the rest of their lives. This is the worst possible thing that can happen, and in the Chinese community we are committed to preventing it from happening.

“Many of the problems that immigrants encounter when they first come to Canada stem from the lack of good employment.”

We have identified language training as the key factor in preparing our Chinese immigrants for employment—for decent jobs with decent pay. And employment, in turn, is the key factor in enabling them to participate in Canadian society and to make a contribution to the community. Many of the other kinds of troubles that immigrants encounter—family tension, medical ailments, psychological breakdown, criminal behaviour—these stem from the lack of good employment.

I am the executive director of the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society—SUCCESS for short. The role of our organization is to help newly arrived persons to overcome the language and employment barriers as quickly as possible. To bring this about, we offer a wide range of informational, counselling, and teaching services to Chinese immigrants in the lower British Columbia area. These services relate to every kind of problem which immigrants face in their first several years in Canada, such as housing, education, medical assistance, financial planning, and many others. In 1983 we answered over 14,000 inquiries. But, by far, the most important services are those related to language and employment. Last year we provided assistance to over 3,000 individuals in employment and unemployment matters.

