

SUCCESS:

A Chinese Voluntary Association in Vancouver

SHIBAO GUO

INTRODUCTION

IMMIGRATION HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE in transforming Canada into an ethno-culturally diverse and economically prosperous nation. Despite our rich immigration history and the strategic role that immigration plays in shaping our future, the issue of immigrant settlement and adaptation is nevertheless prominent. We are still grappling with many important questions, such as: How do new immigrants adapt to a society that is very different from their own, with a different language, culture, and tradition? How do they navigate the complex paths that citizenship (and all the skills it requires) entails? And where do they go for assistance? In particular, where do immigrants get the programs required to upgrade their knowledge and skills as new citizens? What is the role of voluntary organizations concerning immigrants' settlement and adaptation?

This study explores, in detail, the ways in which one voluntary organization in Vancouver – the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (SUCCESS) – bridged the gap in immigrant settlement and adaptation. It investigates the process through which SUCCESS was founded and developed during its first quarter century (1973 to 1998). It documents how SUCCESS responded to the changing needs of an ethnic community in Canada's multicultural society. It also examines the relationship between SUCCESS, a voluntary organization, and the state.

The discussion begins with a review of the role of ethnic organizations in immigrant settlement and adaptation, and it goes on to address the historical, social, and political context in which SUCCESS emerged. The sections that follow focus on the founding and historical development of the organization as well as on its social contributions.

I rely upon document analysis and personal interviews, my goal being to understand people's lived experience with SUCCESS. The documents

analyzed include SUCCESS's annual reports, newsletters, AGM meeting minutes, important speeches, and program brochures. I conducted twenty interviews with the organization's early founders (3), chairs (3), board members (1), executive directors (2), and program directors (11). I did not interview SUCCESS's clientele. I decided to limit my analysis of SUCCESS to the perspective of its administrators and board members (1) in order to ensure that the participants had a substantive knowledge of the organization's development and (2) because the transient nature of the clients and members of SUCCESS made them difficult to trace. See Appendix 1 for a description of the research design.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When immigrants move to a new country, they need assistance with language, employment, housing, daycare, education, health, counselling, and legal and social services. They are likely to encounter barriers when attempting to adapt to a new society. A number of studies have identified lack of access to social services as one such barrier (Bergin 1988; Leung 2000; Nguyen 1991; Reitz 1995). For instance, from a review of nearly four hundred international publications, Reitz (1995) concludes that recent immigrants very often experience low rates of utilization with regard to many important social and health services, despite evidence of significant need and the fact that they contribute more to the economy through taxes than they use in services. This low utilization can be attributed to a number of barriers, including language and cultural difficulties. Other, more recent, studies emphasize employment barriers, including the devaluation of foreign credentials and work experience, as major challenges facing immigrants (Guo 2005; Leung 2000; Ma 1996).

While many commentators view barriers to social services for immigrants as cultural and linguistic issues, the persistence of racial inequality in immigrant settlement and adaptation can be attributed to the existing ideologies of "democratic racism" and universalism (Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees 2006). While Canadians are committed to democratic principles such as justice, equality, and fairness, many people still respond negatively towards efforts that aim to ameliorate the low status of minority groups. Henry et al. refer to the ideological context in which these two sets of conflicting values coexist as "democratic racism." They also state that failure to provide immigrants with accessible services can also be attributed to liberal universalism, which assumes that people are all the same and, therefore, require similar modes of service and intervention.

The major studies reviewed here found that traditional mainstream social service organizations were not responding adequately to the needs expressed by members of minority ethnic groups. Although some mainstream agencies have attempted to provide more accessible and equitable services by introducing a multicultural organizational model, the change often appears to be “cosmetic” rather than substantive as “the needs and interest of minorities are dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis rather than being integrated into the structure, policies, programs, and practices of the organization” (Henry et al. 2006, 191). As an alternative to this, ethno-racial organizations have undertaken the responsibility of providing more effective, responsive, and equitable services to minority communities.

In recent years, a number of studies pertaining to the role of ethnic organizations have focused on their relationship with the state. It was predicted that, with the rise of the welfare state in the 1960s, ethnic associations dealing with the individual adjustment and advancement of immigrants would become less important (Moodley 1983). The function of these associations, Moodley insists, would be largely assumed by a host of state-directed social agencies. Since the state offered financial and moral support to help immigrants whenever they needed it (except for a handful of lower-income and older individuals), immigrants would no longer need to rely on cultural self-help organizations for initial survival. While Moodley’s observation is interesting, a number of studies have shown that it is premature. On the contrary, ethnic organizations continue to play an important role in providing accessible and ethnic-sensitive services to help immigrants settle in and adapt to their new environments. The experience of the Jewish community of Montreal provides a good example (Weinfeld 2000).

One study that challenges the prediction of an early demise of ethnic organizations is Shirley Jenkins’s *Ethnic Associations and the Welfare State* (1988). After examining the role of ethnic organizations in five countries – Australia, Israel, the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Kingdom – Jenkins concludes that ethnic organizations range from those that are well organized and offer a broad spectrum of professional services to those that are less well organized, offering hardly any services at all. On the whole, ethnic organizations act as social service providers, maintain ethnic identities, and promote integration. In addition, they function as the “link” or “broker” between newcomers and formal service providers. In some circumstances, they may “provide the only decent or nearly decent help available to some minority groups” (Cheetham 1988, 147). Jenkins (1988, 275) suggests that, to some people, ethnic organizations are the “best-kept secret in social work.”

Jenkins's comparative studies also reveal national differences among the five countries. For instance, Australia, Israel, and the United States sought new immigrants to populate their countries and to increase their labour supply. Therefore, ethnic associations for immigrants in these countries received formal approval and were incorporated into the network of community support. Ethnic organizations were "simultaneously bureaucratized and non-bureaucratized" with a mix of public, semi-public, and voluntary support (Korazim 1988, 155). In contrast, ethnic associations in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom appear to have been less effective as instruments of social service delivery. Despite the national differences, ethnic organizations across national borders share common challenges. They are usually "low on resources, understaffed," and "function from inadequate premises" (Casey 1988, 262). The short-term nature of their funding has resulted in "insecurity" and "inflexibility," greatly restricting the development of their services.

Besides providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services, immigrant service organizations can play an active political advocacy role in combating and eliminating all forms of racism related to social services (Beyene et al. 1996). Unlike Beyene et al., Ng (1996) is not so optimistic about the role that ethnic organizations play, especially as advocates. She contends that state-funded ethnic organizations function as an extension of the coordinated activities of the state. Through funding requirements and accountability procedures, the state exercises a form of social control. In other words, ethnic organizations offer the state an alternative way to dissipate potential dissension and to maintain class domination, thus blunting their initial attempts at advocacy.

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The founding and historical development of SUCCESS mirrored, and was influenced by, Canada's immigration policy. To understand the founding of SUCCESS, it is necessary to examine the history of the Chinese in Canada, focusing in particular on the development of Chinese voluntary organizations.

From Confederation to the 1960s, Canada selected immigrants on the basis of racial background, with the British and Western Europeans being the most "desirable" citizens and with Asians and Africans being viewed as "unassimilable" and, therefore, as "undesirable." After the Second World War, Canadian immigration policy continued to be

“highly restrictive” despite external and internal pressures for an open-door policy (Knowles 1997). By the mid-1960s, when Canada experienced its “greatest postwar boom” since the end of the Second World War (Whitaker 1991, 18), Europe, the traditional source of this country’s immigrants, was no longer able to meet Canadian needs. Consequently, the Canadian government turned its recruitment efforts to traditionally restricted areas such as Asia. In 1967, the Liberal government introduced a “point system,” which based the selection of immigrants on their “education, skills and resources” rather than on their racial and religious backgrounds (19). According to Whitaker, this new system represented “an historic watershed,” which established the principle that Canadian immigration policy should be “colour blind” (*ibid.*, 19). The new policy has not been without critics, however, and Matas (1996, 100), for one, has argued that it favours “some racial groups ... against others.”

Despite criticism, the “point system” successfully reversed the pattern of immigration from Europe to Asia and other Third World countries. By the mid-1970s, more immigrants were arriving from Third World countries than from the developed world, the largest number coming from Asia, followed by the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa. Among the Asian group, many were from Hong Kong (Li 2003).

According to Wong (1992), since the end of the Second World War, emigrants from Hong Kong have come in three major waves. The first wave occurred between 1958 and 1961, owing to dramatic changes in Hong Kong agriculture. A political crisis, the 1967 riot, which spilled over from the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) in China, triggered the second wave. The riot began with a demonstration led by local communists and ended with violence and terrorism. Threatened by bombs and political instability, thousands left Hong Kong for popular destinations, of which the United States and Canada were the most favoured. Many of these migrants were members of the Hong Kong elite. The third wave of emigration began in the 1980s. According to the 1984 Sino-British Agreement on the future of Hong Kong, the colony was to become a special administrative region under the rule of China in 1997. Many of the residents, who were worried about their future under Beijing, began to leave Hong Kong. Among them, a large number found homes in Canada. Wong describes this latest group of emigrants as “predominantly ‘yuppies’ – young, educated, middle class professionals” (4).

Almost as soon as the Chinese arrived in British Columbia in 1858, they began organizing a remarkable number of voluntary mutual aid fraternal associations, partly in response to the racial discrimination they

suffered. In fact, the Chinese produced proportionately more mutual aid associations than did any other immigrant group in Canada (Willmott 1969). A number of Canadian studies have been conducted pertaining to the development of Chinese voluntary associations (Li 1998; Wickberg 1979, 1981; Willmott 1969, 1970). Based on an analysis of the existing literature, they can be divided into four groups. The first was the clan association, in which members were grouped under the same surname; the second was the district/locality association, in which membership was limited to Chinese from the same village or county in China; the third was the fraternal-political association, which included the Chinese Freemasons, or Zhi Gong Dang and the Guo Min Dang (while clan and district associations were mutually exclusive, the fraternal association cut across other associational lines); and the fourth was the community-wide Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA). Originally established in 1884 in Victoria to organize Chinese support for the war against the Japanese, the CBA developed into an umbrella organization to represent the entire local Chinese community. Wickberg (1979, 90) argues that the CBA-type organization was the one “most often given official or unofficial status by host governments as the sole spokesman for Chinese Community interests.”

The various functions performed by these organizations included: “providing aid and social services, resolving the community’s internal disputes, and dealing with the external pressures of discrimination and segregation” (Li 1998, 77). With the CBA as an exception, the first three types of voluntary associations “functioned largely as mutual-aid fraternal associations” (Chow 1976, 133). These associations played an important role in helping each other, especially when mainstream society refused to assist immigrants.

Chinese voluntary associations declined in the 1960s and 1970s because they were quite isolated from mainstream society and could not provide the kind of help new Chinese immigrants needed (Chow 1976; Mitchell 1998; Ng 1999; Willmott 1970). Many of the new immigrants arriving after the 1950s came from Hong Kong and a modernizing China. They “found the traditionalist clan and locality association of Chinatown anachronistic and refused to participate in them” (Willmott 1970, 50). Both cultural and demographic changes contributed to the creation of a community that was “more heterogeneous, and in certain ways more integrated into Canadian society” (Chow 1976, 130). Instead of seeking help from the traditional associations, Chow argues, these new immigrants were “more concerned with government contributive welfares

and government assistance programs” (132). A combination of these factors indicated that a new type of organization was needed to meet the needs of Chinese immigrants in the changing context of Chinese communities in Canada.


THE FOUNDING OF SUCCESS

Many of the early postwar immigrants from Hong Kong came through family reunification programs. Most had a limited grasp of English and found it difficult to gain access to mainstream social service agencies. At the same time, they did not fit into most of the traditional Chinese voluntary clan or locality associations. In Vancouver, many relied on the conveniently located “Pender Y,” the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) at the corner of Dunlevy Street and Pender Street in Chinatown. Many of the new arrivals were familiar with the “Y” in Hong Kong and soon took advantage of its services. It offered information, in both English and Cantonese, on social services, housing, law and schools; hired a counsellor to help immigrants with social problems; and initiated a women-in-training project (later funded by the federal government) to give immigrant women an opportunity to learn new skills. However, providing such broad settlement services was beyond the mandate of the “Pender Y,” and it could not cope with increasing demands for help. Moreover, Linda Leong, a founding member of SUCCESS who came to Canada in 1967 from Hong Kong to study for her BA in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of British Columbia (where she also received her master’s degree in social work), recalled that the “Y’s” many other activities meant that it was not in a “strong position to speak for the Chinese community.” She believed that community members “should be in a better position to speak for themselves.”¹

Maggie Ip, the founding chair of SUCCESS, had moved to Ottawa from Hong Kong to obtain her master’s degree in education in 1966. She remembered how she and others, many of whom, like her, were well-educated immigrants from Hong Kong and were fluent in both English and Cantonese, encountered cultural and language barriers that isolated new immigrants from mainstream social service agencies. To bridge that “gap,” several enthusiastic and conscientious citizens and welfare professionals, including herself, Jonathan Lau, Mei-Chan Lin, Pauline To, and Linda Leong, initiated the discussions that led to the creation

¹ Interview with Linda Leong, 23 October 1998.

of success. They worked for several years to organize programs and services for new immigrants before forming the first Board of Directors of success.² Ip explained that “eventual integration” was the ultimate goal of every program that success offered.

“SUCCESS” was carefully chosen as an acronym for the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society, but this is not an exact translation of the Chinese term, which is Zhong Qiao Hu Zhu Hui (中僑互助會), or the Chinese Immigrant Mutual Help Society. However, within the Chinese community, it quickly became known as Zhong Qiao (中僑). Jonathan Lau explained the choice of name and logo: “for the Chinese name, instead of using a wood bridge, we use people [Chinese immigrants] as a bridge. That’s the way we chose the name. Qiao is the human side ... [for] the logo [, we just changed one side of the character [Qiao – as in Hua Qiao], very easy for people to accept.”³

The first task of the board was to apply to Health and Welfare Canada (now Health Canada) for a three-year grant for a demonstration project – the Chinese Connection – that would provide a link between the social service agencies and the immigrants. To find out what was wanted, they held a public forum in November 1973, which was attended by over three hundred people, including both community members and representatives of many of the social service agencies that dealt with immigrants. Over two hundred people signed a petition endorsing the Chinese Connection application. The following February, success was officially registered as a non-profit, non-political organization under the provincial Societies Act.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SUCCESS

Once formally established, success opened its headquarters in Chinatown. This location was convenient not only for those who lived in Chinatown or nearby but also for Chinese from elsewhere in Greater Vancouver, who would go to Chinatown via public transit to take advantage of its stores and professional services. In addition to immigrants from Hong Kong, success’s early clients included mainland immigrants from Taishan County and the surrounding areas of Guangdong province who required services that were not provided by other agencies. The Chinese Connection Project hired seven staff members, including four

² Maggie Ip served as chair, Philip Leong as vice-chair, Faith Lam as secretary, and Sister Teresa Fung as treasurer. The other eleven founding members served as an interim board.

³ Interview with Jonathan Lau, 30 November 1998.

who were already community workers.⁴ At first, in order to allow the staff time to do paper work, make contacts, and conduct other tasks, the office was only open for half a day for referral services. During this stage, the organization mainly provided basic settlement services such as language interpretation and information services. In addition, the staff worked on developing links with community agencies and volunteer services. SUCCESS also actively participated in the debate over the federal government's Green Paper on Immigration. To facilitate this process, the Immigration Policy Action Committee, a lobbying group, was formed in 1975. Following its establishment, the committee organized a three-day joint national conference with the Immigration Policy Study Committee, which was based in Toronto. The committee proposed changes to the Citizenship Act that would favour an equitable and liberal immigration policy, and it sensitized government to the needs of the Chinese community.

The 1977 expiry of the grant for the Chinese Connection Project caused a crisis; however, since SUCCESS's services were well used and were likely to be needed in the future, the board decided to carry on even though it had to dismiss most of the staff. At one point, the staff consisted only of the executive director and one staff member. Nevertheless, they served their clients with the help of SUCCESS members and volunteers. Maggie Ip recalled that "lots of Board members came down to help because there were people coming and we opened our door for three years ... That was a very difficult time. One very important ingredient to overcome is that everyone put aside their own personal interest. We want[ed] to make this Society develop and [be] strong."⁵ The ability of SUCCESS to carry on after its grant expired clearly demonstrated the spirit of self-help and mutual aid.

Because of SUCCESS's financial problems, Angela Kan, who became its executive director in 1977, worked with the board to rebuild the society through long-range planning, fund-raising, developing membership, and associating with the United Way. Kan, a social worker, initially joined SUCCESS in 1976. Born in Hong Kong and living in Winnipeg before moving to Vancouver, Kan was hired as executive director because of her background in social work, her bilingual abilities, and her earlier experience with the organization. A grant of funds from the federal Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) in 1979 was a

⁴ Paul Chan, Ambrose Hsiung, Elgin Lee, and Lilian To were community service workers. Jonathan Lau, who had been with the Neighbourhood Services Association, and Penelope Steward shared responsibilities for coordinating the project.

⁵ Interview with Maggie Ip, 26 September 1998.

turning point. That year too, the United Way of the Lower Mainland, an umbrella fund-raising group for a wide variety of charities, accepted SUCCESS as a member. As K.C. Li, the chair of SUCCESS from 1975 to 1981 observed, in addition to providing funding, membership in the United Way was “good for the prestige of SUCCESS. It put SUCCESS on the map.”⁶ With funding in place, SUCCESS could turn to long-term planning and accept a new challenge. In cooperation with the Vietnamese Refugees Assistance Association, chaired by K.C. Li, SUCCESS formed a citizens group to sponsor fifty Vietnamese refugee families and to provide resettlement services for them. The spirit of volunteerism, mutual help, and self-help continued and increased.

Other challenges soon faced SUCCESS as the number of immigrants from Hong Kong steadily increased in the 1980s and as earlier immigrants moved from Chinatown to other parts of the city, mainly the Kingsway district of South Vancouver. In the 1980s, with 18 to 23 percent of its population Chinese-speaking, that area had the second largest Chinese community in the city outside of Chinatown.⁷ To deal with this demographic change and to serve clients near their homes, SUCCESS initiated the Kingsway Community Outreach Project, which sought to develop a sense of community participation among Chinese Canadians in that area. Nicholas Lo, who had been program director of finance and asset management at SUCCESS, began to work at the Kingsway project in 1984 and became its manager. The following year, the project office was moved to Fraser Street, where SUCCESS opened its first branch office.

While the federal government funded new programs related to employment, including skills training and orientation for job seekers, SUCCESS had to find different sources of funding for its other programs. One of the most important of these was the Vancouver Foundation, a philanthropic non-governmental community foundation that consists of a permanent collection of endowed funds, the income of which is distributed to support the activities of charitable organizations across British Columbia. In 1986, the foundation matched the \$25,000 that SUCCESS raised in 1985-86 and also administered SUCCESS's endowment fund, which had reached \$60,000 by December 1986 and \$160,000 by October 1989. The “landmark” moment of joining the Vancouver Foundation meant,⁸ in the words of Angela Kan, “a commitment ... that

⁶ Interview with Kuo Chu Li, 14 December 1998.

⁷ Interview with Nicholas Lo, 20 August 1999.

⁸ Interview with Kuo Chu Li, 14 December 1998.

success will never go out of sight.”⁹ To raise funds, SUCCESS engaged in a variety of activities, including the Walk with the Dragon Walkathon in Stanley Park, which was jointly sponsored by the Lower Mainland’s United Way and two television stations – Hong Kong TVB and ATV (Asia Television). The walkathon became an annual event and one of the two major fund-raising activities, along with the Fund-raising Gala Dinner at General Motors Place.

Yet, SUCCESS had not solved its financial problems. In 1986, Sandra Wilking, SUCCESS chair from 1985 to 1987, reported that the board had had to cut back its administrative and program staff and to raise approximately \$100,000 through such activities as dinners, raffles, donations, and the walkathon as well as by securing new members. She explained that “this challenge is coming at a time when the demand for our services is increasing and government funding at all levels is not expanding” (Wilking 1986, 3).

The board faced more than financial problems. While it was pleased that Angela Kan’s work was recognized with Kan’s being appointed as a Citizenship Court judge, it regretted the loss of “a committed, innovative and hardworking executive director” (Wilking 1986, 2). Replacing her involved a long, difficult process as the search extended across Canada, the United States, and Hong Kong. Finally, the board selected Lilian To, a social worker who had served on the original staff team when SUCCESS was founded. Within a few months of taking office, Eugene Lee, the chair of the board (1987-89), remarked favourably on her dedication, perseverance, and rapport with the staff and board, which increased morale and created a sense of unity (Lee 1988).

Lilian To took over at a time when SUCCESS was experiencing unprecedented organizational growth due to a near doubling of the number of immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as students from China (See Table 1). The increased demand for services called for “new approaches and direction” (To 1988, 9). In 1989, SUCCESS provided more than 90,000 service contacts, an increase of almost 50 percent over the previous year, and expected further growth (8).

The 1986 Census of Canada reveals that most Chinese-Canadians still lived in East Vancouver near Strathcona, but a growing number were moving into suburban areas such as Richmond and Burnaby (Hiebert 1999). Many of the new arrivals settled directly in Richmond, a suburb to the south of Vancouver and close to the airport. To serve them, SUCCESS opened its third office in the summer of 1989. The new office,

⁹ Interview with Angela Kan, 11 January 1999.

TABLE 1
*Chinese Immigrants to Vancouver,
 by Country of Last Permanent Residence, 1980-98*

	VANCOUVER CENSUS METROPOLITAN AREA		P.R. CHINA		HONG KONG		TAIWAN	
	Total #	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1980	3557	1759	50	1339	38	189	5	
1981	3937	2198	56	1332	34	171	4	
1982	2691	999	37	1364	51	103	4	
1983	2490	637	26	1551	62	120	5	
1984	2375	570	24	1527	64	104	4	
1985	2444	506	21	1581	65	148	6	
1986	1868	470	25	1023	55	208	1	
1987	4360	616	14	3111	71	385	9	
1988	6499	649	10	4716	73	797	12	
1989	7078	944	13	4499	64	1336	19	
1990	10554	1151	11	7422	70	1663	16	
1991	12034	3189	26	5960	50	2591	22	
1992	15836	1949	12	9430	60	4052	26	
1993	18987	1966	10	10705	56	5833	31	
1994	23072	2628	11	15253	66	4612	20	
1995	19867	2915	15	11226	57	5192	26	
1996	25299	3977	16	11862	47	8885	35	
1997	22392	4683	21	8177	37	8936	40	
1998	13271	5476	41	2121	16	4581	35	

Source: Landed Immigrant Data System, 2003.

Note: P.R. China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan constitute the major source of Chinese immigrants to Vancouver, while a small percentage came from other parts of the world.

which offered career consultation and job referrals as well as traditional services, immediately attracted over 150 volunteers and quickly became an important part of this growing community of Chinese immigrants. To (1989, 8) reported that it met the “service needs of local residents” and established “bridges and linkages” for them.

While continuing to deliver social services, SUCCESS also moved into advocacy and, after two racist incidents in the media, began fighting for social justice. In the first case, a CTV program, the W5 “Campus

Giveaway,” erroneously depicted Chinese Canadians as foreigners and accused them of taking educational opportunities from white Canadians at the expense of Canadian tax-payers. “Dim Sum Diaries,” a CBC radio program, satirized the accents and stereotyped the behaviour of new Chinese immigrants. SUCCESS joined the national campaign against “Campus Giveaway” and led the protest against “Dim Sum Diaries.” As a result, CTV apologized, and the CBC cancelled “Dim Sum Diaries” and publicly acknowledged its adverse effects on many Chinese, especially recent immigrants. Angela Kan recalled that, while in the past the Chinese community had not been prepared to protest its being portrayed in terms of “drugs and gangs,” it was now able to fight for “civil justice.”¹⁰

The SUCCESS Board of Directors congratulated the staff and volunteers for providing professional social work and for sacrificing “personal and family lives to ensure that whatever task demanded of them [would] be dutifully fulfilled” (Wan 1989, 7). Similarly, Maurice Copithorne, a former Canadian commissioner in Hong Kong and one of the few non-Chinese board members, recalled how he was “always impressed” with the professionalism with which SUCCESS workers handled social welfare issues.¹¹ Indeed, the Chinese community as a whole appreciated SUCCESS’s work in helping immigrants and developing the community. The CBA, for example, gave SUCCESS its Community Service Award and Certificate of Merit in 1980 and 1986, respectively. In addition, in 1989, the Chinese Canadian National Council, which was established in 1979 as the result of a national protest against the CTV Campus Giveaway program and which, by the 1980s, had grown into a national organization with twenty-eight chapters, accepted SUCCESS as a full voting member.

In the early 1990s, with the transfer of Hong Kong from British to Chinese rule approaching in 1997, a number of Hong Kong residents moved to the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (See Table 1). Because many new immigrants settled in the suburbs, especially Richmond and Burnaby (Hiebert 1999), SUCCESS opened the Burnaby-Coquitlam Office in November 1991 and the Newcomers Integration Network (NINT) for the Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody) in September 1993. The Burnaby-Coquitlam office offered, among other things, family and youth counselling, immigrant orientation programs, and English language training. However, SUCCESS no longer confined its efforts to Chinese immigrants. The NINT Program served

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Interview with Maurice Copithorne, 25 May 1999.

immigrants from Korea and Iran, whose own communities could provide only limited support, in addition to Chinese-speaking immigrants. The federal government provided funding for multilingual services.

For the sake of effective and efficient settlement, Employment and Immigration Canada (later, Citizenship and Immigration Canada) had found a need for a comprehensive post-landing, pre-settlement orientation and referral service. Through the Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), SUCCESS won the contract to help immigrants on landing. To greet immigrants, SUCCESS launched the Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN) on 15 October 1992, opening a kiosk at Vancouver International Airport that offered group and individual orientation in fourteen different languages and provided direct services, such as assistance with customs and immigration procedures and appropriate referrals for individual needs. The project provided immigrants of many backgrounds with a bridge to Canadian society and gave them a personal first point of contact while helping to relieve the frustration and confusion that many felt upon arrival.

Cooperation with the federal government continued. As Canadian policy shifted towards attracting business- and skill-oriented immigrants, SUCCESS conducted a feasibility study for a small business training and development centre in 1993 and developed training programs in its centre on West Broadway to prepare immigrants to start businesses. Although this venture seemed to contradict SUCCESS's original mandate of helping Chinese immigrants to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, Thomas Tam, the program director of Small Business Development and Training, described it as "an extension of our service base on the same mandate" of helping "newcomers and local people"¹² to overcome language and cultural barriers, especially in developing and conducting business in Canada.

At the same time as immigration from Hong Kong rose, many Mandarin speakers arrived from Taiwan and Mainland China (See Table 1). In fact, immigrants from Mainland China outnumbered those from Hong Kong in 1998, and Mainland China became the top source country for immigrants to Canada (Guo and DeVoretz 2006). Guo and DeVoretz's study also reveals that the recent arrivals constitute a substantially different group from those of former years. Their different language and background meant that they did not need the same services as had earlier immigrants. Some supporters of SUCCESS questioned the desirability of giving preferential treatment to one language group, but

¹² Interview with Thomas Tam, 6 August 1999.

Mason Loh, the chair (1994-98), successfully argued that it was necessary to make these newcomers feel comfortable and to have a sense of belonging. Moreover, he asserted that the number of Mandarin-speaking immigrants was likely to increase whereas the number of Cantonese speakers would probably decline. Thus, SUCCESS expanded to meet new challenges. In 1992, it hired six Mandarin-speaking staff members and established an advisory committee to address the needs of, and develop programs for, this group. As the number of Mandarin speakers continued to rise, SUCCESS opened one Mandarin Service Centre in Vancouver's affluent Oakridge area and, with support from the Hong Kong Bank of Canada, a second (in July 1996) in Chinatown.

Meanwhile, since 1988, SUCCESS's Board of Directors had been making plans for a permanent social services complex. Although the city offered a site, namely Block 17 between the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Gardens and the International Village, for the 26,000-square-foot complex, planning and raising the necessary \$5.4 million took time. When the building was completed in 1998, it represented permanence and stability, reduced general operating costs, accommodated youth, gave seniors who previously had had to move from one building to another a stable meeting place,¹³ and, above all, became a symbol of pride and created a sense of belonging. The new Social Service Complex was only one of two major physical accomplishments. At the same time as SUCCESS approved the construction of the complex, it began planning a multi-level care facility project in Chinatown that would provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services for a growing population of seniors. Progress on this building was slow until the provincial government granted \$12.2 million towards its construction.

SUCCESS continues to build bridges through consultations and presentations to schools, parents, and community groups. It has also taken the initiative to cooperate with other agencies – such as the police, the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia (AMSSA), the Multicultural Health Coalition, and the Canadian Ethnocultural Council – in workshops, conferences, and programs to promote social awareness, to encourage intergroup relations, and to address issues of multiculturalism, racism, employment equity, and media relations. SUCCESS has also acted as an advocate in the areas of immigration; social, health, and education policies; and has proposed family and child protection regulations. Individual members of the staff and the board of directors have served on committees of

¹³ Interview with Wilfred Wan, 11 July 1999.

the city council, the school board, federal and provincial government departments, and social service organizations. Lilian To explained the importance of building bridges to both sides:

Our clients should not be focusing only on the immigrant population, our clients should also be the mainstream ... We have to work with employers and help them understand where the immigrants come from, and help them to understand that they can contribute to their businesses. So our target now is not only immigrants, but also mainstream communities ... There is still a lot of work we have to do with mainstream organizations, mainstream communities, or mainstream employers. That is our target now.¹⁴

ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF SUCCESS

How successful is SUCCESS? Starting in 1973, with only four full-time professional social workers who made two thousand client contacts per year, by 1998 SUCCESS comprised a professional team of over two hundred people who made over 200,000 client contacts annually through its eight locations in the Lower Mainland. Its budget increased from less than \$100,000 per annum to \$8 million. Its services have expanded from basic settlement work, such as language interpretation and the provision of information in Chinatown, to a holistic approach that helps immigrants become competent socially, culturally, linguistically, and economically wherever Chinese have settled in numbers throughout the Lower Mainland. Moreover, it also serves immigrants from non-Chinese backgrounds and provides services in many languages. As Mason Loh observed:

We are reaching out in our work ... to the mainstream, the media, government all around ... Today it [SUCCESS] is no longer just a community group ... it's part of the institutions of Vancouver ... When it [SUCCESS] does something, it is noticeable not just in the Chinese community but in the mainstream as well.¹⁵

Many social forces have contributed to the success of SUCCESS. First, the profile of immigrants changed owing to changes in Canadian immigration policies (such as the adoption of the point system), the introduction of the business immigrant category, and the opening of the immigration division in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. One

¹⁴ Interview with Lilian To, 29 January 1999.

¹⁵ Interview with Mason Loh, 15 February 1999.

consequence of the most recent policy change was the increase of professional and business immigrants, especially those from Taiwan and China. Second, the needs of newly arrived immigrants differed from those of their early counterparts, and SUCCESS responded to meet these changing needs. The federal and provincial government also influenced SUCCESS by organizing (and withdrawing) funds for various projects. In all cases, SUCCESS adapted to changed circumstances. Its success can be attributed to its professionalism; an internal democratic electoral system; timing; and, especially, the presence of a dedicated team of founders, board members, volunteers, and staff. Their shared compassion, empathy, dedication, and common experience were formative influences in propelling SUCCESS forward, while their fluency in both English and Chinese enabled them to negotiate with organizations both inside and outside Chinatown.

Naturally, the Chinese community has been the greatest beneficiary of SUCCESS because SUCCESS has bridged the gap between community and mainstream social service agencies and has created a safety net for Chinese immigrants (i.e., a community in which they can feel that they belong). In addition, it has fought for social justice and equity, and it has educated its clients about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. To many immigrants, SUCCESS has been a stepping stone to integration into mainstream society. As well, SUCCESS raised the profile of the Chinese in Vancouver and demonstrated that they are not just an isolated group confined to Chinatown; rather, they consist of multiple communities, all of which contribute to the social, cultural, economic, and political spheres of Canadian life. At the same time, SUCCESS reshaped the well-established social order in the Chinese community, forming a tripod relationship among ethnic Chinese organizations in Vancouver, the Chinese Benevolent Association, and the Chinese Cultural Centre (Ng 1999). In the 1990s, the Chinatown Merchant Association joined this group to form a quadrilateral arrangement that has worked to “safeguard the interests and welfare” of the Chinese community (Mah 1998). Unlike the clan and locality associations, SUCCESS was a modern association mandated to serve all new Chinese immigrants regardless of their native locality or their surname. SUCCESS represented the collective efforts of immigrants to negotiate fairer terms to promote social justice and equity in the new society.

Furthermore, through community development events and various activities, SUCCESS has helped sensitize the mainstream non-Chinese organizations about their service approaches. It has even changed public

attitudes towards immigrants by enhancing mutual understanding and shortening the social distance between immigrants and mainstream society. SUCCESS has also helped other ethnic groups either directly through its programs or by providing a model for them to follow. Finally, SUCCESS provides an affordable model, characterized by its strong community support, through which governments may provide community services to hard-to-reach ethnic communities. Yet, SUCCESS also benefits from government funding and from federal multiculturalism policies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the history of SUCCESS has been characterized by dualities. It was founded to fill a gap in both the Chinese community and mainstream society; it served individual needs and offered institutional support; and it provided a way for government and mainstream organizations to approach an ethnic community as well as a means for immigrants to step into mainstream society. Government funding was involved in some of its programs, but SUCCESS also fund-raised; it provided direct services and also advocated on behalf of immigrants; it served both Chinese and non-Chinese; and it used both volunteers and paid staff.

This study shows that the relationship between SUCCESS and the state is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, government funding made it possible for SUCCESS to provide more services to help immigrants and, consequently, contributed to making SUCCESS a highly respectable voluntary immigrant service and advocacy group; on the other hand, by providing this funding, the government was also able to legitimize its own policies and to carry out its own agenda.

This study challenges the prediction of the early demise of ethnic organizations, showing that ethnic organizations can play a central role in helping immigrants to settle and adapt in a new society by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services and advocacy. It also demonstrates that ethnic organizations can act as a mediator between individual immigrants and the state. They provide a means to investigate the dynamics between the agency of individual immigrants and the structural, or institutional, constraints they face in exercising that agency. As transitional institutions, they ease the process of immigrant settlement, adaptation, and integration. The experience of SUCCESS has shown that ethno-racial organizations can be more effective than mainstream organizations because they are more closely connected with and responsive to ethnic community needs.

Now in its thirty-fourth year, SUCCESS remains a growing, successful organization that is continuing to serve the needs of the Vancouver Chinese community. In 2006, it had a professional staff of more than 350, 10,000 volunteers, and an annual budget of \$17 million. One major development since 1998 involved the expansion of its programs to include health education and services. This was marked by the opening of the SUCCESS Simon K.Y. Lee Seniors Care Home in 2001 (103 beds), the Health and Wellness Centre in 2003, Day Care Centre in 2003 (serving twenty to twenty-five seniors per day), and the Harmony House Assisted Living Residence in 2006 (thirty-three suites). When SUCCESS celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, it achieved accreditation status with the Council on Accreditation, an international independent organization committed to promoting standards, quality, and accreditation in human services. Unfortunately, these achievements were saddened by the sudden death of Lilian To, the late CEO of SUCCESS, in July 2005. In transition, T.N. Foo was the interim CEO until the appointment of Tung Chan, a former Vancouver city councillor and vice-president of the TD Bank Financial Group, in November 2006. To was regarded as a key figure in the growth and development of SUCCESS, particularly since she became executive director in 1988. In his letter to SUCCESS mourning the loss of To, Paul Martin, then prime minister of Canada, encouraged SUCCESS members to follow “in Lilian’s footsteps by providing dedicated and selfless services to others who strive to better themselves and our great country.”

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APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH METHOD

During the process of research design and data collection, I tried to strike a balance between what Marshall and Rossman (2006) refer to as efficiency considerations and design flexibility. I spent six months gathering and analyzing documents that would supplement other qualitative methods, such as participant observation and interviewing (Marshall and Rossman 2006). The information collected helped me

to develop an understanding of the basic structure of the organization and the programs and services it offered during its development. Furthermore, this was the starting point for me with regard to identifying potential interview participants.

All interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. Before each interview started, I assured interviewees that any information they gave me would be kept strictly confidential. I informed them of their right to cancel the interview at any time and to withdraw from the study before, during, or after the interview. Participants were also offered anonymity if they so wished. All participants agreed to allow me the use of their real names. One reason for this could be that they were proud to be part of *SUCCESS* and welcomed the opportunity to make their names public; another might be that assurances of anonymity were almost useless when participants held key positions in such a public organization (Phtiaka 1994).

Each interview took one to one and a-half hours to complete, and the whole process took one year. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a copy of the transcript was sent to the participants to verify content accuracy, along with an attached letter to thank them for their participation. This process gave participants a chance to protect themselves by excluding sensitive issues. It also went some way to addressing the problem of an unequal power relationship between the researcher and the researched (Bernard 1994).

At the beginning of the project, language was a concern. Since I do not speak Cantonese, the participants could only be interviewed in English or Mandarin Chinese. I decided that, if some people were not comfortable in either language, I would find an interpreter who was fluent in both English and Cantonese. Before each interview, I explained my plan to the participants. Everybody agreed to be interviewed in English, probably because they had resided in Canada for many years and were now more comfortable with English than with Mandarin Chinese.

To analyze my interview data, I developed a four-stage process: (1) identify main points, (2) search for salient themes and recurring patterns, (3) group common themes and patterns into related categories, and (4) compare all major categories with reference to the major theories in the field in order to form new perspectives. This four-stage process ensured that there was frequent interplay between data and theory.

In addition to the two major methods of research mentioned above, site visiting and participant observation helped me to contextualize

what I had read and heard about success. The use of multiple data sources and methods enabled me to take a triangulation approach to the research, thus ensuring its credibility.

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