

Downtown Eastside through the eyes of Chinese residents

By: King-mong Chan

Over the past weeks, I've been talking with Chinese people in the community at food line-ups, different organizations, and recently at a community meeting last Thursday (March 7th) where almost 35 people, mostly seniors, gathered inside the Oppenheimer Park House. Most of the people I've talked to don't speak or understand English. The community meeting also revealed that many of them have a low education level; they were not able to read Chinese or even write their own Chinese name. Given this, what are their experiences living in the DTES?

Similar to what was identified in CCAP's Community Vision for Change, the participants of the community meeting said that the DTES is an important place for them. Some of the main reasons were that "shopping is very convenient" and that "there are a lot of Chinese people" here. Their social life is central to them: many of them talked about how great it was to "socialize" with others and to "take part in social activities" with such as Bingo and Mah-Jong.

Again, it was also echoed in the meeting that there was a need for more "public housing" and the people at the meeting noted that "everything is getting more and more expensive." However, they also spoke specifically about the discrimination they face. One of them had an experience where she was told to "Go back to China" and "Go to Chinatown" by others. This discrimination was also sadly present in the food lines/services where they see non-Chinese people getting large amounts of food while their portions are much smaller. The language barrier is also very severe as people felt out of the loop with regards to events and programs and that there were only limited places where they could communicate their stories and opinions to other people and be understood.

CCAP will be organizing more such meetings and dialogue so Chinese speaking residents can add their voices and needs to a social justice plan for the future of the whole low-income community. With greater non-Chinese resident understanding of the lived experiences of Chinese people, CCAP hopes we can help them become more accepted as part of the DTES community.

從東端生活的中國人的角度去看他們的社區

作者：陳敬望

過去的幾個星期，我在不同的派發食物服務地點及服務機構和上週四（3月7日）在日本花園舉辦的社區會議內與中國人傾談。參加會議有近35人，多數是長者。他們大多數都不能講及聽英語。在這個會議內我們發現許多人的教育水平都很低。甚致有大部份的人都不懂中文（看及寫），連寫自己的中文名字都不能。在這個情況下，你說他們所過的生活及經歷是甚麼呢？

好像卡麗基社區行動計劃的報告：『社區改變的異象』裏所提及到參加會議的人都說市中心東端是一個對他們很重要的地方。主要原因是因為買東西很方便和因為東端有很多唐人。相信你們可以看到社交生活是對他們非常重要的。他們都說他們很高興可以在這裏與其他人聯誼及參加社交活動，例如：玩Bingo和打麻將等等。

參加者及其他住在東端的人都同樣說：『東端需要更多公屋。』我也聽到他們說：『全部東西都越來越貴。』還有他們都提及到他們被人歧視的經歷。有一位長者對我分享她有幾次被人叫她回中國或叫她去唐人街！很可悲的種族歧視都發生在派發食物服務地點，雖然他們看到非中國人獲得分配到大量的食物，但他們只得到的分量就特別小。他們也說到語言障礙亦是嚴重的問題，例如：他們很多時都很遲才得知有社區活動或有新的服務。他們也覺得沒有足夠的地點給他們去和人溝通和發表自己的想法，並很想可以被了解。

卡麗基社區行動計劃會繼續舉辦更多的社區會議和對話，使住在東端的中國人的聲音和需要能帶入一個為整個低收入社區的未來的社會公義計劃。我們希望透過非中國人更深入認識關於中國人過的生活及經歷，我們能幫助中國人被整個東端社群更加接納。