

We Are Listening

By: King-mong Chan

At our monthly community meeting in Cantonese in November, we participated in a "Listening Campaign," which sought to identify concerns and priorities for groups through listening to their members. The four questions that each participant at the meeting were asked were: 1. What are the key personal challenges in your life? 2. What brought you to these monthly community meetings Carnegie and why do you continue to come? 3. What would make things better for you, your family, and your community? 4. What are you willing to do with a group to make these changes happen?

The phrase "key personal challenges" did not seem to resonate with many of the participants and thus, many initially answered "nothing." But when the facilitator probed deeper, some answers emerged. As discussed in earlier articles, discrimination was again the most common response. This included not being able to receive food (i.e. fruits and vegetables) while others in the community did as well as an experience of being purposely stepped on while traveling on the bus. One participant elaborated, saying that one personal challenge was that the community was not unified. Other responses included health challenges, the high cost of medication, and feeling unsafe.

Many of the participants said that they came to the meetings because they wanted to speak out about matters important to them, learn more about issues in the community (including discrimination), Canadian news, matters of justice, as well as to socialize with others. One participant commented that other participants were like family to her.

The personal challenges the participants faced came to light when discussing what could make their lives better for them. Many said that an unified community where everyone is treated equally would make their lives better. Many also spoke of the need of having more social activities; social activities seemed very important to the group to prevent boredom, to encourage some exercise, as well as to see and socialize with friends. Having less expensive housing (i.e. rent) and medication (including Calcium) were also other common responses. One sobering response to this question was: "I'm old and I don't care."

Regarding what they were willing to do, responses varied depending on the individuals. Some said "no" and "if I were young, I would be a volunteer." Others displayed remarkable signs of solidarity with each other by saying they would come out to events to support and help each other with whatever issues they were facing because it was their duty to do so.

These are the participants' responses to the questions of the Listening Campaign. I hope these notes helps you further understand and know more about some members of the Chinese community in the Downtown Eastside.

我們聆聽

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在十一月份的粵語社區研討會內，大家參與一個『聆聽運動』。這運動的目的是籍着聆聽組員們大家首要關注的事。每一位參加者都被問及以下的問題：

1. 在你的生命裏，你個人的重要挑戰是甚麼？
2. 甚麼原因促使你來到在日本花園參加每月的會議？而你又為甚麼會繼續來？
3. 怎樣可以令到你和你的家庭及社區更好？
4. 你願意參加與一組人去改變現在的境況工作嗎？

好多參加者都不太了解『個人挑戰』這個詞語的意思，所以他們都回答『沒有』，但當主持人講解後，就有答案了。正如早期的通訊文章所討論，歧視再次是最普遍的回響，這包括其他人可以獲得派發免費食物（如：水果、蔬菜），但他們就被拒絕。有分享者說出有一次乘搭巴士時被人故意踩她的腳趾。另有人說他個人的挑戰是社區的人不夠團結。其它的回響包括健康問題，昂貴的藥物及感覺不安全。

大多數的參加者說他們來的原因是：他們想表達對於他們重要的事情，知道更多有關社區消息（包括歧視），加國新聞、公義、及與其他人相交。有參加者表示她待其他人如親人一樣。

當討論到怎樣可以令他們生活得更好時，參加者的『個人挑戰』就浮現了。在一個團結的社區內，每一個人都能被一視同人」，這就可以令他們生活得更好。很多人都說出需要多些社區活動。社區活動的重要是解決他們的『悶』的感覺，鼓勵一些運動及社交。一般普遍的心聲是能有便宜的住屋（如：租金）及藥物（如：鈣片），就可以會生活得更好了。

關於他們願意做甚麼，答案是比較個人的。有些人說『不願意』、『如果我還年輕，我會做義工』。有些人表達出感人的團結心，來參與不同的會議及活動的目的是表示支持和在一些問題上大家互相幫助，這正是應該做的！

以上是參加者在『聆聽運動』的會議內所回答問題的答案。我希望這些分享會幫助你加深了解及認識更多有關華人在東端的社區。