

Vancouver Foundation
in collaboration with
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

Chinese Community Leaders' Summit
Thursday, December 13, 2007
S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Choi Hall

Introduction

Vancouver Foundation conducted the Metro Vancouver Vital Signs project between June and July 2007 by asking over 400 Metro Vancouver community and business leaders to assign a grade for each of the 12 key areas that define the metropolitan's livability and wellness. To understand how the Chinese community thinks about the metropolitan, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and Vancouver Foundation have decided to cooperate and conduct the same project within the Chinese community. An online polling was conducted by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. between November 30 and December 10, 2007. 108 local Chinese had participated in the polling. With the same questions asked in Vancouver Foundation's earlier study, the participants were asked to grade Metro Vancouver's performance in the 12 key areas based on their impression and experience.

The results were officially released on December 13, 2007, at the Chinese Community Leaders Summit. Over 30 Chinese community leaders from different areas attended the summit and re-evaluated Metro Vancouver's performance in the 12 areas by interactive grading. A discussion session was held immediately after the grading. Facilitated by Barbara Grantham, Vice President (Community Leadership) of Vancouver Foundation, and Tung Chan, CEO of S.U.C.C.E.S.S., the attendees shared their thoughts and suggested possible actions to improve the current situations of the Metropolitan.

Discussion Minutes

Getting Around -

Vital Signs grade: C-
SUCCESS online grade: C+
Community Leaders' grade: C-

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 4%; B - 11%; C - 39%; D - 36%; F - 11%

Getting Food -

Vital Signs grade: C+
SUCCESS online grade: B
Community Leaders' grade: B-

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 13%; B - 47%; C - 30%; D - 10%; F - 0%

Arts & Culture -

Vital Signs grade: B
SUCCESS online grade: C+
Community Leaders' grade: B-

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 11%; B - 44%; C - 37%; D - 7%; F - 0%

Discussion:

Comment - The real Chinese culture has barely been touched by the non-Chinese community. As a multi-cultural society, we have to go deeper than just scratching on the surface. For example, the BCIT Confucius Institute, which promotes cultural exchange, economic and business development, international trade, and Chinese language instruction, is a resource that not many people know about.

Barbara - The perceptions of people often differ from the actual factual data presented in the report. For instance, transportation figures show that commute times are actually going down, but public perception disagrees with that. It's important to address the disconnect between reality and perception.

Comment - The mainstream public needs to spend more time in understanding Chinese history, philosophy, and the ethnic differences between the cultures. Some believe they are culturally sensitive by observing a lion dance and thinking, “oh, isn’t that nice that they like to dance.” There is so much more to our culture than that.

Tung - This is why we are hosting events such as this. We act as a bridge between the Chinese and Canadian communities. It’s important to understand that we have a voice, and it’s important to use that voice to move us forward as a multicultural society - we’re not just a song and dance institutional activity. Everyone from the Chinese community needs to step out and share our culture with other people.

Belonging & Leadership -

Vital Signs grade: B-
SUCCESS online grade: B-
Community Leaders’ grade: B-

Community Leaders’ breakdown of grade:
A - 4%; B - 45%; C - 37%; D - 15%; F - 0%

Environment -

Vital Signs grade: C+
SUCCESS online grade: B
Community Leaders’ grade: B

Community Leaders’ breakdown of grade:
A - 10%; B - 53%; C - 30%; D - 7%; F - 0%

Discussion:

Barbara - Why the difference between the Chinese community and the Vital Signs graders?

Comment - As an immigrant population, we haven’t been here as long to witness the changes that have occurred over time.

Comment - Having travelled extensively in Southeast Asia, Canada is a paradise in comparison. Canadians need to travel more to appreciate what they have here.

Comment - I echo that opinion, but having just moved back from Ottawa, there’s a difference even between here and there. In Ottawa, the recycling

programs are not as developed as they are in Vancouver. You can put your old refrigerator out on the curb, and the garbage man will pick it up.

Gap Between Rich & Poor -

Vital Signs grade: D
SUCCESS online grade: D
Community Leaders' grade: C

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 4%; B - 21%; C - 32%; D - 29%; F - 14%

Discussion:

Comment - People in this room are doing well - we're all middle to upper-class - which is unlike new immigrants who are not as affluent and lacking jobs that match their skills. Because the people here are sitting above average, the perception is different.

Comment - The Chinese people work very hard, but they can never get to the top. There is a certain kind of discrimination going on in society here. But, between friends, there is not a big gap and we help each other out. If society did a better job at welcoming new immigrants and helped them get better jobs, there would be less difference.

Getting Started -

Vital Signs grade: C
SUCCESS online grade: C
Community Leaders' grade: C-

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 0%; B - 16%; C - 48%; D - 35%; F - 0%

Comment - I have a lot of friends who are professionals and have high credentials; however, when they've tried to join professional organizations, they are blocked because the standards are slanted in a way that keeps them out. This is a legal issue that must be addressed to reform these standards so they can participate too.

Barbara - We know, and this is becoming a more pressing issue. We are not realizing our national competitive advantage because of it. At Vancouver Foundation, we are partnering with key players - the Provincial government, the Board of Trade, SUCCESS, MOSAIC - to address the issue of foreign credentials and how we can ease the pathways for new immigrants to find meaningful employment.

Tung - We recognize that the way in which foreign credentials are being handled is a big problem. We have been talking with all levels of government - Ottawa, Victoria - as well as professional immigrants to partner with Vancouver Foundation and the Board of Trade to help resolve this situation. Feedback like yours needs to be heard more. Talk to your local politicians, MLAs, MP, mayor. Send them a letter. We now have a minority government and there will be an election soon. Go to the all-candidate meetings and ask for timelines, budgets - don't take any lip service.

Comment - As a past director of Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA), representing 450 immigrant and refugee settlement agencies from across Canada, I wrote a report for the Finance Standing Committee on how to make Canada more competitive in the global market. There are 20 recommendations in my report.

Health & Wellness -

Vital Signs grade: B
SUCCESS online grade: B-
Community Leaders' grade: B

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 14%; B - 50%; C - 18%; D - 14%; F - 4%

Discussion:

Barbara - Not much difference here. Our health overall is very good; however, it's the sub-populations that are a concern. The long-term outcome of children at risk is a concern and those of Aboriginal and First Nations and new immigrant populations in particular.

Housing -

Vital Signs grade: D
SUCCESS online grade: D
Community Leaders' grade: C

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 4%; B - 25%; C - 32%; D - 21%; F - 18%

Discussion:

Comment - As Chinese, most of us like to own a house, and do so. Therefore, we feel housing is better than the other graders.

Barbara - The Conference Board of Canada released a report yesterday comparing elements of various cities across the country. Vancouver was rated 7th, and the number one reason was the prohibitive cost of housing that prevents people from moving here. The dream of owning a home has become just a dream for many, as the cost has gone beyond the normal reach.

Learning -

Vital Signs grade: B
SUCCESS online grade: B-
Community Leaders' grade: B-

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 10%; B - 45%; C - 32%; D - 13%; F - 0%

Discussion:

Barbara - The results here are much like those for Health. Our overall capacity is high, but, again, it's the sub-populations that are left behind and vulnerable - children living in poverty, immigrant populations, etc.

Safety -

Vital Signs grade: B-
SUCCESS online grade: C-
Community Leaders' grade: C-

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 4%; B - 11%; C - 39%; D - 39%; F - 7%

Discussion:

Comment - I would like to know when Vancouver Foundation did their study?

Barbara - It was done in June.

Comment - I believe the reason the grades are so different is that that's half a year time-gap and we are mostly concerned about the Chinese community.

Barbara - There have been a lot of high-profile incidents in the media lately that have raised public perceptions. However, the stats are consistent in that over time crime - in the main - is on the decrease.

Comment - If you take a walk through Chinatown - especially Hastings Street - you'll know why Chinese people don't feel safe.

Comment - The crime situation is a concern for all of us. Local governments need to put more money into the pot. Prevention is as important as protection, and the public needs to be educated. This issue has to be squarely faced by politicians.

Barbara - The Vital Signs report speaks about our safety overall, not just crime. There are a lot of things to think about, like seat-belt usage, bicycle helmets, disaster response, adequate flood plain protection. I acknowledge people's concern about crime, and we also need to think more broadly about safety issues.

Comment - Chinese people are still concerned about crime. Seat belts are not a problem for us. Criminals are. I've been here a long time. What I see is that the law appears to value the human rights of the criminal. They are privileged over the safety of the public.

Comment - Recently there was a plane crash in Richmond. The Canadian government should have a watch dog over the public safety of this city and province. Seniors who drive should have to have a yearly check up.

Comment - Vancouver Foundation asked 12 questions [showcased 12 key areas]. Why is addiction and drug usage not one of them? Sixty percent of crime is related to drug use. Recently the government has agreed to convert 12 sites to house the homeless and those recovering from addictions. This will affect our safety.

Barbara - We don't have questions that go into that specific kind of detail. Our focus is on a broader perspective of public opinion.

Comment - Most people in the Chinese community are concerned about safety. I don't want to criticize Vancouver Foundation, but drug issues, illegal weapons, the justice and legal systems, education, community watchdogs - these are the things Vancouver Foundation should be paying more attention to.

Tung - We recognize that and that is why we host events like this. We are not decision-makers. We go and do advocacy on your behalf. We take your opinions to those that do. That is why we really appreciate you coming today.

Comment - There is a problem with gambling within the Chinese community. People gamble, and lose, then go to loan sharks. The loan sharks come to their homes and affect the safety of the neighbourhoods.

Much discussion ensued around this issue.

Comment - Our community must take full responsibility for that. However, the City supports gambling. So many problems are related to it. We need to ask the government for more funding - to DO something - that will change the legal system and stop criminal activity.

Work -

Vital Signs grade: B
SUCCESS online grade: C
Community Leaders' grade: C+

Community Leaders' breakdown of grade:
A - 7%; B - 30%; C - 44%; D - 19%; F - 0%

Discussion:

Barbara - This group sat in-between the other two groups.

Closing:

Barbara - This has been a most enjoyable morning. I appreciate your frank and open dialogue, the honesty and intelligence of the discussion.

Tung - I echo the same sentiments. I know I need people to come here. I know I have a mission to build that bridge between communities. I need you to walk across the bridge. I'm so happy you've taken up that offer today. You chose to come here today and participate. I appreciate your honest and thoughtful feedback. Thank you.