Meeting emerging needs with limited means: A case of aging Chinese in Calgary

Liza Chan

Executive Director

Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens' Association

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Email: liza.chan@cceca.ca

CCECA

- Established in 1985 with 50 members.
- 5,982 members in January 1, 2011
- Moved to the Calgary Chinatown Seniors' Centre in 1995.
- 17 directors who are seniors.
- 12 full-time and 7 part-time staff.
- Receives funding from FCSS, United Way, Alberta Lottery Board and Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security.

Calgary Chinatown Seniors' Centre

Chinese seniors: Who are they?

- In 2006, 39% (37,580) of all seniors living in Calgary were immigrants and/or refugees (City of Calgary, 2006).
- Almost one in five Calgary seniors (16,000 people) were part of a visible minority group and of these 42% were Chinese (City of Calgary, 2008).
- Chinese is the largest visible minority group with a total population of 66,000 (2006 Census), slightly over 10% are seniors.

OUR STRATEGIES

- Be proactive and reach out to clients in a place that they are comfortable with.
- Work with the community and other service providers to provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of clients.
- Provide a supportive environment to empower seniors to make positive changes in their lives in a new country.
- Services are provided in mother language.

Client Characteristics

- Do not speak English (60% clients)
- Low income
- Social Isolation
- Need information, guidance and advocacy
- At risk – approaching crisis
- Reluctant or fearful of hospitals
- Clients' age distribution (Dec. 2010):
  20%: 45-65; 58%: 65-79; 22%: 80+.

Social Work Outreach
"BRIDGING SERVICE"

- Provision of information, form filling, benefit application, interpretation and translation, home and hospital visitations.
- Case management – family conflict, elder abuse and arrangement of services.
- Four Support groups - social isolation reduction program that build social network and support .
- Outreach worker ratio:
  - Mainstream: one worker per 600 seniors
  - CCECA: one worker per 1800 seniors

Special Needs Support Group

- Started in May 1, 1999.
- Target client: Chinese seniors with disabilities. 10 clients per program day.
- The only first language adult day program in Calgary.
- 5 days a week, 4.5 hours or 6 hours per day. Clients can come one to two days per week depending on needs.
- A social integration program which provide respite for family caregivers.

Chopsticks on Wheels

- In partnership with Meals on Wheels in 2002.
- Reinforces good health to those with special needs and promotes self reliance.
- Meal consists of meat or fish or chicken, rice and vegetable.
- Each meal costs $5.25.
- Daily checking and monitoring.
- No doctors' referral is required

Health Services

- Regular health care services: wellness centre, nutrition screening and foot clinic.
- Living well program (chronic disease management) – workshops, exercise and self management. Alberta Health Services is the provider.
- Regular preventative health services: mobile laboratory, annual escorted mammogram and flu vaccination.
- Much effort is required to advocate for on-going funding and needy services.

Volunteer Program – Visiting and Home Assessment

- Volunteer Visiting
  - For Chinese elderly, 60+. Weekly volunteer visit to homebound seniors from community, care centres or assisted living facilities.
- Home Assessment
  - Volunteers are trained to do safety assessment in seniors' houses. After home assessments, clients are referred to outreach workers to access funding and contractors.
- Lack of on-going funding. Advocacy is everyday business.

Older Adults Advocacy Group

- Established in 2009 with two full days training on government structures, civic engagement and advocacy strategies.
- There are 12 members including people from different age groups and service providers.
- Main focus is on senior issues for Chinese older adults. For other issues, we will work with other stakeholders to broaden our capacity.

Older Adults Advocacy Group

- Activities in 2010
  - A petition to retain our Chinatown Chronic Disease Management Program
  - Hold a forum for Chinese candidates to promote municipal election
  - Hold 4 focus groups to educate seniors about new Alberta Health Act; meeting with Alberta Health Act representatives to raise our concerns and submitted a full report.

Older Adults Advocacy Group

Activities in 2010:

- Form Diverse CT Alberta with Calgary and Edmonton ethno-cultural associations to have a united voice for immigrants and visible minorities.
- Form City Centre Parking Improvement Committee with various groups in Chinatown to ask the City of Calgary for more affordable short term parking spaces, shuttle bus service and future parking structure in Chinatown.

Community Projects

- Chinese Community
  - Emotional Health Carnival
  - Chinese Response to Family Violence

- Immigrant Seniors
  - **Immigrant Senior Advocacy Committee**
  - **Diverse CT Alberta**
  - Calgary Connecting Seniors Cultural Council
  - Immigrant Seniors Website (www.immigrantseniors.ca)

Community Projects - Mainstream

- ElderNET
- Older Adult Service Providers of Calgary
- SHACC (Senior Housing Action Co-ordinating Committee)
- Action Group on Elder Abuse
- Network Co-ordinating Committee
- Outreach Worker Network
- Senior Centre Network

Challenges - Funding

- Ethno-cultural organisation may be interpreted as narrow focus and lack of capacity.
- Coping with changing funding priorities and requirement of evidence based research
- Funder requires collaboration and/or merger between agencies
- Accreditation requirement for health program

Challenges – Human Resources

- Insufficient bi-lingual social workers
- Pay scale is below market and majority of the positions are on contract basis
- Heavy work load and limited first language professional support

Challenges – Demographic Change

- More boomers than seniors
- Funding does not go with the trend
- Strategy: Engage boomers and young people as volunteers to serve vulnerable seniors and as strong advocate for different issues