

# **ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS**

## **January 2004 to January 2005**

### ***Policy Advocacy***

The essence of the advocacy work that the CCNC - Toronto Chapter takes on is easily summed up in a few words: grassroots, community building and fierce. It is incredibly difficult and most likely impossible to cover all the many projects that our organization has taken on over the last twelve months. Our involvement in projects, cover a variety of fields and continue to touch many people. In fulfilling our mandate, the Toronto Chapter has remained very active on many equity-seeking fronts and this report will focus on a few key projects that we have been involved with and others which we have spearheaded.

#### **Review of Social Planning in Toronto**

We continue to work in partnership with the African Canadian Social Development Council (ACSDC), the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) and the Hispanic Development Council (HDC) in the ongoing Alternative Planning Group (APG). As in previous years, the APG has been active in building a distinct vision where all diverse views are involved in policy planning at the City of Toronto. APG strives to advance recognition for development and empowerment for diverse groups wanting to play an active role in shaping our communities, by ensuring that a planning perspective from all ethno-racial diversities are truly put into practice, until it becomes fully entrenched in advanced planning and development models.

In early 2004, the City hired consultants to review the city's social planning mechanism. Based on the consultants' report, City staff has recommended the creation of a "Social Development Network (SDN)", which will include CCNCTO as a founding member. The Social Development Network aims to be a coalition of social planning community organizations in the City of Toronto that embraces all visible minorities and emergent groups. Its role is to discuss and set the priorities of social planning for the City that takes into account the diverse needs of different ethno-racial groups. CCNCTO's participation and roles in the SDN signals a tremendous breakthrough for the advocacy work that CCNCTO has been conducting in the area of social planning in Toronto since 1999.

#### **Same-Sex Rights**

In the beginning of 2004, CCNCTO and its members were invited to participate as opponents in a televised debate on the issue of same-sex marriage. It was apparent that the visible contingent of Asian protestors in last summer's orchestrated show of support for Church sponsored family values at Parliament Hill had created a damaging stereotype of the 'homophobic Asian' for the general public.

CCNCTO invited Asian community groups to come together to build a progressive voice in a show of support for same-sex marriage. All in all over 20 organizations sponsored the mission statement of the newly formed, Asian Canadians For Equal Marriage (ACFEM). ACFEM was publicly launched to the Chinese media in April 2004 and although the future of this loosely formed coalition is uncertain, the public impact with the Chinese press was generally positive. When there was no voice of support before ACFEM, there is one today. Most recently, our National office has continued to conduct further activities as per their mandate on the lobbying of federal legislation, such as marriage. Representatives of CCNCTO had participated in numerous press conferences, newspaper, radio, and television interviews, as well as public debates have been conducted since June 2004. A series of public discussion and debates between representatives from CCNCTO and ACFEM with representatives from religious bodies in such public venues as shopping malls will be carried in March 2005.

#### **Others:**

- Made deputation to the City of Toronto's Budget and Finance Committee on the 2005 Budget.

- Developed joint submission to the City of Toronto about Stable Core Funding on behalf of the Community-City Working Group on Stable Core Funding
- Conducted survey on the Chinese Canadian community members' opinions on the selection of the new police Chief of Toronto, and press release stating CCNCTO's position and voicing Chinese Canadians' concerns about the selection of the new Police Chief, mobilized community members and youth to participate public consultation about the selection of the new Police Chief, and presented the results of the survey

## ***Research and Planning***

CCNCTO is also actively engaged with several community based projects. We basically adopt a community-based participatory research and action research approaches that not only help to create knowledge that informs policy change but also empower the participants in the research process. Some of the research projects are: Social Inclusion Project, Mapping Chinese Youth Engagement; another project dealing with Chinese skilled immigrants; and finally a web-based survey project that provides ethical guideline for community research and accountability.

### **Social Inclusion Project**

The project is the outcome of a Health Canada initiative, which helped foster a project partnership between the Alternative Planning Group (APG) and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, allowing us to explore the manner by which the social determinants of health intersect with race and racism. The project was completed and the final report was published in June 2004. Within the context of Chinese Canadian community in Toronto, the study had identified six general overarching barriers that led to social exclusion of Chinese Canadian immigrants. They are: (1) discrimination, (2) language barriers, (3) income security, (4) stress, despair, loneliness, and isolation, (5) marginalization within the Chinese Canadian community, and (6) access to services. In the next stage, CCNCTO will work independently as well as collaboratively with the other APG partners to take the project a step forward to address the barriers identified through the development of a social audit tool. The tool aims at helping organizations to assess and develop equity employment and work practices.

### **"Chinese Canadian Youth Speak Out!" Project**

It is a project funded by Wellesley Central Health Corporation Enabling Grant, which aimed at identifying the barriers that Chinese Canadian youth faced in GTA to engage in civic participation and formulating alternative solutions. A Steering Youth Committee had been formed which was composed of 15 Chinese Canadian high school students and 5 college/university students, mostly new immigrants.

### **Breaking Down Barriers: A study on Community Services for Female Chinese Victims of Domestic Violence**

This project was a collaboration among CCNCTO, Chinese Family Services of Ontario, Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, and South Riverdale Community Health Centre and was near completion. A press conference was held on November 18, 2004 to share with the media the results of the study. A workshop titled "Domestic Violence Training Workshop" was conducted on December 6, 2004 at South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

### **Contingent Immigrant Women's Project**

CCNCTO was active in the Contingent Immigrant Women's Project and did so in partnership with CASSA and the group Toronto Organizing for Fair Employment. The mandate of this project is to develop a network to seek policy improvements for contingent immigrant women. Several community based forums were organized bring together community dialogue and to distribute literature. Our social inclusion report has been completed and a launch date as yet to be determined.

## ***Community Education and Outreach***

### **Civic Engagement**

For over ten years, CCNCTO has been active at the Chinese Interagency Network (CIN) and its Labour Group. During the recent municipal elections, we helped organize the Mayoral Election BBQ, which brought many of the mayoral candidates into our community. Questions in Cantonese and Mandarin, all affecting the Chinese Canadian community were asked to the candidates. We hope that such events will further encourage civic participation and empowerment within our community.

### **Equity and Education**

The municipal elections also saw the election of more progressive school trustees. This proves to be promising for CCNCTO's equity and education work. We will remain active on this front through our involvement with various community partners, such as the Community Equity Reference Group. Time will tell if the change of political guards will truly bring in political change. Other activities include:

Conducted Pre-federal elections forum on "Globalization and the Impact on Chinese Canadian Workers in Toronto" to discuss issues related to and impacts of globalizations on Chinese Canadian workers, particularly the garment workers.

Organized the first of a series of university forums namely "Can you do that with an Oriental accent" with over 100 Asian Canadians and people of other ethnicities attending. The event was well received and raised the awareness of misrepresentation of Asians in the media among the audience. Coverage of the event was published by the Ming Pao newspaper as a front page headline news item. A group of youth interested in media representation of Asians came together to form a task group.

Organized the "National Forum on Race and Homophobia" in partnership with Ryerson University Equity Office. The forum aimed to invite Asian Canadian groups, CCNC chapters, service agencies, activists, students, media, and supporters to the national forum which featured panels on the experiences, issues, and responsibility in fighting homophobia, and developed action plans.

Worked with CCNC National and other organizations to assemble a number of youth short videos with LGBTQ themes and/or made by LGBTQ youth which was shown at the national forum.

### **Youth Engagement through the Monkey King Collective**

With the Youth Engagement Initiative, we are mandated to build and sustain infrastructure within CCNCTO to engage youth priorities in a fully integrated manner. The main focus is to foster youth involvement at CCNCTO to ensure effective mentorship and to encourage youth to become better engaged in civil society. With our original Asian youth cabaret, "Take This Job and Funk It" now 2 years past, we are in the preliminary discussions for a similar event scheduled for Mayworks/Asian Heritage Month 2005 hoping to exceed our previous attendance of 350 people.

This summer, we enrolled 150 participants in our locally organized youth forum, called IdentificASIAN. This was another successful CCNCTO initiative that pulled together community partner such as Hong Fook Mental Health and the Silayan Community Centre. Over 80 Asian youth attended the event. This all day event had workshops designed by the MKC to allow youth to address issues that were identified as current and relevant.

Counter Impressions 2003 was the second annual art auction fundraiser hosted by the Monkey King Collective (MKC). No art auction was held in 2004 due to the organizational re-structuring of the MKC. The third annual Counter Impressions is already scheduled for February 27, 2005 and it will be another fundraiser for the HWA.

Overall, the MKC remains a highly spirited youth focused project that will be lead in 2004/2005 by our Youth Co-ordinator, Barnett Chow. Barnett Chow can be reached at [barnett@ccnctontoronto.ca](mailto:barnett@ccnctontoronto.ca).

### **Outreach**

- Outreached at University of Toronto, Ryerson University, and York University to increase awareness of CCNCTO and MKC to over 100 university students who had never heard of us before.
- Developed relationships with the presidents of university clubs and encouraged partnership in event planning and built closer relationships with 3 Chinese Canadian university clubs.
- Outreached at high schools in the community and Toronto School Boards and developed relationships increased awareness of CCNCTO with 5 local high schools and recruited 15 Chinese high school students to the “Chinese Canadian Youth Speak Out!” project.
- Outreached to the Chinese Canadian youth community regarding the IdentificAsian project and reached more than 80 participants from Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese origins.
- Invited by the City of Toronto to present in “Involve Youth Presentations” to other community organizations about CCNCTO/MKC’s success and challenges over the years

## ***Advocacy and Coalition Building***

### **CCNCTO and the Homeworkers’ Association**

Last year, CCNCTO become the main sponsor of the Homeworkers’ Association after we took over the position from the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). The HWA is a natural partner for CCNCTO because we have always been committed to the advancement of workers’ rights. With the support of CCNCTO, the HWA offers ESL, computer training and sewing classes to its members, in addition to ongoing support around issues of workplace rights. In the upcoming year, CCNCTO will help the HWA strive for greater self-efficiency and to increase effectiveness in their advocacy for equality in the workplace. Moreover, advisors from such diverse expertise and background as that of labour and union organizers, human rights lawyer, social workers, social economic development specialist, university academics, and fashion designers were recruited to help built strategic direction for this new project.

At current, HWA has no funding and currently no staff person allocated to its service. As expected, the absorption of this 200 member organization has put additional strain on the occupancy, organizational and financial capacity of CCNCTO. Therefore, until funding is secured, we will continue to undertake fundraising events to sustain us during this important incubation period.

### **Member of the Community-City Working Group on Stable Core Funding**

Since 2001, CCNCTO has been a member of the Community-City Working Group on Stable Core Funding, working collaboratively with other not-for-profit community agencies and networks to explore structural funding challenges facing the City’s not-for-profit organizations and emerging community groups. The goal is to identify specific actions that the City could take, independently and as a leader with other stakeholders, to improve the not-for-profit community sector’s ability to support all of Toronto’s diverse communities, particularly its racialized and disenfranchised constituencies.

After three years’ endeavour, the Working Group produced a final report which was submitted to the City of Toronto, with concrete recommendations of how to support City’s not-for-profit organizations and emerging community groups.

## ***Organization and Resource Development***

### **Three Year Strategic Plan**

CCNCTO is constantly developing and in the spirit of organizational growth, we hired outside professional consultants to assist us in the development of a three year Strategic Plan. The purpose of the strategic planning process is to put into place a documented guide that will outline priorities and programming shifts for our organization so that we can be more effective in our pursuits of advocacy, outreach and research. The strategic plan should be completed by the end of November 2004.

### **Re-location of Office Space**

During August 2004, CCNCTO moved two blocks south of our previous location, to our new office space in The 215 Centre for Social Innovation. This is the beautifully restored heritage Robertson Building with brick and beam construction. At The 215 Centre, we are now co-located with 13 other organizations with common social justice mandates. Our previous office space will be occupied by the HWA until the end of our lease. Our office reception is scheduled for Thursday October 28, 2004 between 6:30 pm. to 9:30 pm. All are welcome to attend.

CCNCTO's new contact information:

215 Spadina Avenue, Suite 124, Toronto, ON M5T 2C7 Tel: (416) 596-0833 Fax: (416) 979-3936

### **New Executive Director**

After faithfully serving CCNCTO for 2 ½ years, we are sad to announce that Mr. Chung Tang has left us to pursue other career options. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

We are also enthusiastic about the hiring of our new Executive Director, Dr. Helen Lai-man Poon. Helen is a distinguished academic, educator, author and political organizer from Hong Kong. She will play an important role in promoting the mandate of CCNCTO with her effective communication skills in Cantonese, Mandarin and English. Helen Poon can be reached at [helen@ccnctoronto.ca](mailto:helen@ccnctoronto.ca).

### **New Website**

For several months, CCNCTO has been investing time and resources in updating our website. We are delighted about the many web improvements and welcome you to check us out at our new website [www.ccnctoronto.ca](http://www.ccnctoronto.ca).