

Immigrants are warned not to leave kids behind [CA-ON] ^[1]

Author: Yuejue, Jin

Source: The Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 24 Aug 2002

AVAILABILITY

Text below

EXCERPTS:

Too many Chinese immigrants are having their young children brought up on the other side of the world, a Toronto family educator warns.

"This will have a significant effect on the child's personality throughout his life," says Florence Wong of the Chinese Newcomers Family Education and Advocacy Project at St. Stephen's Community House.

Wong says the traditional belief that children can adjust to anything has been coupled with the desperate desire to gain an economic foothold in Canada.

"These parents believe that bringing the children with them will make it more difficult for them to start a new career. They also believe in the first several years in Canada they cannot offer a life to their children as good as in China."

The parents choose a solution that is acceptable in China: They leave their children behind or send back those born in Canada, to be brought up by grandparents. They know separation is hard for children, Wong says, but think this is "a less bad choice."

Youngsters under age 6 lose self-confidence if they are taken away from their parents, Wong warns. They feel unsafe and inferior. They assume that parents leave them because they are not behaving well.

Research funded by the Ontario Children's Secretariat says the same thing. "Early years from conception to age 6 have the most important influence of any time in the life cycle on brain development and subsequent learning behaviour and health."

More than 70 per cent of the Chinese new immigrant families who come to the centre are planning a temporary separation or have already been separated from their children, Wong says. "There are hundreds of Qiqis in China who are waiting to see their parents."

The centre started the Chinese Newcomers Family Education and Advocacy Project in August, 2000. The services are free. Besides offering individual counselling, social workers and volunteers go to English classes, pre- and post-natal drop-ins and other community centres in Toronto to educate immigrants.

"We talk about family planning," Wong says, "and I tell them that it is better to spend some time adjusting to the new society before making a decision to have a baby."

Wong's program, which received \$66,380 from the United Way of Greater Toronto and \$10,000 from the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program, has reached more than 700 people. About a third of the families in counselling who had planned to send children back to China changed their minds, Wong says.

After families reunite, she says, they face two difficulties.

First, they are not eligible for child-care subsidies. Wong says the law requires every immigrant family to have a \$10,000 deposit when they come to Canada, but a family must have assets less than \$5,000 to qualify.

Sixty per cent of the families the program reached in 2001 said that's the main reason they planned to send children back to China.

Wong urges immigrant parents to help each other when they cannot afford child-care fees. She says four or five families can organize themselves and take turns looking after each other's children.

The second difficulty is that parents and children must get to know each other again after the separation.

She suggests parents make it easier for their children to adjust by staying with them for a while in China before bringing them to Canada. That is what Lu did.

reprinted from The Toronto Star.

Region: Asia ^[2]

Canada ^[3]

Ontario ^[4]

Tags: demand ^[5]
diversity ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/02/09/immigrants-are-warned-not-leave-kids-behind-ca>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/02/09/immigrants-are-warned-not-leave-kids-behind-ca> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/asia> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>

[5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/demand> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/diversity>