



Respect Works Here

Community Champion

Lin Tsan, a refugee who has experienced powerlessness, is passionate about giving a voice to voiceless people, in both her volunteer and professional work.

Born to Chinese immigrants in Vietnam, Lin is fiercely proud of her Chinese culture.

“No matter where Chinese people go, they always maintain their values and their roots.”

Her grandfather was a Kuomintang officer and doctor who had been sent by the army to Vietnam when Lin’s father was just a child. Once Lin’s father and mother married, they went to Vietnam to look for his father. When the Chinese communists came to power in 1949, the Tsans were not able to go home. Instead her father, educated as an Engineer, started a school in South Vietnam and the family lived there until they had to flee in 1979.

As one of the thousands of refugees escaping Vietnam on boats, Lin landed in Malaysia at a refugee camp.

When delegations from various countries met with refugees to offer them a new home, Lin chose Canada as she felt it was a very peaceful country. Although she had a brother living in the US and the representatives suggested she should pursue a new start there, she believed that Canada should be her home and was able to convince officials to let her come here.

When Lin arrived in Kamloops, she helped immigrants, whom she saw as voiceless, by volunteering as an interpreter. This led to her first career in Canada as a Settlement Worker at Kamloops Immigrant Services and then later as Manager of the Langley Immigrant Services office.

From Settlement Work to Social Work, Lin continues her path to give voice to those in need. Both she and her daughter graduated from the UBCO Social Work program – Lin with her Masters and her daughter with her Bachelors degree – in 2010. Lin currently works in the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

She still actively volunteers helping immigrants in the community.

“Canadians helped when I came with nothing, and they gave me a second homeland. Now, I am more than happy to help others.”

Lin has also created the performing Rejoicing Team as a social connection.

“I started the Rejoicing Team because I saw a lot of Chinese women here with a language barrier being so isolated,” she explains. “The Rejoicing Team is open to everyone - it doesn’t matter how old you are, it is international and cross-cultural. Everyone comes together.”

Her pride in the Team is evident. “We are truly non-profit, we get no funding and we are fully self-supporting.”

“Canadians helped when I came with nothing, and they gave me a second homeland. Now, I am more than happy to help others.”

~ Lin Tsan

The most important feature of the group though is that the women support each other. “I tell the members: we have to do our best for each other performance, but that is not why we are here. We are here because we help and care for each other.”

Lin also participates with Vernon’s new Multicultural Meet-UP group, which connects multicultural groups and activities. She believes in people maintaining their culture and looking linkages. “Multi-culturalism isn’t performing in costumes on Canada Day. Multi-culturalism is building understanding in a positive way, explains Lin stressing that because tolerance hints of superiority or hierarchy, “Don’t say: ‘I tolerate your culture’, but rather: ‘I accept your culture, and you accept mine’.”

