

Fast-Track to Success: A BC Skills Connect Success Story

In China, Mr. Wang enjoyed challenging and rewarding work as an IT professional. After completing his Masters degree in software programming, he has held senior positions in large, multi-national companies. Had he stayed in China, he could have continued to climb the corporate ladder; however, he felt that there were more opportunities for him and his family in Canada.

Moving to a new country and adapting to a different culture can be lonely and disorienting. Mr. Wang describes his first few months: "When I arrived in Victoria 4 months ago, I had no idea what's going to happen. I knew nobody and nobody knew me."

If settling in a new country is a difficult process, finding employment can be even more so. Many newcomers have little or no knowledge of even the basics of job search. Without a good resume and cover letter, a professional network or effective job search skills, immigrants have little chance to finding work, a hard fact that Mr. Wang learned first-hand. Despite his high level of education and strong skills, he could not find a job in his field: "It seemed there were some jobs [that might have been suitable], but I didn't know what the right way is... I tried and waited, tried and waited. After submitting dozens of resumes, I became utterly depressed and felt rejected."

Four months passed. Then a friend of Mr. Wang's recommended him to contact the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS). There, he found the help he needed. From his case manager, he was introduced to the IMMPowerBC/Skills Connect program. According to Mr. Wang, the case managers at VIRCS "are always encouraging me forward. Their counselling methodology impressed me most because step-by-step they helped me to identify my strength and weakness. All of the sudden, [I saw myself as a new man]."

Mr. Wang worked with his IMMPowerBC case manager for one month. Together, they assessed his skills and identified areas to be improved, re-worked his job search strategies, created an action plan, and discussed Canadian workplace culture. She also introduced him to some local websites and names of employers to help him widen his professional circle. Although he received some guidance, Mr. Wang was ultimately responsible for his own success: "After one month of intensive discussion and kind tuition from [my case manager], I tried for a new position using the methodology from [my case manager], who helped me a lot on the resume and cover letter. She didn't write those for me, but led me to

discover what I had but failed to present. By reorganizing and reformatting a bit, it turned out that I am still the same guy, but in a quite different form – more clear and powerful. I submitted the resume [and] three days later, I got an invitation for interview; two days later, I got an offer. The CEO interviewing me asked if I drafted the resume myself. I told him I did most of it, but I got great help from a dear friend.” Mr. Wang is now employed in a position that is commensurate with his experience.

Mr. Wang had all the right skills and experience to succeed in Canada – the only thing he needed was a helping hand in showing him how to present his qualifications to an employer. “I think VIRCS provided me with help when I needed it most in my life...they know what skills are needed in our community and what immigrants and refugees can contribute the most.” With his education and skills, Mr. Wang could have found work eventually, even without accessing the IMMPowerBC program; however, with some assistance, he was able to find fulfilling, meaningful employment without suffering the economic hardship and emotional turmoil of lengthy job hunting.

For more information about the Skills Connect program at VIRCS, please contact Annie at 361-9433 ext. 218 or via e-mail: skillsconnect@vircs.bc.ca