

High Energy Engineer Seeks Alternative Career for his Talents

Flint Chen was a successful electrical engineer in China but he felt charged up to immigrate to Canada for four reasons:

- a cleaner environment,
- a good future for his son,
- the peacefulness of Canadian society, and
- the business atmosphere.

But plugging in to the local economy has been more challenging than expected.



Welcome to British Columbia!

In February of 2012, he arrived in Canada with a strong academic background: an undergraduate degree in telecommunications engineering and a post-graduate certification in “Power Plant Thermal Energy Engineering Auto-control.” He has 20+ years of experience.

This Coquitlam-based newcomer is a business immigrant, hoping to continue his entrepreneurial record. “Hunting for good business partners” to expand his inventions, is his mission.

Since arriving in Vancouver, he has studied English as a means of achieving his goal. Although he spent years working on English in China, he finds English holds him back and limits his ability to connect with professionals who could help him.

“I need more network, more information, more people to know me and the work I can do.”

You might be picturing a quiet, introverted man, but that is not Chen. When you first meet him, he is quick with a friendly smile, strong eye contact and a warm handshake.

Ask about his volunteer work and you will hear about his stand-up comedy (in Chinese, for the Tri-Cities Chinese Community). He has no problem winning hearts and minds in his own language, but he is still working on that skill in English.

Funding for this project from:

Learning about the B.C. Labour Market

If Chen could go back in time he would study more about business. He has created a series of devices for testing high pressure equipment (up to 37,000 psi). The device pictured to the right is a portable pressure testing device that is one in a series of inventions and is used throughout oilfields in China. Chen says the series of products can prevent blowout accidents and disasters like the spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. He has also developed automation devices.

Part of the difficulty for Chen lies in interpreting the differing economy, trying to see where he can contribute. He spent time researching the labour market on the Work BC site and reviewing ads on Indeed.com. What he noticed was a surplus of electrician positions.

Getting the Ticket

Following advice from a friend in his cross-Canada network, the inventive engineer challenged the exam for an electrician trade ticket in August. Chen passed with a strong margin, proving he had the knowledge required.

Did he apply for engineering jobs in Canada? No, Chen admits, “no confidence.”

As a result, he has not pursued relicensing as a Professional Engineer with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC). Neither has he connected with the Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC (ASTTBC). His worries about English hold him back.

Getting Help with Job Search

Chen’s electrician trade qualification has provided an alternative career, although it doesn’t fully use his abilities. He recently provided some electrician services for a Richmond furniture store and finds leads through his growing network.

The Future

“If I find the correct direction,” he said, “I can do more, create more opportunities, more future.”



Chen created this device used by oil and natural gas companies in China. The cords connect this device, other units (such as pumps, valves, sensors) and a laptop computer to form a pressure testing system.

Funding for this project from:

Funding for this project from:

