

Toronto follow this example.

Most important, of course, is a receptive climate in the community. A number of employers have risked financial sacrifices in hiring refugees, and have demonstrated considerable faith and goodwill when communication is strained by language limitations or cultural misunderstandings; and for many the risk has paid off.

For all of us, if we have the imagination to grasp what refugees resettling here are enduring, and the compassion to help them adjust, perhaps we can enhance their courage and determination and, therefore, their chances of succeeding. This may be another variation of "doing what you can". □

*Anne Hume is the former Employment Co-ordinator for Operation Lifeline, Toronto.*

## **VIETNAMESE IN THE YUKON: CONTENT TO STAY WHERE THERE ARE JOBS**

*by Nancy MacMillan*

*Nancy MacMillan is the former Co-ordinator of the Vietnamese Support Project, Whitehorse.*

Snow, cold, isolation, long dark days, perhaps even an igloo. These are images that many people have of the Yukon — and moving 70 people here from the steamy climate of Vietnam may seem like madness.

But the first thing that any Yukoner, whether Native, English, French or Vietnamese, will set you straight on is that conditions are not so barbaric as many people think. The summers are beautiful and the long daylight hours make for a very active season. The winters may seem as long as they are cold, yet out of the 70 Vietnamese who settled here during the past two years, 60 have not yet been lured away to the bright lights and warmer climates of Edmonton and Vancouver. Living in this small community has some compensations to offer.

The Tran family was the fourth of thirteen families to settle in Whitehorse. They arrived on a snowy November day and their sponsors settled them into a townhouse. By various means of sponsorship, other Tran family members have also come to Whitehorse, making an extended family of 23, which has meant a great deal of mutual support. Having other families here already also made it much easier to understand and cope with the new surroundings, says 16-year-old Mi Tran. It has also meant a sufficiently large and cohesive body of people to support a food-ordering service from Vancouver, allowing the families here to enjoy their own type of food.

### **Sense of belonging**

The Vietnamese acknowledge that learning English is easier in Whitehorse than in a larger city where it would be easy to find lots of Vietnamese- or



Summer outings for Vietnamese young people in Whitehorse.

Chinese-speaking friends. Also, the sense of belonging that comes with living in a small community, walking down Main Street and exchanging greetings with people you know, is a pleasure much appreciated after a vacation in Edmonton or Vancouver, and one that is causing several families to think twice before moving "Outside".

### **High pay helps family sponsorship**

Most important, pay is generally quite good in the North. Because becoming self-sufficient and capable of sponsoring other family members is top priority for many of the Vietnamese, the comparative boredom and isolation are of secondary importance.

Even 800 miles north, in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, where people from Whitehorse are considered "Southerners", the one Vietnamese couple still there is satisfied for the time being, because they have good jobs. Myli is making Inuit parkas at the sewing centre, and Nhan is a truck driver for the army. The other three couples who were placed there left, Myli says, because of boredom and because of relatives in other cities. But Myli and Nhan are saving money to sponsor their parents in Vietnam and only afterwards, they say, will they move to a bigger city.

The question has been raised as to whether refugees should be placed in such isolated, extreme areas. Obviously each person's adaptive ability is different. It does seem however, that on the whole most situations can be gotten used to, as long as job

security is present. In such areas as the east coast where unemployment is high, it is no surprise to see such high secondary migration. It also seems only rational to ensure that several families be settled in the same area, providing each other with the support that can make the process of becoming a Canadian citizen a smooth and manageable transition. □

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## REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AROUND THE WORLD

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### THE UNITED KINGDOM

Between April 1975 and the end of December 1980, 12,884 Southeast Asian refugees were admitted to the United Kingdom. Three voluntary agencies shared the task of receiving and resettling the refugees: the British Council for Aid to Refugees, the Ockenden Venture and the Save the Children Fund.

With government funds, each agency ran a number of "reception centres". On arrival the refugees stayed in the centres for three to six months, during which time they received intensive tuition in the English language, as well as some orientation to British society and any necessary medical care.

During the refugees' stay in the centres, the staff of the agencies - which included social workers, nurses, teachers, individuals acquainted with Southeast Asia - tried to familiarize themselves with the resettlement needs of each family, its employment potential, its ties with other families in the U.K.; and then to arrange its move into the most appropriate available public housing.

Two features of the British experience might be of particular interest to Canadians:

#### Settlement in clusters

- The Vietnamese resettlement operation has followed a policy of establishing "clusters" of between five and thirty families within walking distance or an easy bus ride of each other.

#### Self-employment

- Prospects for employment are bleak and the level of jobs most refugees get is so low that they must still receive state benefits. The agencies have therefore concentrated on assisting people to become self-employed: Save the Children Fund established a fund to provide the necessary tools of trade for refugees to become self-employed — for example, an industrial sewing machine for a seamstress or tools for a plumber; and the agencies have been successful in getting banks to provide loans for such labour-intensive enterprises as a window-cleaning venture and a bicycle repair business.

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## RESOURCE EXCHANGE

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### GUIDE FOR NEW CANADIANS

The Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia has developed a booklet about Canadian institutions and culture specifically for newcomers from Southeast Asia. It details customs about punctuality, eating, socializing; explains concepts like volunteer work and our expectations of civil servants; outlines civil and human rights protected in Canada, and more. The guide was written by a Canadian who lived many years in Southeast Asia. It is available in English, French, Vietnamese, Lao and Chinese.

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### SLIDE-TAPE: INDOCHINESE CULTURE

The Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia has produced a 20-minute slide-tape programme which presents Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian customs that Southeast Asians have maintained in their new lives in Nova Scotia. The programme is intended to help sponsors and teachers better understand Indochinese cultures. It was developed by Xuong Ngo and Patty Ha, who arrived in Canada in the summer of 1980.

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### UNHCR

At its annual meeting in October, 1981, the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noted that, in line with various recent United Nations General Assembly resolutions requesting UNHCR assistance in Africa, UNHCR has broadened its category of "persons of concern to UNHCR" to include not only Convention refugees defined in terms of fear of persecution but also persons who are forced to flee their country because of serious conflicts there, such as external aggression or civil conflict.

UNHCR officials and representatives of non-governmental agencies also expressed concern at the increased scale and seriousness of violations of the physical safety of refugees, including pirate attacks in Asia, bombardments in Southern Africa and kidnappings in Latin America.

The Executive Committee also approved the projected financial requirements for 1982 programmes for UNHCR, which are shown in the Statistical Survey on page 8.