



Canh Bui

Canh Bui was ten years old when he bounded down the airplane steps to enter Canada and a new life as a Vietnamese refugee. He came with his older brother.

Canh Bui's experience leaving Vietnam was similar to that of hundreds of thousands who fled the country in 1975. That was the year Communist North Vietnam entered Saigon, the capital city of South Vietnam. As the Communist government established its rule former citizens of the Republic of Vietnam (also known as South Vietnam) were expected to conform to Communist values.

Bui's parents were business owners. This made them de facto capitalists which led to continual harassment and arrest. The Bui family decided that the sons needed to leave the country for a chance at better opportunities elsewhere. Arrangements were made for them to escape Vietnam.

Vietnamese Boat People & Canada's Response

At the conclusion of the war (1975), Canada allowed 5,608 Vietnamese refugees into the country. However, the refugee crisis continued to worsen. In 1979 and 1980 the Canadian government admitted another 50,000 people. This was partly in response to pressure from Canadian religious organizations, citizen groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Prime Minister Joe Clark promised that Canada would admit an additional 50,000 refugees by the end of the following year. The government plan proposed that Canada would match each privately sponsored refugee – a program that is similar to Canada's sponsorship program for Syrian refugees.

The Bui brothers were sponsored by a family living in Ontario. They arrived in Toronto in December 1982. Their experience with their host family was very positive. As Bui stated, "I think my brother and I were ready to have a family and to have parents, and it felt comfortable for us." Eventually, members of Bui's family would come to Canada. Bui and his brother would spend the school year with their host family and summers with their immediate family. Bui would later attend university and receive a business degree while his brother went into medicine.