

Canadian Council of Muslim Women Montreal & West Island Chapters
Yearly Report 2008-2009

From Oct. 2008 to Oct. 2009, CCMW Montreal & West Island chapter members have initiated many activities and have been participating actively with other organizations bringing the presence of Muslim women to the fore.

Activities of CCMW members, either under the banner of CCMW or individually:

- CCMW Montreal chapter, which has joined **Montreal Council of Women** (MCW) as an affiliate, maintains representation at their monthly meetings (Fehmida Khan). MCW is affiliated to the **International Council of Women** which represents over 74 countries, and is actively involved in the battement of human rights and economic issues world-wide. CCMW members benefit as well as give input at their lecture series ranging from "Climate Change" to "Water: The Big Picture & Local Issues" to "The Beginning & The End of Life: Ethical Issues Resulting From Evolving Scientific Discoveries" to "Why City Hall Needs a Special Council on Women's Issues".
- Center for Research -Action on Race Relations (CRARR), with whom CCMW Montreal chapter members have been working for a couple of years, invited us to a new CRARR initiative **Partners for Equity** initiated in July 2009. It was unanimously decided by our membership at our monthly meeting that we should participate and select a suitable candidate as representative. It was also agreed that we should try to get one of our Adult Youth (18-35) to participate in the workshops.
- Two workshops were conducted by Sana Khalil and Samaa Elibyari for **"Integration of Muslim Youth in Canada"** project for secondary 4 students at two Muslim schools, namely Jeunes Musulmans Canadiens (JMC) & Écoles Musulmanes de Montreal (EMM). Sana Khalil is a member of the steering committee for the MYCanada project.
- Recruited people for **MYCanada project**, collected stories and wrote a report on barriers, Magda Baczkowska is presently writing her own story on identity.
- Attended **Women Who Inspire** event held in Toronto (Magda Baczkowska, Sana Khalil, Celine Leduc, Samaa Elibyari).
- Hosted **Dr. Parin Dosa** who is a professor at Simon Fraser University, Dept. of sociology and Anthropology. She presented her study of **Trauma & Social Suffering of Afghan Refugees** due to war and this was in relation to social & health policy.
- Fehmida Khan is a regular contributor to **OWLS (Older Women's Lives)**, a radio show that is broadcast once a month by the **community radio station CKUT**, hosted by McGill University. OWLs avoid stereotypical "old lady" topics like knitting, grandchildren and the old days, but instead focus on stories with more expansive political or social appeal. The OWLs celebrated their 3rd anniversary this year.

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- Samaa Elibyari runs a weekly bilingual (English & French) radio program on **CKUT, CARAVAN**, giving an Arab/Muslim perspective on current events from politics to religion to culture.
- Samaa Elibyari gave a **talk at McGill University** in November 2008 about the report submitted in the name of CCMW to the **Bouchard-Taylor Commission**.
- Samaa Elibyari gave a **talk at Université de Montréal** in February 2009 about the **Aspirations of Feminists in Egypt** (based on a study conducted the same year and personal contacts with Human Rights organizations and activists in Cairo since 1994).
- She also introduced the **documentary 'Four women of Egypt'** by producer Tahani Rashid (**National Film Board**). The documentary was featured in October 2009 as part of a series on Arab women and resistance.
- She remains an active **member of Canadian Egyptians for Democracy**. They write letters to the Egyptian ambassador protesting government politics (the curtailment of civil liberties internally and the closure of the border with Gaza for example). They also met with the Consul General in Montreal. No response! No effect!
- Samaa Elibyari and Shaheen Ashraf were invited and participated in a panel discussion held at **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)** in September 2009.
- **Montreal Dialogue Group** organized a **communal supper** that was CCMW (Shaheen) initiative in conjunction with the Unitarian Church of Montreal. The president of the Montreal Dialogue Group is Mr. Liaqat Ashraf, husband of Shaheen Ashraf. Shaheen Ashraf organized this supper after she participated in one of Rev. Diane Rollert sermons. As part of the sermon Shaheen read a prayer from the Islamic Tradition.
- Shaheen Ashraf attended an **interfaith breakfast** held by the **mayor of Montreal**. There was a Jewish and Christian prayer, but no Islamic prayer, since there was no show by the person who was supposed to perform it. Shaheen offered her services but was not allowed to proceed.
- CCMW members participated in the **International Women's Day** in March 2009.
- Inge Reed organized a **fundraising** on January 24th **for Medical Aid to Palestine** (MAP) along with other people from the Muslim Community of Quebec (MCQ).

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- **Monia Mazigh** came to speak about her book *Hope & Despair* and the struggles she went through. The event that was sponsored by CCMW and Inge Reed helped to coordinate and organize it. Monia Mazigh also held a book sale and a book signing session after her lecture.
- **Ramadan Baskets program** was a joint effort with the AMAL Centre for women. CCMW raised money and physically helped prepare baskets that went out to more than 200 families.
- There was another Ramadan Basket project in cooperation with with **Muslim Community of Quebec (MCQ)** masjid **Ramadan food baskets** were prepared and handed out to **43 Muslim families**. CCMW members Safia El Awad, Samara Mohamed, Farida Mohamed and Shaheen Ashraf helped to organize, shop for and deliver the baskets.
- CCMW Members cooked elaborate meal for 75 women and children at a **women's shelter**, Espoir pour les Sans Abri, and gift bags were bought, prepared and handed out by Magda Baczkowska to the children (during Ramadan).
- **Saturday iftars** at Muslim Community of Quebec (MCQ) were organized by CCMW members Inge Reed, Samara Mohamed and Farida Mohamed as well as non-members Safia El Awad and Monia Jelassi.
- Participated in **Afghan Relief** organized by **Dawson College students and Human Concern International**, which was held in Montreal on October 23, 2008. The theme was Islamic Aid to fund education and employment through small loans that allow women and men to start a business and to especially help widows and small children. The evening opened with verses from the Qur'an, two poems were read, music was included, then the 10 most misunderstood accusations of Islam were discussed. Interestingly the No. 2 most misunderstood accusation was that women were considered to be second-class citizens and the No. 1 was terrorism.
- Participated in the **NDG Food Depot fundraising** evening of poetry and music to raise awareness against hunger. NDG food Depot project was initiated by Celine and Shaheen. A booklet of poems is being distributed and sold and 30% of the proceeds goes back to the NDG Food Depot.
- Celine Leduc has helped to organize a Muslim friendly atmosphere at the **NDG Food Depot** to make sure that **Halal** principles are respected and gave information on what is halal and what is not. She ensured that 19 Muslim families, who may be regulars at the food depot, obtained Ramadan baskets through MCQ.

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- A **booklet** will be written, published and sold so that **30%** of the cost of the book goes back to **CCMW and the MCQ** for Ramadan food baskets for next year. Celine Leduc is putting out a call for poems, recipes, short stories, etc to compile together for the book.
- Celine Leduc is also writing a **book on Muslim women** based on principles she learned from women coming from the southern part of the Mediterranean, principles about religion, culture, respect, law etc. It is a 40 page book and part of the profits will go to CCMW.
- Celine Leduc is the **Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ) representative** for CCMW and also a member of the cultural communities table.
- She has arranged for CCMW to be **part of BCRC Black Community Resource Center** so that we can hold our meetings and special events in their rooms.
- Natasha Ivisic has prepared a **documentary on Muslim women and the hijab**. The documentary gives visibility to CCMW since some members participate in the movie. Natasha gave an **interview on channel VOX** in a program called **Premières Vues**.
- Samaa Elibyari approached a Muslim school, **Écoles Musulmanes de Montreal**, to write up a **joint grant proposal** (Quebec offering a 3 year grant of 3000\$/year to a non-profit organization registered in Quebec for promoting equality of gender). The meeting was also attended by Farida Mohamed since CCMW - Montreal could have been a sponsor. At the second meeting, only two teachers showed up. Project was aborted in December 2008.
- Nusrat Mirza initiated a **research and study of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation**, which are linked to global warming, as an ongoing commitment to Environmental Concerns. The project 'St. Jude's Anti-idling Campaign' came out of that study and won several awards. She attended **The International Children and Youth Conference on Environment** arranged by U.N. at Daejeon, Korea in August with 3 students (ages 13-17). She presented a paper on "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Transportation linked to Global Warming".
- Halima Kaddouri has been doing voluntary work for **Handicap International in Montreal** from March 2009 to August 2009. The main activities were a photo exhibition: "Fatal Footprint" about anti-personal and cluster bombs that was held at UQAM University.
- On 8th october 2009, Halima helped Handicap International for the **3rd "Pyramid of Shoes"** in Canada which is a national day of mobilization of civil society against cluster munitions.

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- Samaa Elibyari organized two lectures about **Islamic Finance** given by Toby Birch, one at McGill and the other at Concordia, as part of Islamic History Month in October 2009.
- Sabiha Azizullah, also a member of Cercle des Femmes d'Origine Indienne, helped to organize an **evening of classical Indian music, dancing and Indian food** at the Montreal West town hall.
- CCMW and **Mama Zimbi Foundation** are working in collaboration through the input of. Mama Zimbi from Ghana will be coming to Montreal and CCMW will organize a series of lectures, poetry readings, etc to promote the cause of **widows in Ghana**. Mama Zimbi was awarded the WISE prize from Qatar for her role in educating the Ghanaian population through radio and television.