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المجلس الكندي للنساء المسلمات

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF MUSLIM WOMEN  
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES FEMMES MUSULMANES

IN THE NAME OF GOD

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women is a national non-profit organization established to assist Muslim women in participating effectively in Canadian Society and to promote mutual understanding between Canadian Muslim women and women of other faiths.

**CONFERENCE: EQUALITY OF WOMEN**

November 3, 4, 5 / 95 EDMONTON

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"No human vision can encompass God, whereas God can encompass all human vision, for God alone is unfathomable, all aware.

**Means of insight have now come to you from your Sustainer, through Divine Writ.**

**Whoever, therefore chooses to see does so for his/her own good and whoever chooses to remain blind, does so to her/his own hurt. And say [Prophet] to the blind of heart "I am not your keeper"."**

*Quran 6:103-104*

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Edmonton



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## **NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

### **Equality of Women: Focus on Youth and Seniors November 3, 4, 5, 1995, Edmonton**

The Edmonton chapter and the National Executive are looking forward to seeing you at the Conference in November in the city of Edmonton, inshaallah.

A great deal of planning has occurred and we think that the conference will be of interest to all Muslim women, their families and to our non Muslim friends as well. The focus is on Youth and Seniors for this was recommended by the participants of the 1994 conference held in Ottawa.

As you will note in the attached Conference programme, there are workshops on the media, violence against women and also on the UN Beijing Conference on Women of the world. We are fortunate as our members, Lila Fahiman and Talat Muinnudin attended that conference and will share their impressions and ideas for actions on the part of Canadian Muslim women.

Letters of invitations have already been sent to speakers and facilitators from across the country and Chapters have been notified of the specifics of their conference delegates.

We will make every effort, inshaallah, to ensure that the conference results in positive actions and we look to your participation and support to attain the goals we have set for CCMW.

As we stated to the fenders, the gathering of Muslim women from different parts of the country is essential for us to create a collective voice for our future.

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Chapters have been notified by letter that the AGM will be held on Sunday, November 5, 1995 from 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Chapters please note that the agenda will comprise of the National and Chapters annual reports, including an update of the 1994 Workplan.

The National Executive has reviewed the 1982 constitution and other documents and found that the goals and objectives have evolved over time ... as they should. We consulted with a lawyer and will present a synthesized, simplified, flexible constitution which retains its original vision and also incorporates the development of the organization during the last 13 years.

We also hope to discuss a closer relationship between National and its Chapters so that we can together

achieve the goals we set ourselves from the feedback of this conference.

### **FUND FOR SCHOLARSHIP**

We are very excited about starting a fund to encourage Muslim women to study aspects of Islam which will be of particular interest to Muslim women.

To initiate this Fund, we will have a fundraising auction at the Conference dinner and inshaallah with all your help and enthusiasm we will succeed in this worthwhile goal.

Those of you who can not attend the conference and would like to contribute, please do so care of CCMW [Solmaz Sahin] at our Mississauga address. Many thanks, we will follow up with more details soon.

### **CCMW ROOTS**

We asked Lila Fahlman, the founder of the organization, to give us a brief history of CCMW as we tend to forget the hard work and the commitment of women who proceeded us to form an organization for Canadian Muslim women.

"In 1978, the Canadian Muslim Council of Canada appointed me as advisor to Muslim women in Canada. By 1980, I felt that I was wasting my time as my overall participation was limited and I had no vote on the organization, so I resigned.

The announcement was received with disbelief as I wanted to meet women so as to understand their issues if I were to represent them.

The board agreed to fund me as I traveled across the country for two summers and spoke of a vision of a Council of Muslim women. In April 1982, I invited women from across the country to Winnipeg to spend a weekend of long hard work. Eighteen women attended and from that group an executive was formed and the vision of CCMW became a reality.

I continued to travel and kept in contact by mail and phone to build chapters across Canada.

I am now 71 years old and I continue to work for Muslim women and I have provided leadership in many areas. I am the Vice Chair of Vision TV, Chair of World Interfaith Education Association and in 1993, I formed the World Council of Muslim Women Foundation as a living memorial to the women of Bosnia and other women who have suffered degradation of rape, torture and death."

Thank you, Lila and we hope that we continue to build on the tremendous work done by these 18 women.

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### **EDMONTON CHAPTER**

Edmonton is many things to many people. It boasts of an outstanding river valley park system, a dynamic cultural centre, known as a City of Festivals, capital of Alberta. Edmonton has many attractions such as the Edmonton Space and Science Centre, Provincial Museum & Archives, the Fort Edmonton Park, a living museum, where the Al Rashid Mosque, the first mosque in North America is located.

European settlement began in 1795 when the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Edmonton as a fur trading post. Edmonton celebrates Bicentennial this year and the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Edmonton Chapter take pride in hosting the Annual National Conference in celebration of the Bicentennial.

The Edmonton Chapter of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women was the founding Chapter being the home town of our founder, Dr. Lila Fahiman. The Chapter undertook various activities in its infancy, the major one being the reception and premiere showing of "A Tale of Two Mosques", a documentary relating the story of the two Al Rashid Mosques, the original one built in 1938 and the new one built in the 1980's.

The Chapter undertook to educate the youth and women in the community by producing monographs compiled in a book called "Beyond the Veil" in 1985. The topics covered in these monographs included Islamic Food in Canada, Raising Muslim Children in Canada, Muslim Festivals and Holidays. The book was distributed in the local schools for their library. Some members also went to the various schools to speak about the Muslim religion and way of life.

One of our members who was teacher in the Arabic Language Program, Edmonton Public School Board, encouraged her class to do art work for our Happy Holidays card to celebrate Ramadan. An ongoing project was the preparation and distribution of the newsletter. Three newsletters were produced per year and distributed to Muslim women in Edmonton and area.

The Chapters decided in 1986 to honour the Pioneer Women (women who arrived in Alberta at the turn of the century) at a tea hosted at the Mayfield Inn. A fashion show with all the different fashion worn by Muslim women was held and the Pioneer Women were presented with our token of appreciation.

Various workshops were held. Some of the topics covered are Awareness of Community Resources, Assertiveness Training, Exploring Human Rights Issues, etc.

In the middle of 1988 it was brought to our attention by Dr. Lila Fahiman that the Al Rashid Mosque, the first mosque in North America, would be demolished if it was not moved from its site by the end of 1989. Many different groups had tried and failed to save the mosque. The Edmonton Chapter after much discussion, decided that it would undertake to save the mosque. The women around the table that night felt that we were in a unique position to succeed in that we are the only group that is made up of representatives in the Ummah and that we would be able to generate support from the community. We had women amongst us who were descendants of the pioneer women who helped to build the mosque, we had women who were new immigrants, we had women who were second generation Muslims in Canada.

A Mosque Committee was struck, meetings were held with various people including the City Council of Edmonton, research was done, presentation packages prepared, lobbying was done, funding sources identified and sought. Through the hard work of our members funding was secured from the Federal Government, Provincial Government, various agencies involved in historical restoration, fund raising dinners and picnic held, and land secured at the Fort Edmonton Park, a tourist attraction which depicts Edmonton as it was at the turn of the century.

Now came the time to do the actual moving of a 50 year old structure. A building moving company was hired and it was decided to move the structure in the middle of the night when traffic was at a minimum. Of course, once the building was moved, the restoration process started. Research once again was done as to exactly how the mosque interior looked like in its early days. Light fixtures, window coverings, etc. were matches exactly and the interior restored to its original state.

During 1989 our President found time to have a baby and resigned as president to devote more time to her new project. Elections were held, and the new executive of the Chapter carried on with the work.

Fund raising dinners for the Mosque project were held and the arduous job of completing the restoration of

the mosque carried one.

Mr. Selwyn Jacob, a film producer attended one of our meetings in 1989. He advised that he was interested in filming the relocation of the Al Rashid Mosque. The documentary called "Al Tasmim", (mean determination in Arabic) is finally completed and was recently shown at the Toronto International Film Festival. Al Tasmim documents the story of Edmonton's Muslim community as they struggle to preserve and restore the Al Rashid Mosque. Inshallah at Edmonton Chapter will again try to have premiere showing of another documentary.

The Al Rashid Mosque was finally reopened at the Fort Edmonton Park in the summer of 1991. Today, it is part of the living museum at the Fort Edmonton Park which is visited by thousands of peoples from around the world. An interpretive program has been established and during the summer a young Muslim works at the Mosque re-living the function of the Mosque in a Muslim's daily life.

This project has been an ongoing project for the Edmonton Chapter. Now we are in the midst of completing the basement of the Mosque. Of course, funds will have to be raised again and work has to continue. We are very fortunate to have a dedicated sister amongst us in the person of Dr. Lila Fahiman who gives selflessly of her time and energy to this worthwhile project.

Although the Al Rashid Mosque, its moving and restoration took a majority of the Chapter's time and energy, the Chapter did not neglect other areas of its mandate. Edmonton Chapter has on an ongoing basis been involved in Interfaith Dialogue with the United Church. Zohra Hussaini, a member of our Chapter spoke on the Essence of Islam at Robertson Wesley United Church during their Sunday congregation. Zohra also lectured on Women and Fundamentalism to the Amnesty International. She presented a paper to Women in Alberta and Saskatchewan History in a conference entitled: Pioneer Muslim Women of Western Canada. Zohra was the featured speaker on Islam at the Conference of Multifaith in a Multicultural World.

Recently, the Chapter has cosponsored a Conference with Indo Canadian Women's Association. The Chapter has cosponsored a research project which Muslim Research Foundation called Muslim Women's Experience in the Alberta Context.

Edmonton Chapter has held Eid Open House at the Al Rashid Mosque at Fort Edmonton. Participated in the Vision TV. open dialogue between Muslim and United Church women at Dr. Lila Fahiman's residence at Seba Beach. Hosted tea at the Garneau Church during the Multifaith Conference. Hosted the delegates to the Multifaith Conference to a tea at the Al Rashid Mosque at Fort Edmonton park. Participate with the Edmonton Muslim leadership to recommend and implement Education Program for the Muslim Women. The Chapter is involved with the Interfaith Society to set up an Interfaith Centre in Edmonton. Our representative was invited to offer prayers to the graduates of St. Joseph's College, University of Alberta. The Chapter has taken on another sizable project in that a video/movie is being made with our Muslim Youth and their concerns, problems faced by the youth today, interaction between girls and their mothers. This video was filmed again at the Al Rashid Mosque. When completed the intention is to have viewing in the high schools to promote discussion and find solutions.

Edmonton Chapter has hosted the National Conference in 1984, 1987, 1991 will be hosting the 1995 Conference.

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### OF INTEREST

**Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada** publishes many documents which you will find interesting. Please write to them care of Communications Branch, Ottawa, K8A 0M5.

A publication on Sufism will be of interest to all. **SUFI REVIEW** by Pir Publications, Colonial Green, 256 Post Rd. E., Westport, CT 06880. Phone (203) 221-7595.

York University will host a conference on **Female Spirituality**, March 1-3 1996 at York University,

## **BOOKS**

Arkoun, Mohammed: **Rethinking Islam**, Westview Press, Oxford, 1994.

This is a fairly academic book, translated from French. The author is an Algerian scholar at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Eowker, John: **Voices of Islam**, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 1995.

The book is a collection of interviews with prominent Muslim scholars in Britain. It is based on a BBC radio series, "What do Muslims Believe?". The conclusion is that there is no single voice of Islam because Islam insists and depends on diversity of interpretations and debate.

Walther, Wiebke: **Women in Islam**, Markus Wiener Publishing, New York, 1993.

Translation from German, the book is a literary history of the lives of Muslim women down the ages in history, culture and arts.

Haddad, Yvonne and Idleman Smith, Jane: **Muslim Communities in North America**, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994.

Papp, Aruna: **The Seven of Us Survived, Wife abuse in South Asian Community**, Multicultural Community Development and Training, Scarborough, 1995.

Stories of seven women who were abused and how each overcame her tragedies.

We recommend this Canadian book for its own value but also because we will make some money on each sale which will go to the Scholarship Fund. The books will be available at the conference but if you would like one please write to us care of our Mississauga address. Cost is \$10.00 each plus postage.

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## **MEDIA**

Globe and Mail, May 23, 1995, The **Empire Strike Back: Islam's Threat to Turkey**.

The article was one of a series on the state of modern Islam. This article discusses the background of Ataturk, his vision of a modern Turkey and the resurgence of a more traditional Islam. The Welfare party called Refah has won many municipal elections.

Kingston Whig-Standard, July 5, 1995, **First Woman Appointed to Cabinet**.

The Libyan government has appointed a woman as a minister.

London Free Press, February 24, 1995, Muslims Under Siege as Artificial Enemy, by Mohammed Elmasry.

A professor at the University of Waterloo discusses the concept of the "new enemy" the West is creating of Islam and Muslims.

Toronto Star, August 13, 1995, Struggling to Hold the Middle Ground.

A Tunisian woman professor of Islamic theology at the University of Zeitouna, in Tunis, Wassila Belaid Ben Hemda, discusses her role in following a moderate path between fundamentalism and secularism in Tunisia.

London Free Press, July 8, 1995, Islamic Community Misunderstood.

An Ottawa author, Daood Hussan Hamdani is writing a chapter in the upcoming encyclopedia on Muslims around the world. Hamdani is recording the history of Canadian Muslims. He states that Islam will become "aggressive in its evangelism". The reporter thinks that Islam will become a conservative force in Canada.

Globe and Mail, June 14, 1995, Strife in Bahrain Focusses Attention on Persian Gulf.

There has been rioting on the island "because of economic decline, uneven distribution of wealth and a hated monarchy", states the reporter. There are groups who are advocating for democracy and view the American support of the ruling family as negative.

Toronto Star, July 22, 1995, New Memorial A Testament To Women's Resolve.

Michelle Landsberg's article on an organization which wants to build a memorial to Ontario women who have been killed by their partners or stranger rapists. The Board of Directors includes the President of the Canadian Muslim Research Institute. This is one of our sister organizations based in Edmonton.

Kingston Whig-Standard, August 14, 1995, Officers Jailed Over Beatings.

There was a vicious attack in France on a Moroccan man by police officers who have been charged for premeditated violence, civil rights offenses and theft.

Kingston Whig-Standard, August 17, 1995, Kingston Multicultural Centre Opens.

The centre will encourage and educate minorities on how to participate fully and effectively in Canadian life.

Kingston Whig-Standard, September 6, 1995, Tragedy of Being Born Poor. Female in Pakistan.

The story of women being burned by husbands and in-laws. A group called the Progressive Women's Association has investigated 189 incidents of women set afire and think that there are up to 2000 women who are abused in this way every year.

Toronto Star, September 22, 1995 and the Globe and Mail, September 22, 1995, Poet Pays a Heavy Price for Her Outspoken Views and Rage Fuels Fugitive Writer's Work.

Interviews with Bangladesh author, Taslima Nasreen. She is a physician and writer who has criticized the treatment of women and the role of fundamentalists in her country.

Toronto Star, September 30, 1995, Fanatics Can't Shake Dignity of Exiled Feminist.

Michelle Landsberg reports on a meeting she attended in Toronto of an address by Taslima Nasreen. Dr. Nasreen responded to questions by stating that neither Islam nor men are the "enemies, fundamentalism is". She said her quarrel is with repressive laws, sexist customs and violent fundamentalist crimes against women.

Toronto Star, September 25, 1995, Shrouded in Black. Women Rendered Invisible, Voiceless.

Katherine Govier, a Toronto novelist, writes her opinion of a photograph she saw of two Yemini delegates to the Beijing conference. They were veiled so that only their eyes are visible. Ms. Govier writes in strong terms about her reaction to "human rights violations in the disguise of religion".

Toronto Star, September 30, 1995, Opinion is Shrouded in Ignorance.

A number of letters in response to Ms. Govier's article which take strong exception to her opinion. One writer says there are Canadian Muslim women who are cloaking themselves to "liberate themselves from being slaves of society". Another echoed this sentiment that she was against the "overexposed, over exploited Western female bodies". A man writes that Muslim women cover themselves from the "sight of lusty men".

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**1995 National Conference**

**EQUALITY OF WOMEN:  
FOCUS ON YOUTH AND SENIORS**

**November 4, 1995**



**PROPOSED PROGRAM**

8:00 - 9:00	Registration
9:00 - 9:10	Recitation of Al-Quran
9:10 - 9:15	Recitation of 0 Canada
9:15 - 9:20	Host Chapter President's Welcome - Nasim Kherani
9:20 - 9:30	National President's Remarks - Solmaz Sahin
9:30 - 9:35	Presentation to Talat Muinnudin, Past President
9:35 - 9:40	Past President's Remarks - Talat Muinnudin
9:40 - 10:00	Guest of Honour
10:00 - 10:30	Keynote Speaker - Zohra Hussaini
10:30 - 10:45	Coffee Break
10:45 - 12:15	Concurrent Workshops

Workshop "A"

**Living as a Senior in Canada**

This workshop will discuss the Rights, Responsibilities and Respect for the seniors. Information will be provided on available resources and women's health issues. Elder abuse will also be discussed.

Workshop "B"

**Issues Facing Today's Young Women**

This workshop will focus on how young women actively participate as Muslims and as women in Canadian society. Young Muslim women face added pressures either because of their origins or practice of their faith.

12:15 - 1:30 Lunch and Prayers

1:30 - 3:00 Workshop "C"

**Violence Against Women (Seniors and Youth)**

This workshop will focus on all forms of violence against women. Violence against women is not limited to physical violence, but encompasses violence in all its forms. Violence in any form is not acceptable by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women or Canadian Society.

3:00 - 3:15 Coffee Break

3:15 - 4:30 Concurrent Workshops

Workshop "D"

**Lessons Learned from Beijing**

This workshop on the Beijing Conference. Speakers participating in this workshop all attended the Conference in Beijing in different capacities and will talk about their experiences and the conference's applicability for us.

Workshop "E"

Muslim women are often portrayed negatively by the media. This creates a barrier between Muslim and other women. This workshop will discuss the role we, as individuals and groups, can play in changing the stereotypical image of Muslim women. The speaker will help us in the sharing of the power and understanding how the media works.

4:30 - 5:00 Strategies/Solutions/Outcomes  
7:30 Dinner  
Entertainment  
Auction

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## **CHAPTERS CONTACTS**

Calgary	Pervina Khan
Edmonton	Nasim Kherani
Halifax	Munawar Ahmed
London	Hoda Hassan
Montreal	Sajida Hussain
Montreal	Fahmida Khan
Niagara	Hasna Tayab
Ottawa	Farhat Rehman Kurd
Regina	Zia Afsar
Sudbury	Zohra Nawaz
Toronto	Wegdan Azzam
Vancouver	Shelina Neallani

## **BOARD:**

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