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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.



1994 CCMW National Conference

FAMILIES: A Woman's Perspective

Ottawa

October 8, 1994

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Read in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created - created humanity out of a germ-cell!

Read - for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One who has taught humanity the use of the pen - taught humanity what they did not know!

Quran 96:1-5

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EDITORIAL

FAMILIES:

1994 has been designated as the Year of the Family by the United Nations.

A Canada Committee for the International Year of the Family was formed to stimulate and encourage national celebration of the importance of the family.

We are proud to say that the Muslim community had two representatives on the Executive Committee. Aziz Khaki was the vice-chair and secretary of the Canada Committee and Talat Muinuddin was a member of the Board. The Canada Committee has defined the family as:

the basic unit of society, valued for the important socio-economic functions it performs. It provides the framework for emotional, financial and material support essential to the growth and development of its members, particularly children, and for the care of others, elderly persons with disabilities, and the infirm. In addition, the family is vital in preserving and transmitting cultural values.

The Vanier Institute of the Family adds:

Whatever the time in history and whatever the challenges they face, families remain the foundation of society. If we lose sight of the family as our richest national resource, our society is weakened.

Most of us have an idealized conception of what constitutes a family but our Canadian reality is vastly different. There are fewer two-parent families and our families range from nuclear to extended, from traditional to variations such as lone-parent and co-habiting couples.

What still remains true is that most of us need families to provide us with affection, support and a place of security.

The research done by the Vanier Institute found that Canadians are worried about the rapid and disturbing changes in society and their effect on these families. Yet, the majority feel that the family is more important in such times.

Of particular interest to us are certain demographic trends. For example, in the 1950s, close to 90 per cent of immigrants came from Europe, while today more than half of all newcomers were born in Asian, Caribbean, African and Central American countries. One of three - 37 per cent - of the population aged 15 years and over has one foreign-born parent, and 18 per cent of this segment of the population were themselves born outside Canada.

Another important factor is that the female labour force has grown from 39 per cent in 1967 to 53 per cent in 1991. Another way of looking at this is that of all Canadian families in 1991, over 61 per cent were two-earner families. The number of lone-parent families is high. Over 13 per cent of all Canadian families are single parents.

Also, the Canadian population is aging and in 1991 nearly 16 per cent were over 60 years of age.

These statistics demonstrate what are significant factors for our families - that there are variations on what constitutes a family: most women are working outside the home as well as managing a home and family, single parents are doing the same thing but without the support of a partner, and many seniors are being cared for by their adult children. However, there are many elderly who lack the care that families usually provide, and live in institutions or alone.

A major function of the family is that it preserves and transmits cultural values. For us Muslims this is a critical and burning issue. It raises many questions for us as a community and as individual families. We are Muslims, but we come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. What do we want to preserve and what is possible or needed for our children in the Canadian context?

The CCMW's Annual Conference is on Families: From a Woman's Perspective. We hope to openly and respectfully discuss our joys, trials and tribulations so that we can educate and support each other as we move forward.

The conference is a joint effort of the Ottawa Chapter and the National. We are most grateful to Ottawa

for their active leadership.

We hope you will want to attend the conference and we look forward to seeing you there in Ottawa, Insha'Allah.

Our next newsletter will provide you with details of the conference.

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#### CHAPTERS' NEWS:

Sincere thanks to each of you for sending us your news. We tried hard to contact and obtain news from other chapters and cities and hope that we will be successful for the next newsletter, Insha'Allah.

Please remember that we, the Executive, need to hear from you, otherwise we are isolated. Please feel free to contact Alia at (613) 382-2847 for information on the newsletter.

Also, please note that the Executive meetings' minutes are being sent to each chapter. If these have not been received, will you please let us know. Thank you.

#### OTTAWA:

A slate of officers was elected at the General Meetings in November 1993. They were: Farhat Rehman Kurd, President; Ateya Mounib, Vice-President; Zarina Khan, Secretary; Jeannine Bradley, Treasurer; and Amina Sleiman, Member at Large.

The chapter wrote to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs expressing outrage at the bombing in Sarajevo. Many projects have been undertaken such as the involvement with the Women's Health Project, fund-collection for Bosnian women and collaboration with the Somali Women's Project. The chapter helped organize a networking event in May 1994 where women service-providers from about 15 agencies came to exchange information and ideas with Somali women. Dr. Sheena Khan, a research fellow at McGill University, was the speaker at Ottawa University on "Excursions into the World of Islam." The topic was on science which was chosen to allow Muslim women to speak on their field of specialization.

The chapter's activities have been exciting and the challenge ahead is to mobilize other community women to join, Insha'Allah.

#### LONDON:

A major project has been to translate from English into Arabic the wife assault brochure entitled "Let's Break the Silence." Funding was received from the Ontario Women's Directorate and the brochure has been distributed to various organizations across Canada.

The chapter has hosted educational sessions such as cancer risk, breast selfexamination, and Muslim burial preparation. Members also have been involved in projects such as the "Rainbow Phoenix Project" which collected funds for Bosnia, and wrote to various politicians. Another project has been to assist Muslim refugee families to settle in Canada.

Chapter meetings have speakers and much networking continues with other groups.

Another recent initiative has been the chapter's fund-raising for the new Islamic Centre, Mash'Allah.

#### NIAGARA FALLS:

Since the fall of 1993, members have cooked and served lunch at the Mosque on Fridays and this has raised over \$3,000 in six months, Mash'Allah. The funds have been donated to the Mosque and to the International Development and Relief Foundation.

Workshops on preparation for burial and on violence against women were well attended.

#### REGINA:

Many activities have occurred as the chapter held and participated in several workshops - legal aid, health issues, and violence against women. There is good networking with other groups and for this Year of the Family the chapter will hold a family dinner with an international flavour.

The membership is approximately 10 and many other women of the community actively assist.

#### EDMONTON:

The chapter co-sponsored a conference on Women and Fundamentalism, and was involved in an interfaith meeting with the United Church on marriage. Presentations have also been made at churches on Islam.

There will be an exhibition on the contribution of Alberta Muslim women at a provincial museum. This is a cooperative effort with the Muslim Research Foundation. The chapter is also preparing an "interpretive" program on Al-Raschid Mosque. A very successful open house was held for Eid.

#### CALGARY:

Although there is no formal CCMW chapter there, women are very active in a number of groups at the Mosque. These groups hold many activities for Muslim women.

#### TORONTO:

Several events have been held by the Toronto chapter. A dinner to celebrate Human Rights Day was held with Ms. Jean Augustine, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, as speaker. Two other women spoke, Miriam Bhaba and Farzana Ahmed, on the continuing abuse of women in Bosnia. A forum was held on the Impact of Racism on the Muslim Community, and speakers were Jamal Hassan, Hadia Shakeel, and Bibi Hakim.

The chapter displayed posters and artifacts in schools during Ramadan and presentations were made on fasting, Islamic principles, and anti-racism. There was also a food drive to reinforce the concept of charity in Islam.

The chapter is a member of the Scarborough Board of Education's Muslim Advisory Committee.

The chapter members held an intense weekend for strategic planning and this will help make the chapter more effective, Insha'Allah.

There will be a mother/daughter tea in August to honour Dr. Hoda El-Maraghi, the first woman to be appointed Dean of Engineering at Windsor University.

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#### ORGANIZATIONS OF INTEREST:

##### National Clearinghouse on Family Violence,

Social Services Programs Branch, Health Canada (federal),

Finance Building, 1st floor, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ont., KIA 1B5.

This organization funds a newsletter, Vis A Vis. It is available free from the Canadian Council on Social Development, 55 Parkdale Ave., P.O.B. 3505, Station C, Ottawa, Ont., K1Y 1G1, or tel. (613) 728-1865.

The summer 1994 edition is on Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women.

They also have publications, e.g.:

Like A Wingless Bird: Tribute To The Survival And Courage Of Women Who Are Abused And Who Speak Neither English Nor French.

Isolated, Afraid And Forgotten: The Service Delivery Needs And Realities Of Immigrant And Refugee Women Who Are Battered.

Canada's Treatment Programs For Men Who Abuse Their Partners.

National Organization of Immigrant And Visible Minority Women of Canada, Contact: Ms. Shelley Das, 251 Bank St., #504, Ottawa, Ont., K2P 1X3, tel. (613) 2320689.

##### National Film Board,

recent video: "No Small Matter" in Punjabi.

##### The Canadian Association of Social Workers,

383 Parkdale Ave., #402, Ottawa, Ont., K1Y 4R4, tel. (613) 729-6668.

The Departments of Canadian Heritage and Health are funding the association to explore issues of ethnic and visible minority communities with respect to elder abuse. For information, contact Ms. Eugenia Moreno of the association.

##### India Mahila Association,

P.O.B. 155, 6416 Fraser St., Vancouver, B.C., V5W 3A4, tel. (604) 321-7225.

This is an organization of women from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, East Africa and Europe whose membership includes women of all ages, religions, traditions and customs.

##### Calgary Immigrant Women's Association,

1035 7th Avenue SW, #230, Calgary, Alta., T2P 3E9, tel. (403) 263-4414.

This organization helps abused immigrant women to gain access to mainstream services.

Cross Cultural Communications Centre,

2909 Dundas St. West, Toronto, Ont., M6P 1Z1, tel. (416) 760-7855.

The centre works against racism and for social equity and has programs and written resources.

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BOOKS:

Towards Equal Access: Working With Immigrant Women Survivors of Wife Assault, from Education Wife Assault, 427 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Ont., M5S 1X7, tel. (416) 968-3422.

A handbook for service providers.

Fatima Mernissi, Dreams of Trespass, Addison and Wesley Publishing Co. The Moroccan feminist's account of her family life in a harem. Nayra Atiya, Ramza, Syracuse University Press.

A modern translation of the novel by Egyptian writer Out el Kouloub (1892-1968), originally published in France in 1958.

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NEWS ITEMS:

The Province of Ontario is setting up a taskforce to look into the subject of female genital mutilation. Members will be from many ethnic organizations. The taskforce will develop strategies and policies.

The European Union has offered haven to a Bangladeshi writer who is hiding because of a government arrest warrant and Islamic groups' calls for her death. Taslima Nasrin, a physician/writer in her early 30s has been a controversial figure because she writes about changes in Islam.

In France, a young Muslim woman dies because three men - a brother, a mosque president, and an imam - try to exorcise her for evil spirits. The three men dipped her in a bath, forced her to drink litres of salt water, beat the soles of her feet for four hours until the girl fell into a coma. She died the next day and the men have been charged with torture and murder. This has caused an uproar in the French city of Roubaix. A local organizer of the Union des Familles Musulmanes has denounced the incident.

NEWSLETTER PLEA:

The CCMW Executive set as one of its objectives to foster communication amongst our members and chapters. Our first newsletter of March 1994 was mailed to over 300 individuals and organizations. We are unsure as to how many were received as our mailing list requires updating. Please pass this newsletter around and please let us know your name and correct address as we would like you to receive the letters. We see the newsletter as a forum for not only informationsharing but also for discussion of Muslim issues. Please let us know if you would like any items discussed or if you would be willing to contribute any articles. Thank you.

MEMBERSHIP PLEA:

We are committed to increasing our membership. The chapters are vital to the CCMW but we realize that it is difficult to have chapters everywhere. We would like to ask you to become individual members. The strength of our collective voice could be most effective if the CCMW represents more Muslim women.

Won't you please join up? Membership is \$25 per year.

To express your views or for information, please write to:

Council of Muslim Women of Canada,

100 McLevin Ave., Unit 204A,

Scarborough, Ont., M1 B 2V5.

Phone: (905) 293-7041

Fax: (905) 771-7117.

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**Le Conseil Canadien des Femmes Musulmanes**

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