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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.



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**"And thus have we willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that, with your lives, you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you."**

Quran 2:143

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### **EDITORIAL**

The C.C.M.W. is proud of its tradition of recognizing the diversity of Muslim women and of its efforts to be as inclusive as possible so that we, as an organization, can speak on behalf of Canadian Muslim women. We have clearly stated Objectives for C.C.M.W. and if a woman believes these are worthwhile and important directions for Muslim women then we welcome her as one of our members. We accept that there are other groups of Muslims and we are committed to working with them to further our shared Objectives.

The C.C.M.W. Objectives are founded on values, are part of our Constitution and are the basis of our Work Plan. One of the Objectives is "to respect the cultural differences among Canadian Muslim women and to recognize and develop our common Islamic heritage".

This for us means that we respect each other and focus on our similarities and learn from our differences. We shy away from judgments of each other's "Islamicity" and of stating criteria of what constitutes a "better, purer or more authentic" Muslim. God has already made abundantly clear, that this kind of judgment is for God to make, not for us as a people.

There is far too much intolerance in the world at large and in Canada itself, so that we as a collective of Muslims should work towards the elimination of intolerance and not add to it.

At the Conference in November, 1995 we had a workshop on the issues which face our young women as they develop their identity of being Muslim and Canadian. Instead of trying to learn from each other and truly listening to the ways individuals have made accommodations, the group split on the issue of what they interpreted as Islamic rules. The focal point became the wearing or not wearing of the hijab and whether this made the hijab wearers "better" Muslims.

Sadly, the session was neither helpful nor did it bring forward any common understanding. This is an example of the lack of respect and the quick judgments we make of each other.

We have also heard that in one of the universities, a vocal group of Muslim students have declared another group of Muslims as non believers, and this because one group follows a different school of thought within the Islamic tradition. Is this what we have taught our young and is this what we want for Islam in Canada?

The responsibility of teaching ourselves and our young lies with families, communities and Muslim organizations, such as C.C.M.W. All members and Chapters of C.C.M.W. should actively promote the Objective that we are all Muslims and that in Canada, it is incumbent on us to work for an inclusive Islam. This is not something novel, for that is what is in the Quran and was practiced by the Prophet.

May God guide us all.

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## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 1995 National Conference was held in Edmonton, November 3 - 5, 1995.

The theme of the conference was "Equality of Women: Focus on Youth and Seniors" and there were five workshops. The workshops were "Living as a Senior in Canada", "Issues Facing Today's Young Women", "Violence Against Women", "Lessons Learned From Beijing" and "Sharing the Power of Media: Understanding and Access".

Approximately, 200 women and men attended, amongst them women of other faiths, service providers and the Imams of the mosques of Edmonton.

The overall feedback was that the conference was successful in meeting the expectation of the participants and did meet most of the planned objectives of the conference.

The Edmonton Chapter was highly praised for the organization of the conference and we thank them on behalf of the participants. We realize how much work went into the details which resulted in the smooth flow of the three days.

We were honoured to have two incredible women who set the tone of the conference and whose participation was seen as "inspirational". We thank the honourable Mrs. Sheila Finestone, Minister responsible for the Status of Women and Multiculturalism, and Madam Fatima Houada-Pepin, of the Quebec Legislature. They came to us after dealing with the Beijing Conference and the Quebec Referendum, events of great magnitude for Canadians.

We also thank the Imams of Edmonton who attended the conference and added much to the conference by their participation. We hope we can count on them to continue to collaborate on behalf of Muslim women and their families.

We had planned the C.C.M.W. Conference to follow the United Nations' Conference on women, held at Beijing in August 1995. Lila Fahlman represented C.C.M.W. and there were other Muslim women who attended such as, our past president, Talat Muinuddin. Their workshop at the C.C.M.W. Conference has allowed us to incorporate the Beijing recommendations into the C.C.M.W. Workplan.

The evaluation of the conference is part of the conference report. We hope to refer to these in the planning of our next conference in 1996, Insha Allah . . . God willing. Please refer to the details of the Evaluation Report.

The workplan is also included in both the Annual and Conference Reports. The intention is to do the tasks outlined, by the C.C.M.W. and also in collaboration with other organizations. We will request close co-operation with the governments as they move forward to implement the recommendations of the Beijing Conference, for these will have a major impact on Canadian Muslim women.

We thank all the speakers, facilitators, volunteers and of course the participants who made the conference such a success. Each year we learn something new and we hope that C.C.M.W., with the support of our funders and our membership, will continue to meet the challenges of creating a strong Canadian Muslim identity for Muslim women.

The conference was followed by the Annual General Meeting and a separate report has been completed to be distributed to funders, chapters, libraries, and other interested organizations.

***We acknowledge with gratitude the financial support of the Federal Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women. For Canadian Muslim women, this support is a***

## **CANADIAN COUNCIL OF MUSLIM WOMEN**

### **1996 PLAN OF ACTION**

This document is the workplan of National and the Chapters as it is the result of consultations across the country. Chapters will be involved in many other activities and are not limited to these tasks only.

### **C.C.M.W. VISION STATEMENT**

To strive for Canadian Muslim women's equality, equity and empowerment.

These goals are Canadian and Islamic values and we, as Muslims women, envision our identity within the context of the principles of Islam and the laws of Canada.

We value our roles and responsibilities in the family and in the community. We believe in the interdependency of each member, so that there is a balance between the needs and the responsibilities of individuals.

### **We define, for ourselves, that:**

Equity provides for fairness and recourse to justice;

Equality, in all aspects, is to be recognized by laws and by the community;

Empowerment is to enable women to be courageous, to learn about their rights and responsibilities so as to increase their decision making abilities regarding choices and options and to act upon them.

### **OBJECTIVES OF C.C.M.W. (As Stated in Our Constitution)**

- To attain and maintain equality, equity and empowerment for all Canadian Muslim women.
- To promote Muslim women's identity in the Canadian context.
- To assist Muslim women to gain an understanding of their rights, responsibilities and roles in Canadian society.
- To contribute to the pluralistic Canadian society the knowledge, life experiences and ideas of Muslim women for the benefit of all.
- To strengthen the bonds of sisterhood among the Muslim communities and among Muslim individuals.
- To stimulate Islamic thinking and action among Muslim women in the Canadian setting.
- To respect the cultural differences among Canadian Muslim women and to recognize and develop our common Islamic heritage.
- To promote a better understanding of Islam and the Islamic way of life in Canada.
- To promote rapprochement and interfaith dialogue between Muslim and other faith communities.
- To represent Canadian Muslim women at national and international forums.
- To encourage the organization and co-ordination of Muslim women's organizations across Canada.

### **PLAN OF ACTION/WORKPLAN**

The workplan is based on our Objectives, the feedback of participants of the 1995 National Conference; chapters input; the UN Conference's PLATFORM FOR CHANGE (Beijing) and the federal government's PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY.

At the UN Conference in Beijing, governments agreed to area of concern for women such as, poverty, education, health, violence, effects of armed conflict, economic structures, power sharing, the environment and the issues around the girl child.

CCMW will respond to the federal government's call for collaboration with organizations such as ours, and we will work with other similar organizations to address common issues.

The objectives we will focus on in our workplan for 1996 and beyond are:

- STRENGTHENING CCMW AS AN ORGANIZATION
  - COLLABORATING WITH GOVERNMENTS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO ACHIEVE OUR MUTUAL OBJECTIVES.
  - PROMOTING THE UNIVERSALITY OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS.
  - WORKING TOWARDS ACHIEVING ZERO TOLERANCE REGARDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.
  - STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY, ESPECIALLY, WOMEN'S ROLES. PROMOTING A MUSLIM CANADIAN IDENTITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY.
  - PROMOTING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM AMONGST MUSLIM WOMEN, AS WELL AS IN SOCIETY AT LARGE.
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### **INFORMATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

One of the Recommendations made by the participants at the Conference was that we need to do more education of women and men about violence in the family. One way to achieve this recommendation is to publish part of the Workshop at the conference on Violence against women, so that a greater number of people are provided the information via the newspaper.

We hope this is helpful and will lead to further discussions and solutions within our communities and families, insha'Allah.

#### **Definition of Abuse:**

Abuse is defined as any behaviour that intends to control another person through fear and intimidation. This controlling behaviour can be financial, emotional, physical and/or sexual.

Physical abuse is often preceded by emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is by far the most traumatic. It constitutes a fear of future abuse for the woman, her children, other family members, pets and property. Abuse shatters a person's trust, self confidence and self worth, leaving a woman feeling helpless, powerless and often believing that she deserves the abuse and is to blame.

The charts (*to be scanned - contact CCMW*) showing the Intimate Abuse Relationship and the Intimate Democratic Relationship are helpful in understanding the dynamics of relationships.

**If you would like further information on this topic, please write to CCMW.**

### **MEDIA**

Toronto Star, Oct /95: **"Racist Remarks Bring Anger, Fear"**

Immigrants and Jewish organizations are expressing disgust, fear and anger over the racist remarks made during the Quebec Referendum by Parizeau and Landry that the "ethnics" are the cause of the failure of separation.

Toronto Star, Oct 8/95: **"Religious Wars" "Why a Proposed Mosque Stirred Up a Hornet's Nest" "Should the House of God Pay Property Tax?"**

"Freedom of worship is one of the cornerstones of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms - as long as you find the parking" says the reporter. Some Muslims would like to build a mosque in the industrial area of East York in Toronto. There are charges of racism as this battle has been going on for months and the Muslims see the issue of parking as a means to stopping the building.

Some city councilors are vs. the building as the municipality will lose about \$91,000 a year in taxes.

The United Church is concerned that with shrinking revenues, municipalities will start looking at church properties for taxes. A report by the Ontario Fair Tax Commission, 1993, recommends that religious properties should pay taxes. Haroon Salamat of the Taric Islamic Centre is quoted in the article.

Kingston Whig-Standard, Oct 16/95: **"Different Message as Blacks March on Washington Once**

## **Again"**

The Million Man March has aroused controversy because the leadership of Louis Farrakhan is seen as questionable. He has been quoted as being anti white and anti Semitic but many blacks see him as a charismatic leader who is trying to instill pride and self sufficiency in them and their communities.

Kingston Whig-Standard, Oct 15/95: **"Algerians Threaten More Blasts"**

There are more threats from Algeria's Armed Islamic Group to bomb places and individuals in France. The group has already claimed responsibility for bombings which have killed 7 people and injured 130 since July, 1995. The group wants France to end its support of the Algerian government.

Toronto Star, Oct 95: **"You Are Invited"**

An ad was placed in the newspaper inviting the general public to an Open House of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque in Maple, Ontario on Oct 29/95.

Kingston Whig-Standard, Oct 31/95: **"Maid Sentenced to 100 Lashes"**

This is the on-going case of a Muslim Filipino maid who stabbed her employer after he raped her in the United Arab Emirates. She had to pay blood money to the family as well as being whipped 100 times.

Toronto Star, Oct 23/95: **"Teach Your Children Well, Islam: To Keep the Faith"**

The article is on Ottawa's Qasem Mahmud who published a series of books on Islam for children. Mahmud started the 8 books in 1984 and now sells over 5000 copies per year.

Kingston Whig-Standard, Nov 9/95: **"Women Find Equality in Iranian Rebel Army"**

A National Liberation Army based near Baghdad has over 2000 Irani soldiers. The army has been formed to overthrow the Khomeini regime and they are proud of the role they are giving women. Their President elect is a woman, Maryam Rajavi and there are several in leadership positions.

Kingston Whig-Standard, Nov 13/95: **"Intolerance Rising in Europe"**

Fears are deepening because of "Racial warfare, extremist politics and blind terrorism". Riots have flared in Brussels vs. Moroccans and the European Union politicians are concerned about the over 10 million "third world" immigrants who try to escape poverty in their countries only to remain jobless and crowded in European slums. Amongst these are young Muslims who are rejecting integration and are turning to crime while young Europeans join right wing extremism.

Montreal Gazette, Dec. 7/95: **"Opponents Cry Foul in Egypt"**

In the recent elections in Egypt when the government won most of the seats in Parliament, many people protested as they felt that the "Islamic" candidates were blocked from the elections and there were instances of fraud. Police have arrested dozens of Muslim Brotherhood supporters.

Whig Standard, Dec. 15/95: **"Queen's Plays Major Role in National Study"**

Osteoporosis is a crippling disease affecting older women. Queen's University is launching a study on this subject.

Whig Standard, Dec. 26/95: **"Islamic Leader wants Coalition"**

In recent Turkish elections when the government of Ciller was defeated, the Welfare Party asked other parties to join him in forming a government. But potential partners are blocking them out as the Welfare Party plans to "put Islamic principles into law."

Whig Standard, Dec. 28/95: **"Religion Sprouts in Albania"**

With the defeat of communism, various religious groups are fighting for the souls of the Albanian people. The population is divided 70% Muslim, 20% Catholic and 10% Orthodox Catholic. Protestant evangelists want to build churches but say they are facing opposition from the Muslims.

Whig Standard, Jan. 2/96: **"Women Rally for Rights"**

Thousands of rural women gathered in Dhaka, Bangladesh to oppose clerics who don't want women to obtain an education or work.

Whig Standard, Jan. 3/96: **"Group Studies Cultural Clashes and Medical Ethics"**

The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria is putting together a research study, about the issues of ethics and cultural clashes, which will guide health care professionals in Canada. It appears that there will be a middle ground of learning from other cultures and also be firm about values which transcend cultures.

Whig Standard, Jan. 3/96: **"Government Seeks Gang Leader Linked to Two Days of Violence"**

There have been severe clashes in Pakistan between various groups, and the police are detaining hundreds of people who are demanding what they say are equal rights for those who are originally from India.

Globe and Mail, Jan. 12/96: **"Ciller Rejects Islamists' Offer"**

Turkey's caretaker Prime Minister, Ciller, spurned the offer of the Islamist Welfare Party. The Party wants to have more Islamic values in the government as different from secular. The Welfare Party won 158 seats out of the 550 seats of parliament.

Globe and Mail, Jan. 12/96: **"Cartoon gets Editor five years in Jail"**

The article is about the state of affairs in Tunisia. The government is severe and bans many political parties so that many dare not express their ideas freely. Tunisians enjoy a stable economy and there is no wild inequalities common in the neighbouring countries, but it comes at a price. There is no opposition, no press and so no open discussion about a powerful government.

Whig Standard, Jan. 15/96: **"Newspaper Editor Wounded, Librarian Killed"**

The owner of an Algerian newspaper was killed after he wrote an article against the Islamic rebels in Algeria.

There have been dozens of individuals killed in a fight between the secular government and those wanting greater religious input into government.

Toronto Star, Jan. 16/96: **"Gender versus Race"**

An article about the situation of black people in Canada and how there is an ongoing discussion around the fight for personal or community improvement. There has been a black women's organization in Canada for many years and it is now called the Congress of Black Women of Canada. A history has been written on the organization.

Toronto Star, Jan. 16/96: **"Ramadan a good time to dispel doubts about fasting"**

The article is by Raheel Raza, a Muslim journalist who explains fasting and encourages her friends and others to ask questions so that myths can be expelled.

The New York Times, Jan. 21/96: **"The Red Menace has gone but here is Islam"**

The author discusses the fear mongering that is being generated in the West against "Islamic Holy War" and the "fundamentalists" who are seen as the enemy replacing Communism. She admits that there are some Muslims, groups and individuals, who feed into this kind of image, but she warns non Muslims that it is a big mistake to view all Muslims as projected by the "politicised" ones. The distortion of Islam in the West only feeds into the misunderstandings of both sides. "The demonization of a great religious tradition because of the perverted actions of a minority of dissident voices remains the real threat".

Too many leaders in the U.S. are buying into these myths and creating more difficulties in the relationship with Muslims.

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### **OF INTEREST**

The [Muslim Research Foundation](#) and the Alberta Museum have joined to produce a number of materials on Muslims of Alberta. For example, there are bibliographies as well as monographies on the history of Muslims. The groups have also held Workshops and documented these.

The Project's Steering Committee is headed by Zohra Husaini and she can be contacted at:

MUSLIM RESEARCH FOUNDATION  
P.O. Box 45060, Lansdowne Postal Outlet  
Edmonton, Alberta T6H 5Y1

The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) publishes a monthly magazine, "The Message" which has articles on Islam as well as information on their activities. For example, ICNA is making videos for children. These can be obtained by calling 1-800-432-4262. ICNA's address in Canada is:

ICNA  
P.O. Box 24530  
1155 Rome Blvd.  
Brossard, Quebec J4W 3J1

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## BOOKS

- [Beyond the Veil: By Members of Edmonton Chapter](#)

Excellent articles on women's rights, raising Muslim children, demographic study, etc. of interest to women and their families.

- [Seven of Us Survived: By Aruna Papp](#)

Moving accounts of seven South East Asian women who survived abuse in Canada. Aruna has extensive experience and knowledge on issues of abuse.

Cost: \$10.00

- [Fiddler with a Wink: By Lila Fahiman](#)

An interesting book combining the history of the oldest North American Mosque, Al Rashid in Edmonton, and of one of our renown old Muslim families, the Ganams.

Cost: \$24.95

## REPORTS

- [Previous Conference Reports](#)
- [1995 Conference Report: Families, A Woman's Perspective](#)
- [Conference Planning Handbook: Assists in the planning and organizing of conferences/workshops.](#) [1996 Conference Report: Equality of women, focus on seniors and youth.](#) [1996 Annual Report](#)

## VIDEOS

- [Al Rashid Mosque: The excellent, heartwarming story of the saving of the oldest mosque and its moving to the historical Edmonton park.](#) Edmonton Chapter's production.
- [Interview with young Muslim women: Edmonton Chapter and Vision T.V. production.](#) A useful discussion tool.
- [Interview with a Young Muslim Woman: Vision T.V.'s interview with C.C.M.W. member Nilofer Pazira.](#) Useful discussion tool.

## NEWSLETTER

- [1994 & 1995: Includes C.C.M.W. news from National and Chapters, book reviews and media coverage.](#)

## MATERIALS IN PLANNING

- Newsletters
- Handbook to assist Muslim women regarding Canadian laws and policies. By Ottawa Chapter
- Discussion regarding a specific research project with a Canadian university



- Discussions with the Edmonton based Muslim Research Foundation on a handbook on Facts & Myths of Islam
  - Internet Home Page
  - Articles by young Muslim women on their development of a Canadian Muslim identity
  - Compilation of past Newsletters of National by Lila Fahiman
  - Scrapbook of articles on Islam. By Toronto Chapter and Voice of Islam
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## **CHAPTERS CONTACTS**

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## **BOARD**

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