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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.



Editorial Comment

Assalamu Alaikum.

There is no better way to know the world's peoples than through an understanding of their religion. From such understanding, every ritual, reflects some hope or fear that dwells within our own hearts.

In this human sense, religions, however distant in miles or different in details, are all closer than breathing. In seeking to understand them, we explore not only our world but also ourselves.

The very word Islam connotes the peace that comes when one's life is surrendered to God. However, to invite others to understand to know us or our religion, we must first ensure that we understand ourselves and our religion. This is the goal of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women.

Dr. Lila Fahiman

President's Report

Dr. Lila Fahlman

Assalamu Alaikum.

The past year, 1985, has been a busy year for our National Council and for many of our Chapters.

We have published three national newsletters to date, with a fourth newsletter in progress. We sponsored three workshops in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. We maintain an office in Alberta (Seba Beach), the **new phone number is (403) 797-3855** and the postal code is TOE 280.

The local chapters are beginning to publish their own newsletters. Edmonton Chapter is currently working on their No. 2 newsletter. As a National Council 1986 will take us in a new direction, where we will travel more as a Council to keep the Chapters active. We will possibly hold one National Workshop per year and encourage the local chapters to apply for local funding for their own local projects.

We have a responsibility to Muslim women in Canada to work to strengthen our **Iman**; to encourage other Muslim women to become active and work with us in the cause of Islam; to reach out to other women's groups in Canada and to extend our scope to an international level; and to become involved politically.

As President of CCMW I was invited to attend a luncheon hosted by the Alberta Department of Trade and Development. The guest of honor was the new Canadian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Douglas Valentine. I was able to have a long discussion with him re the role and education of Muslim women. I received an invitation from the Ambassador to visit him and his wife in Riyadh. I was also invited by the Department of Trade and Development to attend a luncheon, with other members of the Edmonton Chapter, for Sheikha Nadia Zahia, wife of the Canadian Honorary Consul to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. The Sheikha expressed an interest in the preservation and use of the Arabic language. An exchange took place on the status of Muslim women. I was invited to speak to the parents and the school board administrator of the Arabic language program in Edmonton Public School System, on the occasion of Maulad al Nabi. I also accepted an invitation from His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan to attend the opening of the new Ismaili Jamat Khana and Centre in Burnaby, B.C.

We now have a seat on the Board of CMCC. This will permit us to have an extra vehicle to reach women in the communities, nationally and internationally.

Let us focus on the year 1992, the year of our **tenth** anniversary, as we continue with our work. We have come a long way in the four years since our Founding Conference in Winnipeg in 1982. There are many issues facing women in Canada and around the world, in particular Muslim women.

We can offer even greater assistance to women in their struggle for knowledge and equality in the home and in the workplace. We need to regain for Muslim women everywhere the status which women enjoyed during the time of the Prophet.

Library on Women in Islam

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women has begun to accumulate books, recordings and television tapes on Muslim women of the past and the present. Chapter members across Canada are being asked to search for suitable items and mail them to:

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women Box 128
SEBA BEACH, Alberta
TOE 2130

The original will be returned if requested.

In particular, we are looking for recordings of the Egyptian singer Umm Kalthoun and the book translated from French by Paul Bowles called "The Oblivion Seekers" (1975).

Umm Kalthoun was a well known singer who died in 1975. Cairo Radio chanted the Qua an following the news of her death, an honour reserved for heads of state. Today her home in Cairo is a national museum.

"The Oblivion Seekers" is a collection of the writings of Isabelle Eberhardt, a writer who disguised herself as a man in order to experience life as an Arab nomad. Ms. Eberhardt was able to record a great deal about the nomadic way of life in Northern Africa before being killed in a flash flood in the Sahara at the age of 27.

We strongly encourage your assistance in making our library on women in Islam an interesting and diverse resource centre. Please send your submissions to the above address or call Dr. Lila Fahlman at (403) 439-1745 or 797-3855 to discuss your collection.

Next National Newsletter....

In keeping with our objective to provide information on the contributions of Muslim women to Canadian society, next quarter's newsletter will include a feature article on Jamelia Hassan, a Canadian Muslim artist.

Maulid U1 Nabi

Dr. Lila Fahlman

On the occasion of Maulid ul Nabi, the President, Dr. Lila Fahlman made the following presentation to the Public School Trustees, the administrators, teachers and parents of the children in the Arabic language program at Glengarry.

Assalamu Alaikum. Bismilla Erahman Erahim.

Glory to God Most High, full of Grace and Mercy. He created All including Man. To Man He gave a special place in His Creation. He honored Man to be His Agent, and to that end, imbued him with understanding - understanding of himself, of his environment and of God. There were those who were destined to become Messengers of God to the rest of Mankind, with one sole purpose to proclaim the eternal light of Unity, the Oneness of God.

The names of many Messengers are inscribed in the records of many nations and many tongues. Their messages were delivered according to the needs of the times and the understanding of the people. Almost 600 years after the message of Jesus, Peace be upon Him, the Roman Empire lay destroyed by its decadence, a decadence which pervaded the Middle East, a decadence which swallowed in its mire the great systems of law, organization and universal citizenship, a mire of ecclesiastical formalism, dogmatism and exclusive arrogance.

Then in the sacred city of pagan Arabia, the city where Abraham and his eldest son Ishmael built the Kabaa, a place of worship, worship dedicated to the Oneness of God, a light shone and spread in all directions, to all continents. It made the Arabs the leading nation of culture and science, of organized enterprise, law and arts, a great zeal to conquer the mysteries of Nature. That light was the birth into the world of an apostle, foretold by the holy prophets Jesus and Moses, Peace be upon Them. This apostle, unlettered, noble of birth, endowed with grace, wisdom, human love and human understanding, came to bring the message in burning words the spiritual truth and message of the Most High.

This was the man Muhammad, Peace and blessings be upon Him. With no learning he put to shame the wisdom of the learned, with the peasant he worked and won their love, with the mischievous and devious, he walked upright and straight, winning from them the name of the Man of Faith who never broke his word.

Muhammad stood for all humanity. He envied not the rich but cared for those neglected or oppressed by the world - orphans, women, slaves, the poor in need of food or comforts, mental solace, spiritual strength or virtues downtrodden in the haunts of men. His life was spent in a constant search for the truth in

Nature's forms and laws and in the inner world of human lives. People sought him out as peacemaker because of his reputation as just and righteous. To a cave in the side of Mount Hira, some three miles north of Mecca, Muhammad retired for peaceful contemplation. Here he talked with God, resolving not only his own problems but also those of his people and of human destiny.

At the age of forty, in the cave of Hira, a great light overpowered his senses and a voice said "Igraa!" Igraa - translated may mean Read! Proclaim! or Recite! The unlettered Apostle was puzzled - he could not read! Again, again and again, three times the angel Gabriel pressed him to his breast and cried "Igraal". The words which flowed made clear His Mission; its Author, God the Creator; its subject Man, God's wondrous handiwork, capable, by Grace of rising to untold heights; the instrument of that Mission, the Sanctified Pen, the Sanctified Book, the Gift of God, for men to read, write, study, or treasure in their souls. The revelation had come, the mission and the inspiration. Who believed? Who followed?

Khad ja, his wife exalted in faith, Ali who became the right hand of Islam, Abu Bakr, counsellor and friend declared his faith, Zaid, a freed slave, who counted his freedom as little compared to service in Islam. Here we see, the first believers - a woman, a child of ten, a man of affairs and a freedman, all bonded in the equality of Islam. His mission was to preach and declare the One Universal God, the Gracious, the Merciful and to lead men to the right and forbid the Wrong. Islam meant the willing submission of his will to God. Muhammad gave that submission, not without effort, even as Moses did before him and Jesus in the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane. For twenty-three years this Man of God received and taught the Message of the Most High. These messages came as inspiration to Muhammad on different occasions and in different places. As he recited the messages, they were recorded by the Pen. They were imprinted in his heart, his mind and in the memory of his loving disciples.

These messages grew into a body of sacred Scripture arranged for public prayer and reading. This is the Book; the Quran. This is the man who fought against superstition, falsehood, dogma and creeds which went against reason and nature and oppressed the people. This is the man who suffered hatred and persecutions, threats, tortures and exile.

This is Muhammad, Peace be upon him, and today we celebrate his birthday.

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Executive Meeting

Ottawa, March 15, 16, 1986

The executive of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women met in Ottawa with representatives of the Women's Program, Secretary of State. The Hon. Walter McLean and Hon. Barbara McDougall hosted a reception on the weekend. The Hon. Joe Clark attended a dinner with the Executive.

Symposium in Ottawa

March 17, 18, 1986

Dr. Lila Fahlman accepted an invitation from Sylvia Gold, President of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Economy, in Ottawa, March 17 and 18, 1986. The Symposium dealt with building our network linking our issues and current initiatives to value women's work. The delegates participated in five discussion groups and five workshops. The Symposium concluded with a dialogue with Council members and Staff on the Council's work to improve the economic situation of women.

McMaster - Aga Khan - CIDA Project

Hamilton

Nineteen women health visitors, nurses and nurse tutors from the Aga Khan University in Pakistan were awarded certificates for satisfactory completion of Advanced Training at a special ceremony at University

Hall, McMaster University on Tuesday, February 11, 1986. This unique program of co-operation in the field of health education promotes knowledge, health and national goodwill between the people and governments of Canada and Pakistan. The graduates return to Karachi to assume senior responsibilities at the Aga Khan University and Hospital.

We congratulate McMaster University, its School of Nursing and the Faculty of Health Science for this outstanding contribution to international development. The vision and funds of Canadian International Development Agency made this joint venture possible and is to be commended.

Our Secretary, Talat Muinuddin, represented CCMW at the ceremonies and reception which were attended by a large number of health professionals and community representatives.

International Women's Day

A series of exhibits, discussions and receptions were held to celebrate women's rights and to sensitize the community at large to the special issues of concern to women, including Muslim women, on March 7, 1986. The Toronto chapter of CCMW held a film showing and reception to mark the event. Later, a joint public meeting was held at Convocation Hall, University of Toronto.

Ontario: Committee on Women in the Private Sector

The Government of Ontario has appointed a three member committee to study and report on equal pay for work of equal value in the private sector. While we welcome this move, we object to the inclusion of only one woman on the committee. We also find it unsatisfactory that the committee members do not include representatives from the labour movement or community organizations.

We urge other provinces to expedite necessary legislation and implementation so that the large gap between wages paid to males and females for work of equal value is eliminated.

Conference on Immigrant and Minority Women

Ottawa, June 1985

Dr. Lila Fahiman

Thirty-seven women representing more than 40 immigrant and visible minority women's groups from across Canada met with four federal cabinet ministers to ask for policy changes that will help put an end to discriminatory practices which keep them in the lowest paid sector of the economy.

The women told the ministers - Jack Murta of Multiculturalism, Flora MacDonald, Employment and Immigration, Walter McLean, Secretary of State and Jake Epp of Health and Welfare - that lack of access to language and job training programs and health and social services prevent immigrant and visible minority women from breaking the cycle of poverty and isolation from mainstream society.

Pointing out that the country's economy is dependent on their labor - often carried out in substandard working conditions with salaries below the minimum wage - the women said they are the most discriminated group in Canadian society, hindered by the double bias of racism and sexism. One third of immigrant and visible minority women work in the low wage sector where they emerge clearly as the most disadvantaged group in society. Professional immigrant women also suffer because their skills are not recognized in Canada, and they often spend long periods of time working at menial jobs before their qualifications are recognized.

Following are the group's major recommendations:

1. Presently, full time language training with allowance is confined to immigrants defined as

"independent". The majority of women immigrating to Canada fall into the "sponsored" category and are not eligible. All immigrants who intend to seek jobs on the labor market should have access to language training with allowances no matter what their admission category.

2. Policies should be developed for skill training courses and on-the-job training programs for women without sufficient language skills or basic training with allowance, and Employment and Immigration should provide special funding for these programs.
- 3.
4. Strong affirmative action programs should take immigrant and visible minority women into account. The programs should include monitoring and enforcement agencies and pressure should be put on provincial governments to follow the federal example.
5. Employment and Immigration should work with provincial educational institutions and professional and trades associations to establish the equivalency of various courses offered in other countries.
6. The refugee determination process should be hastened, and refugee claimants should have oral hearings before the Refugee Status Advisory Committee.
7. Refugee claimants should be allowed to work, to have access to social services, and their children allowed to go to school while this decision is in process.
8. Women immigrants admitted to Canada under "family class" and "assisted relative" categories should have access to welfare benefits and student loans and bursaries as well as allowances for language and skill training.
9. The Minister of Multiculturalism should work with the ministers of Secretary of State, Health and Welfare, Employment and Immigration and Labor to develop strategies within their programs to reach immigrant and visible minority women and improve their status.
10. Senior advisors drawn directly from immigrant and visible minority women should be hired by Multiculturalism, Health and Welfare, Secretary of State and Employment and Immigration and Labour, to counsel the ministers on accessibility to services and programming.
11. The Health and Welfare department should provide incentives for the training of professionals that would take into account the multicultural nature of Canadian society, and written materials for people using services should be culturally sensitive and available in relevant languages.
12. Immigrant and visible minority women should be present as full time members of the new National Council on Health and Welfare.

Action Committee on Immigrant Women

On January 14th, 1986 Dr. Lila Fahlman received a follow-up report on the subsequent work of the Action Centre established last June in Ottawa.

Report on meeting with Otto Jelinek, December 10th, 1985:

The Minister pledged his total commitment and support for the cause of immigrant and visible minority women, and would like to take this opportunity to exchange notes and to set priorities.

Mary Mouammar gave opening address on the historical perspective of the Action Committee and the need for continuing consultation.

Mary Minna and Christina Lee addressed the issues of health and social services based on the response of Jake Epp.

Two positive outcomes of the correspondence were:

- a. The joint initiatives of the Department of Health and Welfare and the Secretary of State in establishing an action-oriented task force on the mental health needs of immigrants and refugees;
- b. The present research study initiated by the Mental Health Division of Health and Welfare on the gender-specific mental health problems and treatments of immigrants.

The Action Committee cautioned the Minister:

- a. The Joint Task Force should include practitioners as well as academic researchers in order to give

a comprehensive coverage of the mental health problems encountered by immigrants and refugees.

- b. The research study should not just be another needs assessment of the problems experienced by immigrants, but should include policy and program development related to the research findings.

However, the general reaction to Jake Epp's response has been unsatisfactory, primarily due to the lack of specificity with reference to the recommendations of the June 3rd Brief. The following are examples:

Recommendation 16 - particularly with regards to core funding for ethno-cultural community, emphasis on preventative approaches, and self help support groups. Also lacking in response is the request for establishment of funding for culturally sensitive health related material and the translation of such materials, request for development of policy guidelines for funding of community projects for immigrant and visible minority women.

Recommendation 18 - no response to the request for provision of financial, medical and social services for elderly, immigrant women who have no such supports from their country of origin, particularly those from Eastern European countries.

Recommendation 17 - inadequate response regarding the re-training of professionals of immigrant backgrounds. Epp's response was that post-secondary education is primarily a provincial jurisdiction. His only commitment was to bring this to the attention of his provincial counterparts.

Recommendation 17 continued - the intent to make multiculturalism a component of all government grants to mainline organizations is to emphasize the need for multicultural awareness in the mainstream organizations, the intent is not to exclude a number of organizations which focus on specific disorder or issue, both goals are not mutually exclusive.

Recommendation 19 - regarding equitable representation on the National Council of Welfare, Epp indicated some appointments of visible minority and immigrant people, however, the mechanism of selection was not clearly specified concerning equitable representation.

The other sections concerned language and skills training, and multiculturalism and women's programs, which were presented by Judith Ramirez and Liliane Ma respectively. There was a general disappointment with the response from Flora McDonald, specifically with regard to the request for full-time language training with allowance whether destined for labour force or not, and the need for community based special language training for women who are illiterate. Liliane Ma stressed the need in hiring of senior advisors in Status of Women and the appointments to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women to include visible minority and immigrant women who are at present grossly under-represented.

Otto Jelinek asked the Action Committee to forward names and curriculum vitae of immigrant and visible minority women to his department for consideration of appointments. The deadline for submission of names to the Task Force on mental health needs of immigrants is December 31st, 1985. Other issues raised were the public education of the host society regarding negative images of immigrants and refugees as job-stealers in the media, and the Public Service Commission job application form to include indication of visible minority and immigrant women.

Otto Jelinek also pledged his commitment to bring the group of 40 women back to Ottawa for June 1986 meeting with the four ministers as promised by his predecessor, Jack Murta. He also pledged his support to facilitate the arrangement of a meeting for the Action Committee in February 1986 with the three other ministers in Ottawa.

Edmonton Regional Council: Alberta Culture Heritage Council

At a recent meeting of the Edmonton Regional Council Dr. Lila Fahlman was elected by acclamation as Chairperson of the Council.

Nairobi 1985

Talat Muinuddin

(As told by Barbara McLean, wife of the Hon. Walter McLean)

In July 1985, thousands of women from countries worldwide came to Nairobi, Kenya to participate in two parallel conferences to mark the end of the Decade for Women. In the Kenyatta Conference Centre,

official delegates played their parts in the United Nations Conference which reached a successful conclusion in the early hours of July 27th. Across the city at the University of Nairobi, more than 13,000 women participated in Forum '85, the culminating nongovernmental meeting. Forum '85 had as its purpose "to bring together people with varied backgrounds to exchange information, learn from each other's experience and plan for action to improve the situation of women after 1985".

Canada was well represented at both conferences. The official delegation was led by the Hon. Walter McLean, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and at that time, Secretary of State of Canada. He is now Minister of State for Immigration and retains his portfolio for women's issues and advocacy. Canada not only sponsored nearly fifty women to Forum '85 but a number of women from developing countries were able to attend due to travel grants provided by the Canadian Government.

Forum '85 featured hundreds of workshops on a broad range of topics. They were related to the main themes of the Decade and of the official conference - "Equality, Development and Peace", and the sub-themes: "Employment, Health and Education". Dame Nita Barrow of Barbados, President of the International Council for Adult Education, was Forum Chairman, while the coordinator was Virginia Hazzard of the U.S.A. Canada played a key role in organizing the International Film Festival and its coordinator was Hannah Fisher, on loan from her job as coordinator at Toronto's Harbourfront. The New Film Group of Montreal was on hand to record numerous events. Hundreds of workshops took place and subject matter ranged from rural development through nutrition, the plight of refugee women, population problems and the role of women in agriculture. "Live" workshops were the brainchild of hundreds of Kenyan women, who displayed water pumps and showed how local access to clean water impacts the development of villages in regard to health, family planning, nutrition and economic development. The display emphasized that the loss of four hours a day carrying water meant that little time was left for women to pursue literacy programmes.

DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era) had a strong impact on the Forum. It is based in New Delhi, India and is made up of a network of Third World women.

The improvement of rural living standards was the subject of a large display called "Tech and Tools" which was the most popular demonstration at Forum '85. Among the technologies shown were a full-scale fish-smoking oven operated by women from Ghana. Women from India were there - building and demonstrating the Chula stove and the solar cooker. Women from Bolivia demonstrated cheese making and women from Kenya, bee-keeping, honey extraction and many different types of stoves. It was an eye opener to witness the variety of technologies brought from the four corners of the world.

The achievement of the official conference in adopting the Forward-Looking Strategies Document by consensus was a great achievement. While the contentious wording in several paragraphs necessitated roll-call votes, there was evident will to agree on the importance of an international strategy for the world's women to the Year 2000. Thus there is now a document to which women in every country can refer when pressing national governments; it is a document which represents a commitment by governments to undertake the necessary measures to integrate women as participants and beneficiaries of development in all sectors.

The three conferences of the Decade - Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985) have been particularly important for women in the developing world, as these events have served to focus the attention of their governments on women's issues. The Decade has stimulated the creation of women's bureaux with the government structures of many developing countries, as well as the creation of numerous non-governmental women's organizations. The Nairobi

Conference demonstrated the high level of agreement that can be reached on political commitment to change on behalf of women, in direct and specific ways.

The Forward-Looking Strategies are intended to ensure that countries establish the machinery to re-direct educational policy, health policy, agricultural policy, and other approaches to economic development so that women can be both agents and beneficiaries of change in these areas.

We came away from Nairobi believing that we are indeed on the edge of a great wave of history, with a new and meaningful partnership ahead for the men and women of the world.

The Developing Human

Gasser Hathout

"It is cited in the Koran, The Holy Book of the Muslims, that human beings are produced from a mixture of secretions from the male and the female. Several references are made to the creation of human being from a sperm drop, and it is also suggested that the resulting organism settles in the woman like a seed, six days after its beginning. (The human blastocyst begins to implant about six days after fertilization.)

The Koran also states that the sperm drop develops into a clot of congealed blood. (An implanted blastocyst or a spontaneously aborted conceptus would resemble a blood clot.) Reference is also made to the leech-like appearance of the embryo....

"The developing embryo was considered to become human at 40 to 42 days and no longer resemble an animal embryo at this state The Koran also states that the embryo develops within 'three veils of darkness.' This probably refers to (1) the maternal anterior abdominal wall, (2) the uterine wall, and (3) the amniochorionic membrane. Space does not permit discussion of several other interesting references to human prenatal development that appear in the Koran."

The above two paragraphs are excerpts from *The Developing Human*, by Dr. K.L. Moore. This book is the current embryology textbook for the first year class at UCLA Medical School.

Here, Dr. Moore recognizes the miracle of the Quran in detailing aspects of human development over 1400 years ago, which only recently are being discovered by modern science. These same aspects have been discussed by Dr. Maurice Bucaille in his *The Bible, The Quran and Science*. We can learn much about our Holy Quran-the eternal miracle by examining some of these fascinating aspects.

For instance, in the Middle Ages the widely held scientific opinion was that man was a completely developed organism residing in the sperm. Pregnancy was simply an increase in size. The Quran, however, stood alone in denouncing this view:

"God fashioned you in (different) stages." (71:14) This is the view now accepted, that the fertilized egg, a zygote, becomes a blastula, then a morula, then an embryo, then a fetus, maturing and changing throughout these stages.

Also, the fact is mentioned that man is created from sperm:

"Was man not a small quantity of sperm which has been poured out?" (75:37)

...Insha'Allah, these aspects will help open our eyes to one of the miracles of the Holy Quran.

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women

OBJECTIVES

- To coordinate the activities of organizations of Muslim women across Canada and to present the Islamic way of life as defined by Quran and Sunnah.
- To stimulate a direction of thinking among Muslim women across Canada which is characterized by acknowledgement of the multicultural differences and the harmony in such diversity of cultures, and by an awareness of their rights, responsibilities and roles in a multicultural society.
- To foster Islamic education for and among Muslim women and stimulate Islamic thought among them.
- To communicate with women throughout the Muslim World.

1987 Executive

President	Dr. Lila Fahlman	Edmonton
1st Vice President:	Omaira Mansi	Montreal
2nd Vice President:	Najet Hassen	London
Secretary:	Talat Muinuddin	Toronto
Treasurer:	Solmaz Sahin	Niagara-on-the-Lake

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