

Manitoba MUSLIM



Your Community Newsletter



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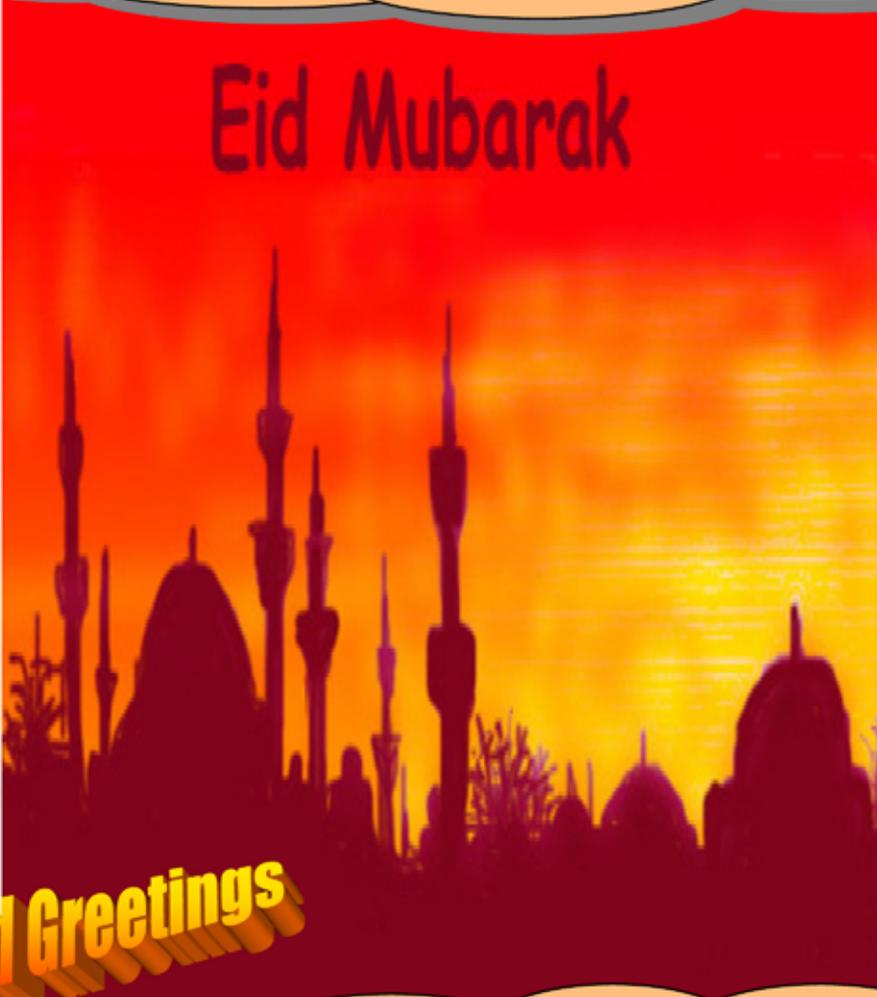
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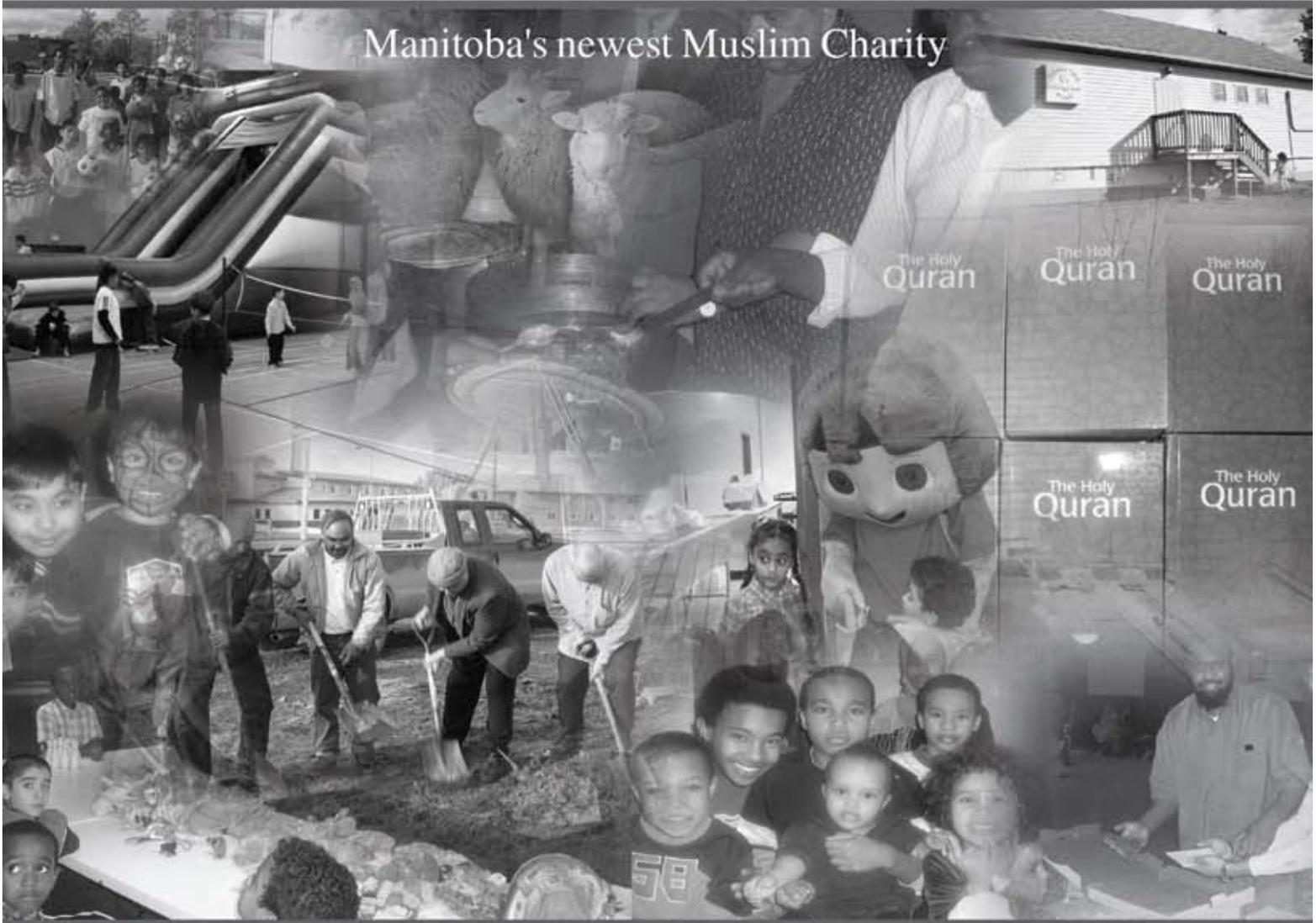
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Feedback

The Manitoba Muslim would like to hear from its readers! If you have any comments, suggestions or if you'd like to advertise in this newsletter please contact us at:

editorialboard@miaonline.org

Friday Prayer Locations

MIA Grand Mosque
2445 Waverley St.
256-1347

MIA St. Vital Mosque
247 Hazelwood Ave.
254-3979

Winnipeg Central Mosque
715 Ellice Ave.
783-6797

University of Manitoba
Education Building, main floor

Health Science Center
820 Sherbrook St.
Room 215

Pakistani Association Center
348 Ross Avenue

Manitoba Muslim

Volume 10 - Issue 4, November 2009



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Opinions and views expressed in this newsletter are the sole responsibility of their authors.

Editorial

With the advent of Eid ul-Adha, Muslims worldwide recommit themselves to the tradition of Prophet Ibrahim and the tremendous sacrifices that he went through. Prophet Ibrahim went through the experience of exile, separation from loved ones and was put to a severe test when asked to sacrifice his first born son. The fact of the matter is that Prophet Ibrahim always found support and affirmations from his family and loved ones. His wife Hajar and his son Ismail, reinforced Ibrahim's choices to obey God's commands and the family was rewarded with the honour of rebuilding and rededicating the Kaabah, the first house ever erected for the worship of God on earth.

This issue of the Manitoba Muslim focuses on the youth in our community. As our readers go through the following pages, we ask that they keep in mind that successful Muslim youth, strong in their faith and excelling in their endeavours, are the product of successful Muslim families who reinforce the choices of the youth to be observant and God conscious. The successes of our younger generation are a reflection of our own, and so are their failures. Individual Muslims and their commitment to their faith, whether young or old, do not exist in a vacuum and need the crucible of a loving family and supportive community.

Community News

Births:

Br. Khaled Al-Nahar and Sr Maisa'a Haj-Ahmad were blessed with a baby girl named Marjan.

Br. Mohamed and Sr. Umaya El-Tasee were blessed with twins: a boy named Ibrahim and a girl named Huda.

Br. Tareq El-Tasee and Sr. Aisha El-Tasee were blessed with a baby girl named Samira.

Br. Sameer El-Tasee and Sr. Meriem El-Tasee were blessed with a baby boy named Yusuf.

Br. Ahmad and Sr. Faiqa Zeid were blessed with a baby boy named Laith.

Welcome:

Br. Omar Amoudi and family moved to Winnipeg from Ottawa.

Dr. Hany AbdEl-Raouf and family moved to Winnipeg.

Goodbye:

Br. Kashif Haseeb and Sr. Sarah Miza moved to Toronto.

Words of Revelation

Qur'aan

On the Youth of the Cave:

We relate to thee their story in truth: they were youths who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance. We gave strength to their hearts: Behold, they stood up and said: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth: never shall we call upon any God other than Him: if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity! (18: 13-14)

Hadith

On youth devotion to Allah:

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet – peace be upon him – said, "Allah will cover seven people with His shade, on the Day when there will be no shade but His: a just ruler, a youth who has been brought up in the worship of Allah, a man whose heart is attached to the mosques, two persons who love each other only for Allah's sake and they meet and part in Allah's cause only, a man who refuses the call of a beautiful and rich woman for illicit relations with her and says: I am afraid of Allah, a man who gives charitable gifts so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given, and a person who remembers Allah while he is alone and his eyes are flooded with tears."

(Al-Bukhari, Hadith 620)

Local Events

Eid ul-Fitr Celebrations:

Winnipeg Central Mosque, the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute and Islamic Social Services Association held a family Eid party at the WCM on October 4, 2009. A similar event hosted by the Zubaiah Tallab Foundation (ZTF) was also held at the Grand Mosque, Waverley Street on the following weekend.

The MIA jointly with the Manitoba Muslim Seniors Association organized an Eid ul-Fitr dinner on October 17 at the Grand mosque. The event was well attended.

Lectures:

On October 17, Br. Abousfian Abdelrazik, a Sudanese Canadian stranded in Sudan by the actions of the Canadian Government, was invited to speak on his ordeal in Sudan at the Knox United Church. This was part of his speaking tour across Canada. Br. Abousfian later attended the Eid dinner at the Grand mosque and gave a short talk. This event was hosted by Peace Alliance Winnipeg and CanPalNet and sponsored locally by the Islamic Social Services Association.

The Canadian Islamic Commerce (CIC) along with the Canadian Islamic Chamber of Commerce (CICC) organized a lecture titled: Islamic Solutions for the Global Financial Crisis October 26, 2009. The speaker was Dr. Toby Birch, Managing Director of Birch Assets Ltd. in Guernsey, UK. He was on a cross-Canada speaking tour. The lecture was held at the Manitoba Hall, University of Winnipeg.

Other regular lectures and study circles were also held, including: the monthly youth halaqa, the monthly IIM lecture series, the MSA weekly halaqa and the ZTF video lecture series at WCM.

MSA Elections:

The Muslim Students Association at University of Manitoba held its annual elections on October 30. The following students were elected to the MSA council:

Br. Aezeden Mohamed	President
Sr. Mariam Jarkas	Vice-President
Sr. Mahada Robleh	Treasurer
Br. Harun Cicek	Education
Br. Mumtaz Mirza	Public Relation
Br. Ramhuzaini Abd.Rahman	Media
Sr. Anisa Isse	Office Manager

Seniors Health Fair:

On Sunday November 1, 2009 a Seniors Health Fair was held at the Grand Mosque from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm. Various health professionals and agencies were present. Participants were given opportunities to meet, talk to health experts and discuss issues such as osteoporosis, mental health, Alzheimer's, healthy eating etc. The event was organized by Islamic Social Services Association and co-sponsored by: Manitoba Seniors Association, Canadian Muslim Women's Institute and Alhijra Islamic School

The MIA Al-Hikma Library Updates:

On November 22 the Al-Hikma Library Committee organized two parallel events: a book review and story time for children. The book review portion was titled; Muslim Extremism: Fact or Fiction and it was a discussion based on the book by Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism. The discussion was led by Br. Ismael Mukhtar and was held at the Al-Hikma Library at the Grand Mosque. The children time focused on reading selected stories for children 2-8 years old. The Library Committee plans to hold events of this nature on a regular basis.

The library was able to complete the purchase of furniture and equipment through generous donations by various brothers and sisters. The library committee would like to thank all those who donated, may Allah bless them all.

The library received a donation of a full set of all the writings of the late Sh. Mohamed Al-Ghazali. The committee would like to thank Dr. Reda El-Jazzar for this donation. The library was able to complete the purchase of furniture and equipment through generous donations by various brothers and sisters. The library committee would like to thank the following brothers for their generous donations: Dr. Fayad Hamideh, Dr. Izzat Ibrahim and his family, Dr. Ghassan Joundi and Dr. Abdulatif Heresha.

Camp Awakening Community Reunion:



Camp Awakening community reunion dinner was held at the Waverley mosque on November 7, 2009. The guest speaker was former Winnipeg resident, Br. Ihab El-Koumi, (currently residing in Ottawa). The program included skits, awards and updates.

*Camp Awakening Key note speaker:
Br. Ihab El-Koumi.*

Q & A

Answered by: Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, President of the Fiqh Council of North America.

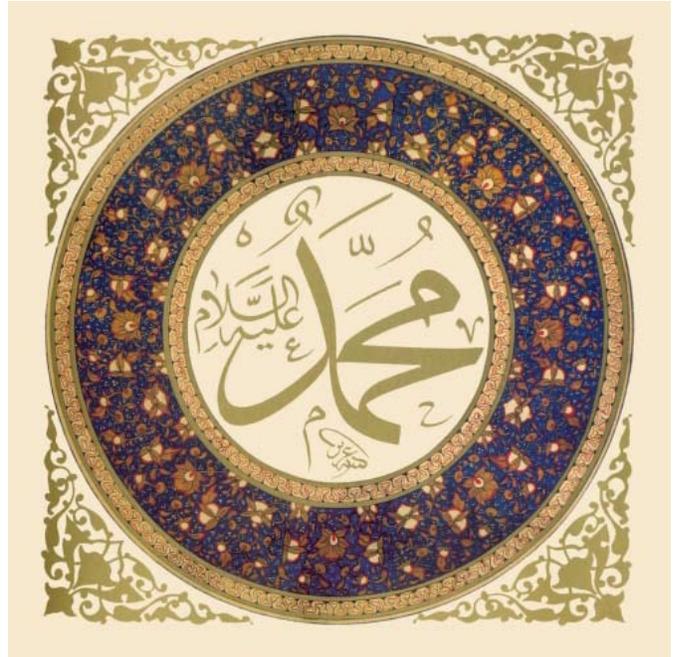
Q. What is the best time for offering udhiyah (sacrifice)? Do we have to offer a separate sacrifice on behalf of every one in our family or one sacrifice is sufficient for the whole family? Is it better to offer sacrifice or can we give money as charity instead?

A. Offering udhiyah (sacrifice) during `Eid Al-Adha is regarded as wajib or mandatory according to Imam Abu Hanifah and as sunnah mu`akkadah or confirmed Sunnah according to other jurists.

All those people who have the nisab (payable amount) of zakah should offer a sacrifice. The time for offering a sacrifice begins after the `Eid Al-Adha prayer. According to a hadith, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said, "Whosoever offered a sacrifice before the `Eid prayer, he or she just slaughtered an animal for meat, but whosoever made sacrifice after the `Eid Al-Adha prayer, he or she has offered a sacrifice." (Al-Bukhari, Sahih, hadith no. 902)

Udhiyah (sacrifice) is an act of worship (`ibadah). As we have the times of prayers so we also have time for making a sacrifice during `Eid Al-Adha. The time of sacrifice remains until sunset on the 12th day Dhul-Hijjah. (This is according to some jurists as there is another opinion stating that the time is extended until the sunset of the 13th day). It is not required for the head of the household to offer a separate sacrifice for every member of the house, rather one sacrifice would be sufficient for the whole family. However, if other members of family own the nisab of zakah, then they must offer their own sacrifice. One goat, lamb or sheep is on behalf of one person, but seven people can share in offering one cow or camel.

The udhiyah is the Sunnah of Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Isma`eel and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them all). It has meaning and significance. It reminds us of the great act of sacrifice that Prophet Ibrahim and Isma`eel were willing to do for the sake of Almighty Allah. Allah spared the life of Prophet Isma`eel, but He told us that, (And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice. As-Saffaat 37: 107). The "momentous sacrifice (dhibhin `athim) is the sacrifice of the billions of people who have



been remembering this tradition for the last four thousand years. Other people who claim to follow Prophet Ibrahim have forgotten this tradition, but we Muslims have kept it alive without any interruption. We must keep this Sunnah and should not forget it.

There is no substitute for udhiyah. However, if one wants to offer a nafl (non-obligatory) sacrifice on behalf of oneself or one's deceased parents or some other relatives, one has a choice either to make udhiyah or give the price of the animal in charity.

The meat of the udhiyah should be divided in three equal portions: one for oneself and the family, one for friends, and one for the poor and needy. If there are more poor people, then it is good to give all of it in charity to the poor and the needy. Here in the USA and Canada we may not need the meat that much, but there are many other places where people do not get meat. It is, perhaps, better for us here in America if we give the money to some dependable relief organizations in order to make udhiyah on our behalf; and to distribute the meat among the poor and needy in poor countries and in countries where people are suffering due to wars, economic sanctions or natural disasters.

Source: Islamonline.net

Youth Profiles

Sr. Asma Mneina (AM) and Br. Ryan Ramchandrar (RR)
 Profiled by: Sr. Nusrrat Masood.

Q1. How old are you?

AM: I am 19 years old.

RR: I am 23 years old.

Q2. Where are your parents from?

AM: My parents are originally from Libya.

RR: My parents are from Trinidad and Tobago.

Q3. What are you studying in school?

AM: Currently I'm in my first year at the University of Manitoba studying a variety of Arts courses.

RR: I'm on my final term in Computer Engineering at the University of Manitoba.

Q4. What are the different committees/projects you have volunteered your time towards presently and in the past?

AM: Within the Muslim community, I've been working with the CICC (Canadian Islamic Chamber of Commerce) for the past few months, putting together a Resource Guide for the Muslim Community. I got the opportunity to Emcee the Canadian Islamic Chamber of Commerce's First Annual Awards Gala. This November I will be speaking as a Muslim youth at an interfaith meeting at the Unitarian Church. I taped two episodes of Islam 101 with Taibah Awan in 2004 and I just recently joined the Al - Hikma Library Committee. I've also had the opportunity to write for the Manitoba Muslim magazine on a few occasions and I am currently writing a piece on their 10th Anniversary Dinner. Outside the community, in my senior year of high school, I was Co-Chair of Amnesty International at Fort Richmond Collegiate. This was an especially successful year, as we had a great team. We planned two coffeehouses, a letter writing campaign, designed and sold t-shirts, and a Taste for Justice Dinner. I am continuing my involvement with Amnesty International at the University of Manitoba

and I am a volunteer writer for the Manitoban.

RR: Well I'm currently on the executive board for the Manitoba Muslim magazine. I also maintain the MIA website miaonline.org and I send out all the E-Newsletter emails. I was also a counsellor at Camp Awakening which is the boys' youth camp. I've done a lot of work without any specific formal positions, e.g., I've done some MSA work, I was part of the Join the Caravan event, I help out with Eid dinners and prayers and I've helped out at different conferences.

Q5. Why and how do you make time to volunteer?

AM: Volunteering definitely takes a lot of time and effort. Balancing work and school is challenging on its own, without throwing volunteering into the mix. However volunteering is not just a time consuming feat, it's also meeting new people, making connections you otherwise wouldn't have, and feeling good about your efforts.

RR: I help out because I believe it's beneficial to me. I like helping others and there's reward in it Insha Allah. It's not always easy. Sometimes it's too much. Early on I was doing too much but now I've limited it to weekends and any free time I have.

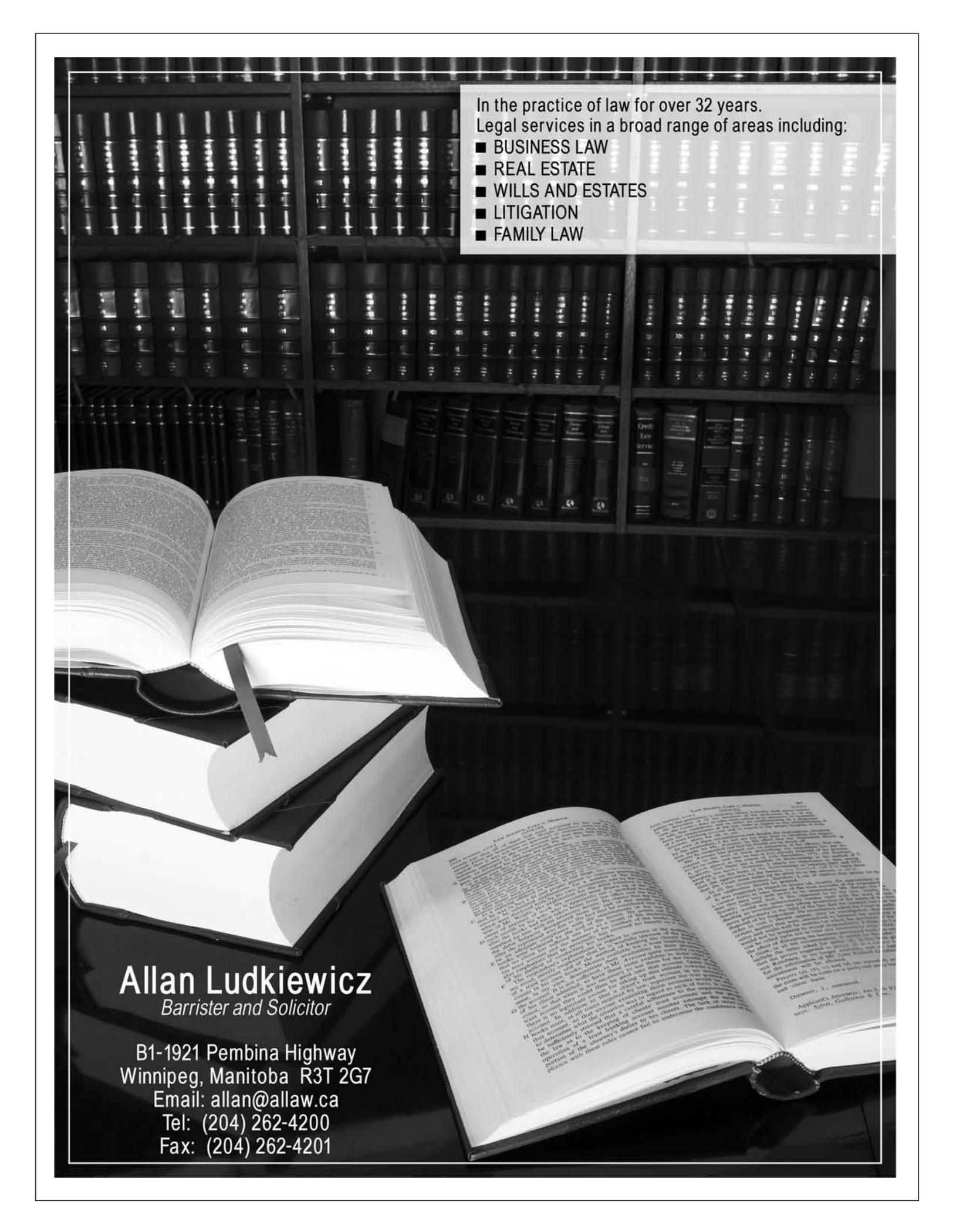
Q6. What's the first project you got involved with? How did you get involved that first time?

AM: I believe the first volunteering I did within the Muslim community was at Kids Day Camps - probably because I still wanted to attend but just surpassed the age limit. Then I believe I was twelve when Taibah Awan, Talia Joundi and I started a Muslim Youth Magazine we called "Seeds". Anyone remember that? It was pretty legit. We passed out flyers advertising the need for writers, planned the issues out, printed them, passed out hundreds of copies during Eid prayer, and burned out after two issues. Just a few weeks ago I discovered one of the issues in my closet. I have to say, I was quite impressed with the result.

RR: My first entrance into working for the community came through a paid position. I applied for and got a position as an MIA secretary. After that initial introduction I got pulled aside a lot at Isha prayers at St. Vital, or Jummah at Waverley, or at University with additional volunteer opportunities.

Q7. What advice would you give to youth that *do not* want to get involved?

continued on page 6



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AM: To youth who do not want to get involved; whatever! I'm just kidding. It's not easy to commit your free time (which we're all running low on this time of year) to any cause, although helping to create that sense of community is worth the hassle.

RR: It's always tempting to sit by and watch others do the work. In the end you'll be asked about your contributions by Allah so why not have something to show? There are a lot of great opportunities that come up when you work for this community. You can get networking opportunities for jobs and meet really good people that grow to be friends you confide in and trust. It's interesting to see how different people have different things to contribute and how we can actually strengthen this community.

Q8. What do you think is preventing youth from getting involved right now?

AM: First and foremost, youth in general are quite active nowadays. Muslim youth are no exception to that. I know a group of Muslim girls who, with Saadia Qureshi, created a team, raised money, and did the walk for Multiple Sclerosis last spring. Others organized volleyball on Monday nights at the Grand Mosque, while others volunteer their time further from the community at hospitals, school clubs and campus organizations. Many youth are pro-active. This being said, to be honest, I believe what's preventing Muslim youth in this community from getting involved is the lack of projects to be involved in. Mashaallah the community has a few things going for it; Manitoba Muslim Magazine, Muslim Girls Camp/Camp Awakening, Al Hikma Library Committee, The Canadian Islamic Chamber of Commerce, and few others that call for volunteers. However, as large and old as the Manitoba Muslim community is, it's only starting to grow in terms of involvement. It's only starting to grow *together*.

For instance, the MSA (Muslim Students Association) at the University of Manitoba just held elections this past October. The dedication and ambition the youth on campus put into their campaign was both excellent and refreshing to see as the MSA has been, and is seriously lacking. Thus, it's not quite about getting youth active, but the community needs to acknowledge that there are students yearning to be. It's up to the community to create programs and projects for the youth to involve themselves in, or at least in the case of programs that have long term standing in the community (especially but not exclusively the MSA) some community members need to step aside, and let the youth of the community shine.

RR: I think youth feel like they can't relate to the rest of the Muslims in Winnipeg. There are lots of programs and they're advertised pretty well but when you go to an event you want to know that you'll be seeing your friends there. I think if you're not involved then it's hard to start because you feel intimidated, like the others are on a way higher level than you and they may look down on you or something because you're not a good Muslim and you don't practise as much. However, that's not the case. You'll be surprised at how much your help is needed and how welcomed you are.

Q9. What are some hopes you have for the youth in the Muslim community?

AM: I know for a fact that the community does realize the importance of its youth, however, I'm hoping it will work harder to act on it. I, as well as many others believe that the MSA is a vehicle into reviving the youth of the community, and in order to spark this activism in the youth that they've wanted, the MSA needs to change. As this is my interview, I can say that I hope the results for the next elections will be different. There's still hope, but this, I believe is the best method to reach our population.

RR: I would really like to see more youth get involved. I think if they did they would develop more spiritually and physically and realize that this community is not just for the elderly or some other group and that the community and the Ummah can prosper.

Q10. How have your parents shaped you?

AM: Alhamdulillah my parents have exposed me to the community through Camp that I attended for several summers, and encouraged me to participate in various activities. That was completely cliched and not my style, but I was raised to aim high and contribute positively to the community, to the world. My parents have made a point in raising me to be a very reasonable, mindful person. Volunteering, in my opinion, is just that.

RR: My parents were very open with me. They allowed me a lot of freedom to learn and make my own mistakes. They were so patient with me too. Whenever I went back to them and realized they were right all along they didn't just brush me aside. They always wanted the best for me and provided the very best opportunities through education. They always drilled in manners with me. They never were tied down with one way of thinking. They taught me to do the best in whatever I did. They were really supportive.

Youth Alienation

By: Br. Ismael Mukhtar



Recently I gave a short talk during the *Taraweeh* prayers in the month of Ramadan. The topic of my talk was “Muslim youth”. My talk was nothing out of the ordinary, according to my judgment; however, the response I received from the youth who were present was overwhelming. Not only did they welcome the talk, but they expressed a sense of relief that an exclusive talk was dedicated to their issues and concerns. One of the youth commented: “we are always told to respect elders, but rarely do we hear similar talk of the need to respect the youth”. A parent commented:

“our youth face mounting pressure to divert; they need constant reinforcements and words of appreciation and encouragement from within their community”. Among the themes of the talk that resonated well with the youth were “respect”, “understanding”, “opportunity” and “appreciation”. I was certainly happy to hear such a positive response from the youth, but at the same time I was very much concerned. I felt the response I received wasn’t a reflection of the talk I gave, but possibly a reflection of the reality that we, as elders and adults, are not doing enough to show our youth how much we value them, how much we appreciate their presence and how proud we are of them.

The youth is an important segment of any given society. They represent not only the future, but also the community’s potentials, its vitality and strength. The greater the energies and resources a community directs towards the youth, the brighter its future will be. Respecting the youth, showing compassion to them, understanding the challenges they face, appreciating their contributions, giving them encouragement and stretching a hand of help to them are key elements towards creating a thriving body of youth within any community. These elements have deep roots in the

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Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and it is part of our rich Islamic history. The challenges our youth face –given the existing social and ethical context- are not only huge, but unique, compounded and complex. With the widespread use of internet and the unprecedented rapid change in the surroundings, the world of our youth today is way different from the world of their parents. New, innovative, well informed and sophisticated approaches are critical in addressing contemporary youth issues. The following paragraphs, present a discussion of three key elements in the social development of the youth. These three play a pivotal role in protecting the youth, transitioning them to their adult life and carrying them to the future.

A. Respect: Respect is pivotal for healthy growth as well as fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness among the youth. Respect is not mere talk, but more importantly, a sentiment, an attitude, a relationship that is expressed in subtle and overt ways as well as by way of omission and commission. Communities that are conscious of the needs of the youth show their respect of their youth, by being youth friendly, youth sensitive and youth inclusive. A center that has sports facilities for the youth would send a more youth friendly message than a center with no such facility. A center where announcements and sermons are conducted in a language clearly understood by the youth would be friendlier than a center where the language is foreign or poorly spoken. Even in community events the type of food served, the nature of the program, the set up, the moderators, the volunteers, all of that collectively send a message of the level of friendliness of a community towards the youth. Further, the attitudes of the Imams and official leaders, their ability to interact, to play, to amuse and communicate with the youth is another important reflection of how friendly a community or a center is towards the youth. Our Prophet had a deep sense of respect and regard for the young. He treated them with reverence and great consideration. In one incident the Prophet, peace be upon him, was offered something to drink. He drank of it while on his right hand was a boy and on his left were some elderly people. He said to the boy, “May I give these elderly people first?” The boy said, “By Allah, O Prophet of Allah! I will not give up my share from you to somebody else”. Thereupon the Prophet, peace be upon him, placed the cup in the hand of the boy (reported by Bukhari). There are many aspects to this hadith, as elaborated by Al-Imam Ibn Hajjar; but it is evidently clear in the hadith the respectful and considerate manners the Prophet displayed in dealing with this young person. Further, Imam Bukhari under

the chapter of “Greeting minors” reports that Anas –the companion of the Prophet - (May Allah be pleased with him) passed by some children and greeted them. Then he said: “Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to do the same”. Greeting is a display of respect; offering it to the young is certainly a form of high regard and consideration. Moreover, Anas –as reported in the book of Imam Muslim- says: “The Prophet was the best amongst people in conduct and manners”. He goes on to give an example of how attentive and friendly the Prophet was towards the young. He says that he had a young brother known as Abu Umair who had a bird known as “Nughair”. When the Prophet met him he used to talk and joke with him. He would ask him to tell him about his bird, saying “O Abu Umair what did the Nughair do?”.

B. Mentorship: Mentorship of the youth is critical for their healthy growth and development. Youth need to be given opportunities to lead, to participate, to take greater roles; however, this must be accompanied with adequate mentorship and training. Mentorship isn’t censorship nor is it killing the creative and innovative intuition in the youth. Mentorship is a process of training young people to take greater roles by way of equipping them with the essential skills, the proper ethical framework and the tools necessary for unleashing their potentials. As noted by Dr. Qaradawi, lack of mentorship not only deprives the youth from the rich experiences and wisdoms of the elders, but makes them, potentially, easy prey for extremists of all kinds. The Prophet had keen interest in the youth. He took time to mentor them, to guide and teach them. Among many of the young he mentored was Abdullah Ibn Abbass who was a recipient of the Prophet’s advice, companionship, blessings and dua. The following selected narrations highlight some aspects of that mentorship.

- Abdullah related the following incident about himself: “Once the Prophet, peace be upon him, was on the point of performing wudu. I hurried to get water ready for him. He was pleased with what I was doing. As he was about to begin Salat, he indicated that I should stand at his side. However, I stood behind him. When the Salat was finished, he turned to me and said: ‘What prevented you from being at my side, O Abdullah?’ ‘You are too illustrious and too great in my eyes for me to stand side by side with you,’ I replied. Raising his hands to the heavens, the Prophet then prayed: “O Lord, grant him wisdom”.
- Abdullah bin Abbas also narrates: one day I was

continued on page 11

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behind the Prophet and he said to me: “Young man, I shall teach you some words [of advice]: Be mindful of Allah, and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of Allah; if you seek help, seek help of Allah. Know that if the Nation were to gather together to benefit you with anything, it would benefit you only with something that Allah had already prescribed for you, and that if they gather together to harm you with anything, they would harm you only with something Allah had already prescribed for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.” (reported by Imam Termizi)

- Abdullah Ibn Abbass is also a beneficiary and narrator of the famous hadith, where the Prophet says: “Take advantage of five matters before five other matters: your youth, before you become old; and your health, before you fall sick; and your richness, before you become poor; and your free time before you become busy; and your life, before your death.” (reported in Musnad of Imam Ahmad)

The tradition of mentoring the young continued throughout Islamic history. Some of the most prominent figures in Islamic history were beneficiaries of great mentors. To mention a few: Imam Al-Shafi (d. 820) was mentored by Imam Malik (d. 795); Imam Abu Yusuf (d.798) was mentored by Imam Abu Hanifa (d.767); Imam Ibn Alqaym (d. 1350) was mentored by Imam Ibn Taymia (d. 1328).

C. Understanding: The youth experience various transitions in their lives and alter between various identities and go through phases in their lives. Issues pertaining to their sexual life are becoming more pressing to them than their parents generation. Further, issues pertaining to their Islamic identity and their faith are becoming intellectually and emotionally draining. To overcome these transitional challenges, the youth need a sympathetic ear, an understanding counselor and a patient mentor. The last thing the youth need is to be scolded or to be told how ungrateful or bad they are. A young man once came to the Prophet one day and said: “O Prophet! Give me permission to commit adultery.” Some of the Companions who were present, seeing this request as being against Islamic morals, told him to be quiet and scolded the young man. Prophet Muhammad was very calm and told the young man “Come over here and sit down.” Then he turned to him and started to talk with him.

“Tell me, would you like for another to commit adultery with your mother?” The young man said, “O Prophet of Allah, I would never desire such a thing.” The Prophet said: “No one would want such a thing for their mother.” He continued, and said: “Would you want someone to commit adultery with your daughter?” The young man said, “O Prophet of Allah, I would not.” The Prophet said: “No one would want for their daughter to commit adultery.” Then he went on to ask if the young man would approve of his sister, paternal aunt or maternal aunt committing adultery. Each time, the young man answered: “No, I would not want that.” When he saw that the youth had understood his error the Prophet put his hand on the young man’s shoulder and said, “My Lord, forgive him his sin, clean his heart and protect him from committing sins.” The young man, according to his own words, did not allow the emotion of lust to enter his heart again (reported in Musnad of Imam Ahmad). In this hadith we notice that the Prophet was not only understanding, but he was equally convincing in his logic, gentle and compassionate in his response. The kind words of the Prophet and the touch from his blessed hand was a remedy for this troubled young man. This sort of understanding, empathy, sensitivity and consideration is something that our youth are in need of today, especially when they divert and fall behind.

Conclusion:

Youth alienation from their Muslim community is a reality that can’t be overlooked. Jeffrey Langs, goes as far as referring to it as an ‘exodus’ of the young from their communities and mosques in North America. The Muslim Community in North America can’t sustain itself through immigration, it needs to urgently foster a sense of belonging among its youth and keep them connected, engaged and fulfilled. Investment in the youth is an investment in the future. What the youth need isn’t necessarily limited to a place of worship or Quran classes, or weekend schools; the needs of the youth are all encompassing: intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual. A comprehensive and holistic approach where the youth are an integral part is of an urgent and paramount importance.

References:

- Lang, Jeffrey, *Losing My Religion*, Amana Publication
- Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection & Extremism*
- Ibn Hajr Asqalani, *Fath ul-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic)

Youth Career Choices

By: Dr. Don Trim*



With rapidly advancing technology, the number of career fields open to young people today is staggering, and many students are being asked to make career choices at younger and younger ages. Considering that a person may spend anywhere from thirty to fifty years in his or her chosen profession, it is imperative that career decisions be made with as much information as possible.

A number of university students were interviewed in attempt to determine when they made career choices and what factors were most important in the decision making process. Their experiences should serve as advice to

young people about to make career choices, and also as a warning to those who have already made choices with insufficient information.

There is no particular age by which students must make a choice for their eventual career. Many students know exactly what they want to be when they enter college or university; some know the basic field in which they wish to work, but have not yet narrowed the field to a particular area; still others do not make a career choice until well into their university education. All of these are acceptable as long as the student has not prevented a particular choice of profession by taking an ill-advised high school program. Most students are well aware that certain programs of study in high school automatically eliminate them from particular fields of study in college or university, and eventually therefore, from certain professions. For example, students intending to become engineers must take certain courses, in mathematics for example, that will allow them to enter a university engineering program.

Many factors influence students in making career choices. We present some of them here in the order that we feel is most important, the most important being first.

continued on page 13

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- The most important factor is to talk to people already in the profession; determine what they do on a day-to-day basis. Ask them what they like about their job; what don't they like about it; knowing what they now know about the profession, would they still pursue it if they could start over; are there new and related professions that are more appealing.
- Secondly, search the web for information about the profession. The web is an inexhaustible source for anything and everything.
- Talk to your teachers and/or guidance counselor. Ask them if they have, or can find, any information on the field of study that you wish to pursue.
- Gauge whether a certain profession is appropriate to you based on your academic strengths and leanings. For example, if you have a definite weakness in, and dislike for, mathematics, it may be unwise to consider a career in engineering, physics, or astronomy. On the other hand, with a flare for drawing, perhaps a career in fine arts, architecture, or interior design might be appropriate.
- Although none of the students interviewed had done so, there are professional companies that perform tests to determine professions that are most likely to fit your personality.

Noticeably absent from this list is perhaps advice from parents, siblings, and friends. We realize this group, especially parents, can sometimes exert considerable pressure on you to enter certain professions. While we can understand their concern for your future, and you should appreciate the fact that they do want the best for you, we must emphasize that unless they are in, or have first-hand knowledge of a profession, they are not in the best position to judge whether a particular profession is suitable for you.

In summary, we suggest that you take all the information that you can find regarding a profession, especially from the sources suggested above, digest it, discuss it with your family and friends, and then come to a decision whether it is something that you want to do for most of your life. Good luck in your CHOICE.

* Dr. Don Trim is a Professor at the Mathematic Department, University of Manitoba and a member of the editorial board of Manitoba Muslim Magazine.

Challenges of Being a Youth Today

By: Br. Ryan Ramchandar*



Growing up as a Muslim youth is not easy and can be a daunting task. Muslim youth are constantly pushed, pulled, and bombarded from every direction, expected to act in a certain way by their peers, teachers or parents. The youth are struggling to find a place in this society while trying hard not to fall into the wrong circles, or straying along the wrong paths. How can we engage the youth, and encourage them to stay close to the community? Similarly, how can we motivate the youth to be better Muslims?

The transition from high school to university opens up a whole new world for the youth. Suddenly, they are now young adults and accordingly they are given many more freedoms. No longer is there anyone checking up on them on a regular basis, and for some this much freedom can pose to be a struggle. This is when the values they've learned from an early age begin to kick in and it is up to them to stick by them. Do they skip class and play pool all day in the Pool Hall? Or do they study in the library or finish an assignment in the computer lab? While getting a good education is important, so too is making sure that they are mindful of their Islamic duties: praying on time, staying away from things that are haram and doubtful, and making sure that they are mindful of Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala*. This can be done by surrounding ourselves with good Muslim friends and, *insha'Allah*, a lot of the struggles that youth face in these environments can be over come.

Having good friends who will remind us on a constant basis is key to overcoming the different temptations we face. However, it is not enough to say that I have surrounded myself with good people and therefore I can relax. We must also struggle to become a better person

ourselves, to benefit others. In order to do this we must seek knowledge and be able to interact with others in a positive way. This especially holds true for when we interact with those who are younger than us, namely in high school or junior high. They are at a period in their lives when they need a mentor or a role model, someone they can relate to, who will not be overcritical with them. Before we can begin to advise or mentor others, however, we must have some basic understandings.

One way we can gain an understanding of what it means to be an exemplary youth is to look at the character of the Prophet, *sallahu alayhi wasalam*, and how he interacted with others. Of the Prophets' attributes, he was eloquent and concise, a good mentor and teacher, did not forget favours done to him, kept his word, was very generous, and smiled often! Abu Huraira, *radiallahu an*, said that he never saw someone smile more than the Prophet. By incorporating these characteristics into our personality we can grow as individuals, *insha'Allah*, if these attitudes/behaviours of the Prophet are reflected

in how we act with others in our daily lives. This knowledge of the Prophet's life can be gained by actively taking part in halaqa's, lectures and study sessions that happen on a regular basis in different areas of the community. In addition, there are many good books written that any youth can learn and read from.

Alhumdullilah, we have been blessed with our youth and we will surely be asked, by Allah, on how we spent it. While we are busy at school, we must also remember that a healthy balance is important and should make time for others. Remaining active in the community is essential, and from being active we can gain knowledge which we can use to teach and benefit others, *insha'Allah*.

* Br. Ryan Ramchandrar is a University student and a member of the editorial board of Manitoba Muslim Magazine.

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How the Qur'an helped me survive my first Winnipeg winter

By: Sr. Ludmila Zamah*



I was most certainly not the outdoorsy kind in my childhood. When I was eleven, I went camping for the first time—that was perhaps the most difficult Girl Guide badge I ever earned. On the last full day, the troop leader said to us all, “You

don't know what you're missing until you spend a night under the stars.” As a fifth-grader, I knew exactly what I was missing: a bunch of mosquito bites. That evening, we abandoned our tents and fell asleep, all snug in our sleeping bags laid out next to the smoldering embers of the campfire. I woke up to a scoreboard written all over my face: Ludmila, 0; Mosquitoes, 33, including one that made my eyelid swollen shut and one that nearly busted my lower lip. This is my first memory of being out in nature. Now I work at mosquito-infested camps every summer; and perhaps even stranger, I run outside in the winter, here in Winnipeg.

I was asked to write a piece on the challenges the youth are facing. I have decided to write about a challenge that I constantly face, in hopes that it will help the readers of all ages find something to relate to, *inshaa' Allah*.

On one coldish (I now know there are degrees of cold) fajar in January, I reached verses 29:19-20 in my daily recitation: “What! Do they not consider how Allah originates the creation, then reproduces it? Surely that is easy for Allah. Say: Go out into the land and see how He makes the first creation, then Allah creates the latter creation; surely Allah has power over all things.” I paused to contemplate the meaning of the verses. The Qur'an does not say, Go out into the land when the temperature is to your liking. Rather, it generally invokes us to go out and look for signs in the creation—how life stems from the apparently

lifeless. What better way to see the lifeless than to go out in the so-called “dead” of winter? So, I suited up in my three-layer running gear from head to toe and set out for my first run on a day when it was -20.

As I ran over the Provencher Bridge, I would pause to ponder the changes in the Red River throughout the seasons. I observed how many forms of water exist in Winnipeg: the strong currents of the river, the “icebergs” (or, as I later learned, pack ice) which bears beautiful patterns, the snow on the banks of the river, the water we drink, the vapors condensing in the air as we breathe out, and the precipitation in its many forms. The physics teacher in me would think of the amazing property of water, i.e. that it becomes less dense as a solid, enabling us to skate or run on the frozen Assiniboine River. When I would see the trees — seemingly dead in winter and alive in the spring — I would remember descriptions of the Resurrection.

I would contemplate verses as I ran—when I was not distracted by the cold! One afternoon, I was thinking about the very first verse revealed, 96:1 “Recite in the name of your Lord Who created.” I found it interesting that of all the acts that Allah does—showing mercy, judging justly, demonstrating His power, to name a few—He singled out His attribute of creation for the first revelation and connected it with learning in the verses that follow. That day, I figured out why I kept running, in spite of the cold: for me, running had become a spiritual exercise.

The Qur'an is the reason why I am unconditionally positive about the weather. I don't believe in calling weather “bad”, because it is all good for something. Weather is one of the few things that is a daily expression of pure, unadulterated God's doing, for His reasons alone. Indeed, Allah reminds us of this fact in verse 25:48: “And He it is Who sends the winds as good news before His mercy; and We send down pure water from the cloud.” We often describe rain and snow as “bad” weather, yet the Qur'an teaches us to think the opposite. Ask any farmer, and you will find out that the snow accumulation in a given winter has a huge

impact on the harvest. They say Venus (our sister planet) cannot support human life, but the earth, in spite of its extreme temperatures, can. And that is truly amazing, *maa shaa' Allah*.

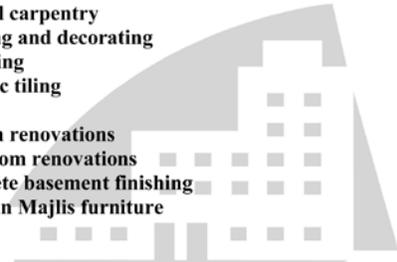
Finally, the challenge that Muslims of all ages face today is making the time to incorporate the Qur'an into our daily lives in a meaningful way. It is easy to get lost in the daily grind and to conclude we have no time, which results in a disconnect between us and the Qur'an. My hope is that my story about running encourages you to make time for the Qur'an and to reflect on its *ayaat* (verses & signs). It doesn't take much to develop a daily relationship with the Qur'an; indeed, it tells us to read that which is easy for us (73:20). The Qur'an is described as "*weighty speech*" (73:5), and therefore it could feel burdensome, so it is very important that we stick to what is easy for us. That might be one verse, three verses, one page, one quarter of a hizb, in English, in Arabic, in both—whatever it is, read it and contemplate it regularly.

* Sr. Ludmila Zamah teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Winnipeg. Her research interests include principles of tafsir and contacts between Abrahamic exegetical traditions. She is a member of the Winnipeg Central Mosque Council.

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Pineapple Cinnamon Coffee Cake

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- 3/4 cup of brown sugar
- 3/4 cup of chopped walnuts
- 1/3 cup of all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

Cake:

- 1 (540 ml) can crushed pineapple
- 2 1/4 cups all purpose flour
- 1 tbsp grated lemon rind
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 3/4 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup of butter or margarine
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup sour cream

Directions:

- Cinnamon Topping: In small bowl combine brown sugar, walnuts, flour and cinnamon. Cut in butter or margarine until crumbly.
- Drain pineapple and set aside. Reserve juice for another use.
- On wax paper, combine flour, lemon rind, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In medium bowl, cream butter or margarine with sugar until it is well mixed. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each condition. Stir in the dry ingredients alternately with sour cream. Spread half of the batter into a greased and floured 10" square baking pan. Sprinkle the half of the cinnamon topping over the batter. Spread the other half of the batter on top. Spoon pineapple evenly over batter. Sprinkle the remaining cinnamon topping on top of batter.
- Bake in a 350 for about 50 minutes, until toothpick inserted in centre comes out clean.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Zam Zam well came into existence at the time of Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (alayhum salam). It then "disappeared" for nearly 26 centuries (2600 years) due to certain events and was rediscovered and dug by the grandfather of our beloved Prophet (salallahu alayhi wasalam). The location of the well was revealed to him in a dream.
- Whoever reads one letter of the Quran gets 10 Rewards. Surat Al-Ikhlās is considered 1/3 of the Quran
- Some verses in the Koran refer to man being equal to woman. Mathematically, the number of times the word "man" appears in the Koran is 24. The number of times the word "woman" appears in the Koran is also 24.

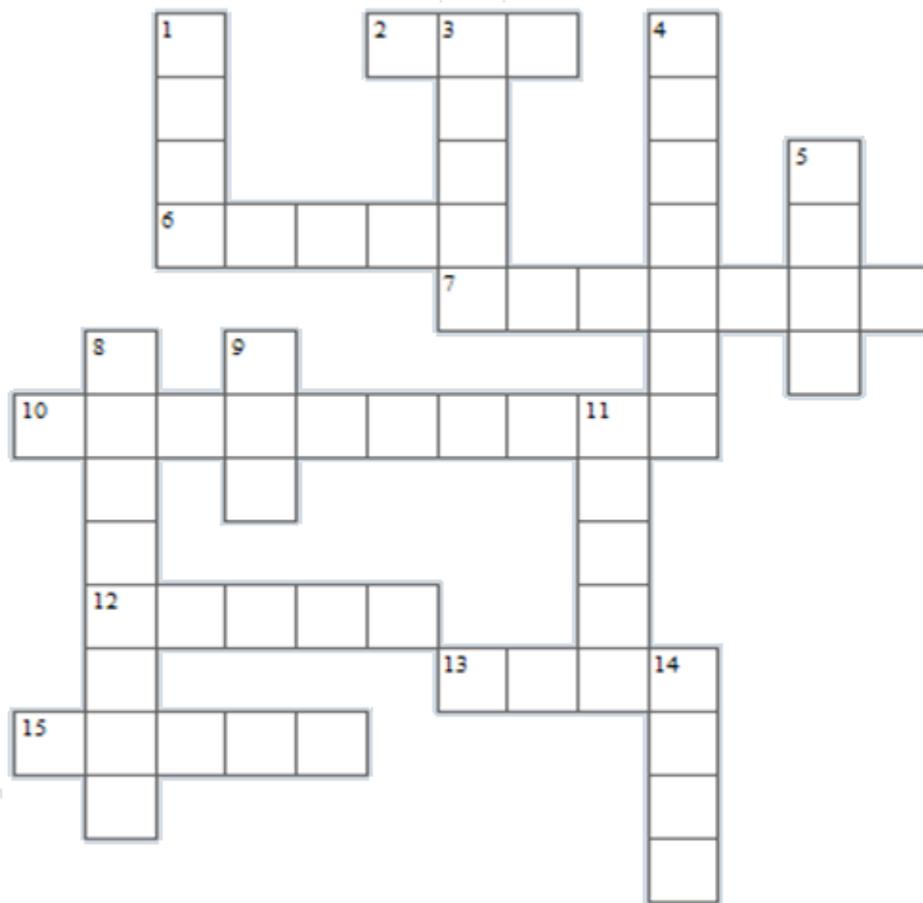
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- The H1N1 flu virus, commonly known as swine flu, is a respiratory illness that affects the nose, throat and lungs.
- H1N1 is contagious and is spread the same way as regular seasonal influenza. This happens when an infected person coughs or sneezes and germs enter another person through their throat, eyes or nose. This virus can also be transferred from touching hard surfaces such as a table or clothing and having hands come into contact with the mouth or eyes.
- Symptoms: Cough, fever, muscle aches, sore throat, decreased appetite, runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- Prevention: Wash your hands often! Use antibacterial gel. Keep surfaces disinfected. If you are sick, stay home until your symptoms are gone.

*Sources: Public Health Agency of Canada

Islamic Crossword Puzzle



Across

2. The Prophet's mom died when he was this age
6. The ZamZam well lies between the hills of Safa and _____
7. The second of holy cities
10. The last month of the Islamic year
12. The call to Islam was kept secret for _____ years
13. The first Mosque established in Islam is
15. There are _____ heavens

Down

1. Surat Al_____ has the word Allah two times without separation
3. Muslims wear this garment during Hajj
4. The name of the Prophet's tribe
5. Allah (SWT) created Adam from this
8. The Prophet (PBUH) himself led the Muslim Army in this many battles
9. The fourth companion of the Prophet
11. This Prophet is specially known for his patience
14. The first few five Ayah's of surat Al-_____ was the first to be revealed

Growing Muslim Youth Girl with a Western Society Thrown into the Mix

By: Sr. Raja El-Mazini*

It is often said that one of the most difficult and important times in a person's life is when one makes the transition from a child to an adult—also known as the teenage years. This transitional stage in a person's life is crucial because in it one must define him/herself, and struggle to establish one's identity while trying to be accepted by friends. It is hard enough being a teenager, but being a Muslim teenager in a Western society proves to be increasingly challenging.

Many teens struggle with fitting in while holding on to their cultural and religious values. Some deem it impossible but the girls from the Muslim Girls Youth Halaqa make it clear that it is not. "It's possible but really, really hard", says 18 year old Yesim Ozarahman, a member of this halaqa. When asked about which aspect of their lives makes it harder to fit into society the majority of the girls answered that it was the hijab. Any Muslim girl can sympathize with this whether she wears hijab or not. "When people look at you, the first thing they notice is your hijab, not your face," said 12 year old Zenab Moustarak. "It's not a bad thing of course, but like once they see the hijab they think you're some extremist or oppressed girl," she added. Unfortunately, this is a harsh reality that is often experienced by most Muslim women living in societies in which opinions and judgements are formed on the basis of people's appearances. The positive aspect to this is that this is a form of Dawaa, as the hijab serves as a great conversational topic and sparks interest in the religion. However, it is hard to walk down the halls of school or in the mall knowing that the terms "oppressed" and "terrorist" are floating in people's minds.

Among the challenges that Muslim girls encounter, identity crisis is very popular. Many girls separate their Muslim identity from their personal one; at home these teenagers can be devout Muslims but out of the home these girls adopt a more Western identity. While some girls work hard to disassociate both identities, some just want both to be recognized. "Sometimes I want to be known as that smart, sweet, talented Muslim girl instead of just that Muslim girl," stated Yesim Ozkahrahman. These girls admit that these identities should not be separated as they can be incorporated. Obviously, being Muslim transcends all national, cultural and personal identities, but it is possible to blend them all. Rather

than just being known as "that Muslim girl", one can be "that smart/intelligent/etc. Muslim girl". These identities do not have to be independent from each other; instead our morals and values should be derived from our religion.

Girls should not feel the need to bury the "Muslim" aspect of their lives and all the morals that come with it and instead portray an identity that is more accepted. As long as one realizes that being Muslim comes before any other label, then they should be satisfied that they possess a personality that is more than worthy enough of respect and value.

"The next hardest thing would probably be trying to maintain your culture while also slightly adapting to the Western culture," says Amal Labib, another faithful member of this halaqa group. "It's normal for girls to have to go to dances or have opposite gender relationships, and if you don't you're considered old fashioned," she adds. While not all Westerners attend dances or have these relationships, it is often the norm for one to be saturated with these types of teenage experiences. The girls made it clear that they know that these things are prohibited in Islam and understand the dangers that are associated with them, but find it hard to explain this to their peers and classmates. Explanations always have to be offered and despite their logic, understanding is not always reciprocated.

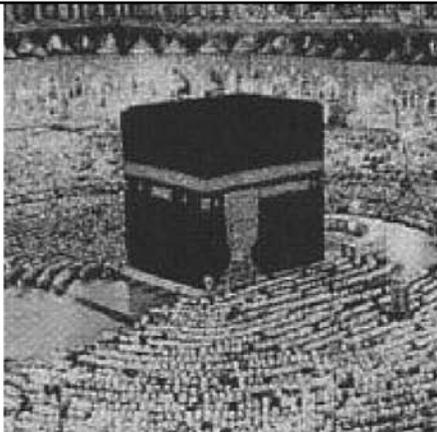
It is evident that all the challenges that the youth sisters face stem from being accepted and being comfortable in society. Girls do not want to necessarily blend into their surroundings or "fit in", but rather be given respect and equal opportunity. The hijab and certain rules and regulations are forms of guidance rather than obstacles. Living in the Western society, these aspects of our religion may seem like obstacles only because of how they are perceived by the people around us and the culture that they are engulfed in. These aspects do certainly make life a little harder, but in the end we will see that they give structure to our lives and lead us down a path that has only the best destination.

* Sr. Raja El-Mazini is a high school student and a member of the editorial board of Manitoba Muslim Magazine.

Contest Winner

Congratulations to Shamael Muhammad Azami, the winner of the MIA 40th Anniversary Competition. Below are the questions along with the correct answers.

1. **Who is the longest serving President in MIA?**
Br. M.G. Joundi
2. **Who among the MIA Presidents, was a veterinarian?**
Dr. Mirghani Shiekhheldin
3. **Who was the first Chairman of the land committee established to buy land for the centre on Waverley?**
Br. Ghulam Kibria
4. **When was the Waverley center officially opened?**
Officially opened on January 20, 2007
5. **Who was the first sister to be elected to an MIA executive position?**
Sr. Sabiha Haseeb
6. **What is the main function of the MIA Takaful fund?**
Main function of the takaful committee is to serve the financial needs of the local muslim community.
7. **Who was the 1st full time Imam in Winnipeg?**
Imam Tahir Adrenumo
8. **What was MIA's gross operating revenue for last fiscal year?**
\$ 428,867.00
9. **Approximately how much did the Waverley centre cost to build?**
Approximately \$1.7 million
10. **How are MIA trustees chosen for office?**
There is a board of trustees comprising of 3 elected members. The members of the board of trustees shall be elected by the annual general assembly.
11. **What is the role of the MIA Trustees?**
Their role is to undertake those major capital projects assigned to it by the general assembly and upon its completion, it shall be handed to the executive council.
12. **How many facilities does the MIA support; financially and other wise?**
3 facilities
13. **What is the total land acreage at Waverley?**
13.5 acres of land



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Moments from various Community Events



Reports

MIA Elections

The bi-annual MIA elections will be held on December 6th, 2009 at the Grand Mosque on Waverly after Zuhr prayer. Below is a summary of information pertaining to elections.

A. MIA Election Fact Sheet:

What is the composition of MIA Executives and what is their duty?

Executive Council

Section (1) There shall be an Executive consisting of seven duly elected Full Members comprising of the following office-bearers:

- (a) President
- (b) First Vice-President
- (c) Second Vice-President
- (d) Secretary
- (e) Treasurer
- (f) Two Executive Members

Section (2) The term of office of the Executive Council shall be two years. However, any member of the Executive Council may seek reelection for more than one term.

Section (3) To seek election to any position in the Executive Council, a member must be a full-time member of the Association in good standing since at least 90 (ninety) days prior to the date of the Annual General Meeting and election.

Duties, Functions and Powers of the Executive Council

Section (1) The Executive Council shall implement and execute the decisions of the General Assembly;

Section (2) It shall be empowered to:

- (a) Initiate activities to promote the aims and objectives of the Association;
- (b) Prepare the annual budget, have it approved by the General Assembly and control funds and expenditures of the Association according to the approved budget;
- (c) Approve or appoint members to standing and special committees;

Section (3) Member of the Executive Council, either individual or jointly, shall not be awarded a monetary remuneration by the Association for their Executive Council responsibilities;

Section (4) Four members of the Executive Council shall constitute a quorum of its meetings;

Section (5) The Executive Council shall meet on a regular basis;

Section (6) The President or the Secretary shall call a meeting within seven days of notification if requested to do so by three members of the Executive Council;

Who are the Trustees and what is their role?

Board of Trustees

Section (1) There shall be a Board of Trustees comprising of three duly elected members;

Section (2):

- (a) The member of the Board of Trustees shall be elected by the Annual General Assembly for a period of three years from the date of their election, except as provided for in Article X Section (2);
- (b) The Chairman of the Board of Trustees shall be the longest serving trustee of the three-member Board;
- (c) In the event of a position on the Board of Trustees falling due for whatever reason, it shall be filled by a duly elected member for the remainder of the duration of the vacant membership at the first General Assembly meeting following the date the position became vacant.

Objectives, Functions and Powers of the Board of Trustees

Section (1)

(a) The Board of Trustees shall undertake those major capital projects assigned to it by the General Assembly;

(b) Upon the completion of a project, it shall be handed over to the Executive Council which henceforth, shall be solely responsible for its use, operation, management and maintenance;

Section (2)

(a) No member of the Board of Trustees shall hold office on the Executive Council simultaneously;

(b) Members of the Board of Trustees, either individually or jointly shall not be awarded directly or indirectly a monetary remuneration by the Association;

What is the Quorum required for General Meeting (GM)?

Thirty three Members or 33% of the Full Members; whichever is the greater. (Article XI, Section (1)).

If a quorum can't be established, what happens?

The meeting will be adjourned for two weeks. Members present at the adjourned meeting shall constitute a quorum; (Article XI, Section (3)).

Who qualifies to vote?

MIA Members who are fully registered as of September 30. (Article XI: Section (4)).

Who qualifies to run for executive position?

MIA members who were members 90 days prior to the GM meeting. (Article V: (3)) - usually on or before August 31.

What are voting procedures?

- All qualifying nominations made must be seconded by another person.
- Voting in the election of the Executive Council / Board

of Trustees shall be by secret ballot. (Article VIII, (6))

- Candidates must obtain a simple majority to be elected to the position being contested; (Article VIII, (6))

What are the duties of Steering committee?

"It shall be the duty of the Steering Committee to ensure fair, free, and honest elections and to serve the remainder of the electorate that "race, color, national origin, regional and linguistic affiliations have no meaning in Islam." Article VIII, section (3)

Can members of Steering committee be nominated for a position? Can they vote?

Member of Steering Committee can't be nominated for an executive position, but retain voting privileges only when conducting the election of the Association (Article: V111, Section (5));

When is AGM Agenda finalized?

(a) The Agenda for all General Assembly meetings shall be circulated no later than one week prior to the scheduled meeting;

(b) No other business except those stated in the agenda proposed for the meeting shall be transacted; (Article X).

B. Islamic etiquettes to remember:

- Purify your intention; keep in mind that Allah is watchful on what you say and do.
- Talk respectfully and cordially.
- Focus on issues, not personalities.
- Be truthful, factual and verify what you say.
- Show respect to elders and compassion to the young.
- Express your disagreement in a brotherly fashion.
- Raise you hand if you wish to speak. Avoid yelling, name calling or interrupting others.
- Be understanding and give benefit of doubt to others.
- Remember when you vote that "race, color, national origin, regional and linguistic affiliations have no meaning in Islam."

Winnipeg Participates in National Conference and Muslim Youth Canada Forum

By: Isha Khan and Hasan Pirzada

During the last weekend of October, something special happened in Toronto. No, it wasn't a big U2 concert. It didn't even have to do with the Leafs trying to make a bigger dent in the season's win column. It was about youth. Not just any youth, but the youth of our community. Of Islam. The MY Canada project (Muslim Youth Canada), hosted by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) in partnership with YOUCAN, the Canadian Centre for Diversity, the Afghan Women's Organization, held its much anticipated strategic planning forum, bringing 100 young Muslims from Vancouver to Montreal and even as far as Inuvik, to discuss, among other things, the definition of today's 'Young Canadian Muslim'.

CCMW, a national non-profit organization with chapters in over 15 other Canadian cities, hosted the two-day forum as part of its national conference. Delegates from CCMW's Winnipeg chapter, the youngest chapter in Canada launched only in early 2008, brought a uniquely



prairie perspective to the conference that brings together community-minded, believing women of all ages and backgrounds, to share their experiences and a common purpose, annually. The Winnipeg delegates, Bilquis Khan, Sumera Sahar and Kokeb Pirzada proudly shared the chapter's early successes in getting Muslim women more

continued on page 27



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involved in our community. CCMW Winnipeg members have been active regularly volunteering with Winnipeg Harvest and Habitat for Humanity, and recently during the month of Ramadan, donated food hampers and money to both Muslim families accessing the Canadian Muslim Women's Institute's food pantry, and also to several non-Muslim families, accessing the services of Osborne House, a short-term shelter for abused women and their children. Despite being a women's organization, members recognize that being inclusive means acknowledging the support of their brothers, sons and spouses, so most CCMW volunteer activities have been open to anyone interested in "getting involved" and have enabled members, their friends and families, to work together to strengthen the view of our Muslim community and to engage and contribute to our city.

The purpose of the youth forum in Toronto was not only to get young Muslims discussing issues about identity, civic engagement and altruistic spirit, but to get them talking about them seriously. Delegates were encouraged to identify the issues that youth all over our country, not just in our Islamic community, face when thinking about who and what they are. The goals of the forum were to find ways to increase the civic participation of Muslim youth in Canada, help youth gain leadership skills, and overall, to gain a sense of belonging and identification with Canada, as young Muslims. While in its earliest stages now, a 'toolkit' is being developed, that will consist of project ideas for community youth, which can be used in each city to help put the enriching ideas and solutions that came from the forum into practice. Each youth delegate helped create the toolkit and therefore, is part of it and believes in its goals. The truth is, the goals weren't complicated, weren't hard to define, or difficult to think about. As it was said at the forum, everyone knows that the youth of any community are its future. The MY Canada project is helping us take steps in the right direction. The forum was about a small number of youth. Now it's time for the youth of our communities to get involved and make this real.

Inter-faith sessions and activities for youth, led by the youth who attended the forum along with regional partners, will be held across Canada. Winnipeg youth delegates, Hasan Pirzada, Shan Pirzada, and Sameer Ashraf, are working closely with youth delegates across the country to complete the toolkit and identify session participants through publicity and marketing campaigns aimed at (but not exclusively for) those Muslim youth who are most "at-risk" of alienation from other Canadians and of self-segregation.

Look out for more information on the inter-faith

youth sessions over the new few months or for more information on the project, go to www.ccmw.com or follow the project on Facebook, Youtube or Twitter. For information on getting involved with CCMW-Winnipeg and their group volunteer activities, please email: ccmwinnipeg@gmail.com.

Interview: Br. Aezeden Mohamed, President of Muslim Students Association at the University of Manitoba

Interviewed by: Br. Idris Elbakri.



MM: Let's begin by having you tell us more about yourself.

AM: My name is Aezeden Mohamed. I am a PhD candidate in the field of aerospace engineering and a sessional instructor in the Faculty of Engineering. I have been MSA president since 2005. I am originally from Libya. I arrived in Canada in 1996. I studied English for 1 year, then pursued Bachelor's and Master's degrees and now I am doing my PhD. I was also President of Canadian Union of Public Employment (CUPE) 3909 in 2006-2007, and a senator at the University of Manitoba Senate for 2002-2006. I was also President of College Housing Co-Op of Manitoba for 2007-2008 and President of Student Council at the Faculty of Engineering for 2000-2002.

MM: How long have you been in Winnipeg?

AM: I came straight here in 1996. I have been studying at UM the whole time.



MM: What role do you see MSA playing in the lives of Muslim students?

AM: MSA plays a very important role in the lives of Muslim students on campus. In fact, its role goes beyond the campus to the community at large. On campus, MSA provides assistance to students before and after arriving in Manitoba. Students approach us before arriving from their home countries. We provide them with assistance in areas such as housing, information about the Islamic center, etc... When they get here we introduce them to the community, add their information to our email list, and help them become familiar with the Muslim community on and off campus. We introduce them to the rest of the Muslim students here. As a result, in a very short period of time they get to know what and whom they need. For example, if someone arrives from Jordan, we help them not only meet Muslims but also people from their country. It is a very good support system for Muslim students who come from overseas and who are single. They are not lonely and we help them feel at home. On Friday, about 200 students pray and feel at home and do not miss anything. We also support them spiritually through providing facilities for prayer in congregation and so they get spiritual support. Our MSA here is very fortunate compared to other MSA's because we have very good relationship with the administration. Personally I know University officials such as the President and Vice President. I got to know them through different committees and organizations and

we built a very good bridge with them. Therefore we reap the fruit of this relationship like the prayer room. They provided us with \$125,000 for the old prayer room in the education building. For the new room, I approached them and they provided \$350,000 to make this happen. This is like a full facility. We even have wudu facilities in addition to 2 study rooms, one for brothers and one for sisters.

MM: What about Muslim students born here?

AM: Those who are born here and grew up here are supported through their interactions with Muslims from overseas, which helps strengthen their faith. They learn a lot from those who have the knowledge of Islam. Some who are born here do not pray or fast because they may not be aware of the seriousness of these requirements. Through interaction with overseas Muslim students, their faith grows stronger. The University provides them with an opportunity to meet other Muslims. By being here, and joining the MSA and attending Friday prayer with different khateeb who are mostly from overseas (such as Shaikh Ismael Mukhtar and others), they strengthen their faith.

MM: What about those who are born here who are also practicing. What does MSA offer them?

AM: Those who are born here and are practicing can

provide a lot of support to MSA. They know the system and language and are a main source of support for MSA. They really run the show. They can communicate better with non-Muslims and understand the life style better.

MM: What role do you see MSA playing in the larger campus community?

AM: We organize Islamic awareness week each term. That introduces MSA to non-Muslims. We run this for a week, providing materials and a mailing list so that interested parties can receive information about our activities. Besides this, we do seminars and an annual conference. It is not meant to be just for MSA members but also for non-Muslims. We not only advertise but also send special invitations. During Ramadan we serve food the whole month. We provide taraweeh prayer, a full program from maghrib through taraweeh that includes education. We invite non-Muslims to learn about Ramadan and fasting. We also do a "fastathon" for the whole month. Anyone can invite his colleagues, teachers or homestay family, in addition to distinguished guests.

MM: Where do you see MSA in 5 years?

AM: I hope it will be the role model for the community at large, an example for the whole community. There is no activity in Manitoba in the Muslim community without the MSA members being behind it. You could not tell me of any activity at MIA without MSA support. MSA members are the driving force of many activities. For

example, students and their wives run one of the weekend schools. The summer camp is run by students. You can even find them involved with other Muslim organizations such as the Zubaidah Talab Foundation and the Jawad Foundation Canada Inc.

MM: Do you expect to be President in 5 years?

AM: I won't be President in 5 years.

MM: What has motivated you to serve as President for so long?

AM: Before I answer your question, you should know that when I ran for President the first time, no one else was running and someone had to come forward. After two years I did not run again and MSA had a different President. Shortly thereafter, the President left MSA and no one was willing to take over. I was approached by everyone to come back to MSA as President but I refused. Finally two brothers agreed to take over temporarily until new elections were held in which I ran for President. Again, no one else was running.

To answer your question, I just love to serve the Muslim community. I want to put my energy to the service of the Muslims on campus. Since I am here and I spend most of my day on campus, I find it convenient to serve. With my connections in the University, I felt I should take advantage to serve as much as I can before I leave. MSA now has a very important role on campus and is respected



by non-Muslims. Under my leadership MSA has become the largest student organization and we have a lot of influence. For example, candidates in the elections for the University of Manitoba Student Union or the Graduate Student Association seek the support of MSA. For the first time in the history of this university the Presidents of UMSU, GSA and CUPE 3909 are all MSA members

MM: How is the MSA President chosen?

AM: By elections by Muslim students.

MM: Does MSA have a governing constitution?

AM: Yes.

MM: Are elections held annually? This year was the first time that I heard of MSA elections?

AM: This time the elections were much publicized. Students were waiting for it and prepared for a long time. This time we had the largest number of voters. Normally, we hold elections every year. Normally it takes place after Friday prayer. Usually there are barely enough candidates and the elections ends up being informal and quick and is done by a show of hands. When there is lot of interest and competition, we implement a ballot and box. There were times when no one wanted to run and we had to beg people to run.

MM: How often do the MSA executives meet and are their meetings open?

AM: This is the negative part. It is very unfortunate that the MSA executives are all students and most of them are undergraduate and busy with their daily class assignments and exams. In addition, some work part time. Where can they find the spare time to serve the Muslim community? When the President requests a meeting, it is not easy to get them all to meet. It would be a very positive achievement if we could meet once in a month. In the past before I was involved in MSA, I was told the MSA executives hardly met and communicated by email.

MM: Since the elections were held one week ago, have you called for a meeting?

AM: No because the executive was not totally complete. One of the positions was tied so we had to vote again for that position. We completed that just today.

MM: What is the composition of the MSA executives in terms of background?

AM: Five members are Canadian raised or born with various ethnic origins. We have 4 sisters and 4 brothers from different ethnic backgrounds. We have a Malay, Somali, Iraqi, Turkish, Pakistani and a Canadian, in addition to myself. It is a mixed group.

MM: How does the MSA executive make decisions?

AM: Normally we get ideas form everyone including members, for example for the MSA annual conference.

MM: How do you decide which speaker to bring?

AM: Normally, we ask around. As long as we agree and can get a well-known speaker to respond to our invitation and the members and executive agree.

MM: Is there a provision to replace an executive who is not fulfilling their duties?

AM: We should do that. Informally, it has happened automatically. For example, when previous MSA executives were not able to fulfill their duties, the MSA President sought volunteers to do the work and cover the duties. The executive may still be officially in office while the work is covered by a volunteer. MSA continues to operate even with one member. I am not going to stop the work of MSA because executives are not able to meet or fulfill their commitments.

MM: Since you have lead the MSA for so long, what do you think are the fundamental skills a good leader should have on campus?

AM: Very good question. Communications skills and ability to accommodate Muslims who come from different backgrounds are important. We have people on opposite sides of issues and a good leader has to bring them together.

MM: Some of the undergraduate students and some sisters feel alienated from MSA, is there any reason for that?

AM: That is not true. That is not true at all. We have people from a wide range of points of view. The range we accommodate is very broad. We have a wider range than any other Islamic organization in Manitoba. We have Shi'a, Ibadhi, Ismaili plus the four schools of Sunni Islam. In fact, we always call sisters and brothers to bring their ideas and suggestions forward. Even today, after Friday prayer, I thanked all those who voted and I requested those who lost in the elections to please bring their ideas and implement

them. All MSA activities are in the newsletter and are announced after Friday prayer. Those who are interested come forward. The simplest thing people need to do is to sign up for the newsletter. In reality, some do not show up or participate no matter what we do. Some members of the group who ran for elections this time were asked to fill a vacant position in the past. We have even non-Muslims helping out. Whoever told you that should understand that as President I have to protect MSA. When someone sends me an email and tells me that they want to do a movie night and all they want from me is to book a theater and equipment, I say sure, but I request information about the agenda of the movie night, topic, or title. It is a simple and straightforward request. It is common sense for us to want to know what the movie is about. They never came back. I have proof from the emails. Some have asked me to book a room for a program. What is the program? An event related to Palestine. I am sorry I can't do it. If they feel alienated from MSA, let them. As MSA, we are responsible for everything that goes on under our umbrella. It is illegal for us to act as proxy for other organizations. When I came, MSA was drowning and I picked it up. There was a time when for Friday prayer there would be no khateeb and no room for prayer. Now we have a room and the khateeb and topic are announced ahead of time.

MM: Is there a relationship between MSA and the Jewish Student Association?

AM: Some JSA members attend our events. I met with JSA President and we would like to meet and talk about common issues.

MM: What is the MSA policy on the prayer room barrier? Did sisters have an input on the decisions relating to their space in the prayer room and the barrier?

AM: The barrier is a very complicated issue. It is not an issue only here, but elsewhere. It is not that I just made a decision. I try to accommodate a broad range of opinions. So I came to the conclusion that the partition we have now is appropriate. Some want a full partition and others do not want it at all. The middle way is what we have: a half barrier on one side and a full partition on the other for those who want it. This is the best that I can come up with. I did the best to protect brothers and sisters from further problems. With the side with a half barrier, sisters who do not want a barrier, no longer have an excuse to open it by force and create chaos. I am [morally] protecting the sisters and brothers by doing this. In the past, there were serious issues at a time when I was on holiday. Many sisters want a full partition, but it is not right for one side to impose its opinion.

MM: Space at Universities is very hard to get. What do you think the University gets out of it?

AM: Frankly, not trying to exaggerate, but it is based on my relationships and communications. I was fortunate to get to know people from the administration and to work with them closely on a number of events.

MM: Do you think the University uses the prayer room to market to students from Muslim countries?

AM: Not at all, nothing like that. In fact, many overseas students are not given admission after their year of English. There are many other student groups and they didn't get anything like what we have. Other universities have even removed the Muslim prayer rooms after September 11.

MM: By what criteria do you select the speakers for Friday prayers? How do you ensure that the khateeb have good recitation, sound knowledge and will speak within the bounds of Canadian Law?

AM: It is not an easy question. We do not restrict anyone with good intentions who wants to deliver khutba as long as they meet our criteria. We normally tell those who want to give khutba to follow the following rules: avoid all sectarian differences, stick to the time allotted, make general du'a with out specifying any country and make it related to the lives of the students. We allow no politics so we can accommodate everyone.

MM: There were reports of somewhat extreme rhetoric in the khutba...

AM: You know, this never happened before but happened recently. I actually sat with the speaker and warned him. It was not violence but it is the zeal of the youth. They have energy and motivation, and that's why it is not wise to let youth lead this organization without senior members guiding them.

MM: Why did you let this speaker come back then?

AM: Because he promised to not repeat his mistake and he acknowledged it. We do not want to alienate anyone and want to give everyone opportunity. If it is repeated then we will take action.

After every Friday prayer I receive positive and negative feedback and I go through these comments with the speaker. Often times I found the speakers to have made unintentional mistakes and did not mean to sound extreme.

MM: Is MSA at UM affiliated with MSA National?

AM: Yes.

MM: Why do you only bring Sh. Abdurraheem Green as a speaker?

AM: Our goals and intentions are to focus on campus on Muslims and non-Muslim. He left a very good impression on the community. In order to approach non-Muslims and give them the message, the best thing is to bring someone who is from them: white, green eyes, blonde. This is the best way to talk to non-Muslims. He is young and the youth enjoy him. The other reason is that we approached others like Yusuf Estes and were not successful. Abdurraheem Green likes Winnipeg and he is a very simple person. He does not require much of us. He even stays with me and MSA saves money. He has good skills in da'wah.

MM: Where does MSA get its funding?

AM: MSA does not need much money. We need money for the ticket, booking fee and food. We sell tickets and we approach donors.

MM: Does MSA get funding from UMSU?

AM: Yes. For the conference we get a few hundred dollars.

MM: To conclude, what is your advice to Muslim students?

AM: Everyone of us we has to be a role model in class, in lab, in the department, with friends...Muslim engineering students have to be role models for engineers and so on. Amongst ourselves we should stick together and work together and stay with the jama'a. We should not create divisions and we should give MSA importance in our lives.

**Sr. Marwa Ali El-Sherbini,
"The martyr of Hijab"**

- Born in October 7th, 1977 in Egypt.
- A pharmacist and a mother of a young child.
- In 2005, El-Sherbini moved with her husband to Germany. Her husband, Elwi Ali-Okaz, a University lecturer, obtained a doctoral research position at the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics. She worked at the University Hospital Dresden and at a local pharmacy.

- Together with others, El-Sherbini founded an association with the aim to establish an Islamic cultural and education centre in Dresden.
- She was killed on July 1st, 2009 at a hearing in a court of law in Dresden, Germany by a man who was motivated by a "hatred of non-Europeans and Muslims".
- "The 31-year-old, who was three months pregnant with her second child, bled to death in front of her husband and their three-year-old son" –BBC-.
- The killer was convicted and sentenced to the maximum sentence: life in prison in November 2009.



Sr. Marwa Ali El-Sherbini and her family.

Opinions and views expressed in this newsletter are the sole responsibility of their authors.

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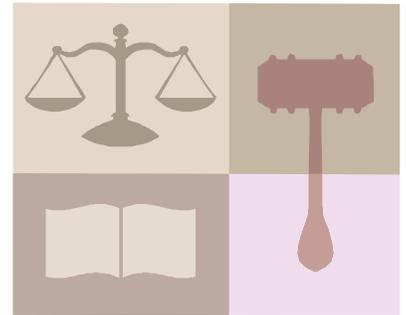
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