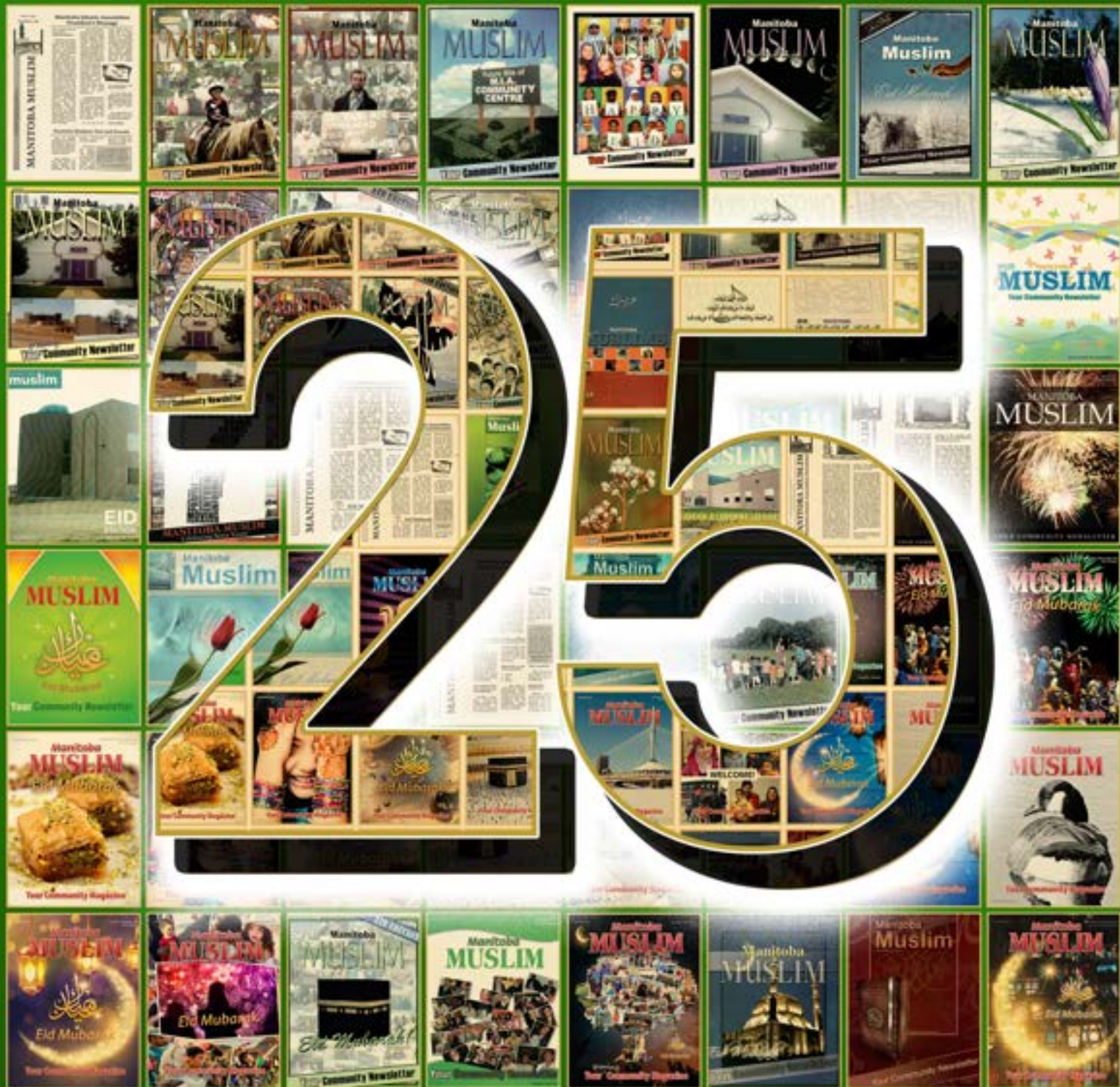


Manitoba Muslim

25
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

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Editorial Board

Ismael Mukhtar

Yasmin Ali

Tasneem Vali

About

Manitoba Muslim Magazine is a publication of the Muslim community in Manitoba under the auspices of the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA).

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The **Manitoba Muslim magazine** proudly marks its 25th anniversary.

The magazine was founded in 1999 and continues to be published consistently for more than two and half decades. The magazine is a living testament to the benefits of a collective team effort. As shown in this issue, the magazine was produced by about 44 volunteers throughout its history. Some of these volunteers have moved elsewhere, two passed away, but the seeds of their good work continues to flourish. Consistency is gold. As the hadith of the prophets indicates, "the most beloved deed to Allah is the most regular and constant even if it were little," (Bukhari). As our community has grown significantly over the years, the magazine has tracked this growth and echoed the sentiments of the community at every stage of its progress. May all the volunteers be blessed.

The magazine marks its 25th anniversary at a difficult time. The tragic events in Gaza have deeply shaken our community. The relentless bombing and the thousands of innocent lives lost is a dark chapter in human history. Our heartfelt sympathy goes to members of our community who are directly impacted by the unfolding tragedy. We pray for peace and justice for the people in the region and may the voice of reason and humanity prevail ultimately.

Editorial Board





MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Peace be upon you and God's Mercy and Blessings.

I am very glad to see that Manitoba Muslim magazine has completed twenty-five years of publication and counting to move forward. Alhamdulillah, twenty-five years ago, the presence of Muslims in Manitoba was quite insignificant, but the role of the magazine was a significant impression of identity and expression of desires to create a community of emerging Muslims in Manitoba.

History was not in favor of Muslims after the First World War. Politically Islam and its followers became weaker year by year, the number of Muslims in diaspora was increasing quickly from one conflict to the other and a downward spiral of the economy of Islamic countries has not stopped since.

Muslims in Manitoba is part of the history. Our pioneers took some very strong steps to unite us and this magazine is a testament to that fact. On behalf of the MIA Board and community at large, I would like to express our thanks and gratitude to all who worked for this magazine and continue to do so for the future. May Allah bless you all.

The year 2023 was a year of disasters as we were faced natural calamities in Pakistan, Libya, Morocco and some other countries but none matched the human created tragedy unleashed on Gaza strip. This is another episode of the massacre of Palestinians and their suffering resulting from seventy-five years of brutal occupation. May Allah grant a solution to this suffering and free Palestine from occupation and make this one the last such tragedy.

The Manitoba Muslim magazine publication has contained feelings of our people, our development and celebrated success of our volunteers in community works; our community is enjoying benefit of their dedication, sacrifices, and hard works for the last 54 years. InshAllah, we will continue the legacy with more success stories in future years.

The Canadian spirit of multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion bring us closer to all, each year, MIA is trying to reach out to more communities to celebrate universal brotherhood among all beliefs, may our publication contribute more to the effort.

I wish you all Eid Mubarak in advance.

Thank you,

Khawaja Abdul Latif

Chair, Board of Directors
Manitoba Islamic Association

Words of Revelation

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do."

Quran: Sûrah al-Nisâ': 135



A'idh ibn Amr ... said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: "The worst of guardians is the cruel ruler"

Hadith



"O Allah, I seek refuge in You from worry and grief, I seek refuge in You from incapacity and slackness, I seek refuge in You from cowardice and niggardliness, and I seek in You from being overcome by debt and being put in subjection by men".

Supplications of the prophet (PBUH)

ARTICLE

MANITOBA MUSLIM: A TEAM SUCCESS STORY!

ISMAEL MUKHTAR*



Effective communication and active engagement are foundational for any community, particularly, for diverse and predominantly immigrant-based communities, such as our local Muslim community. One important means of this communication is a newsletter. Understanding the vital need for communal engagement, the early pioneers of the community in the '60s took first steps of publishing intermittent newsletters. They were simple newsletters made up of a few pages, covering community news, announcements and some articles. Over the years, many publications were produced, but their main challenge was lack of consistency. Two of the better structured and more consistent MIA publications were *The Prairie Crescent*, edited by Dr. Anwar Islam in the '80s and *The Al-Ansar* edited by Ayub Hamid in the '90s. Both lasted for over a year. In addition, the Muslim Student Association at the University of Manitoba had its regular newsletter, *Al-Nour*, which lasted for a few years. Similarly, the youth had their long-lasting newsletter, *The Pillar*.

The *Manitoba Muslim Magazine* story began with a casual conversation at a dinner. Following the departure of Ayub Hamid from Winnipeg and the end of *The Al-Ansar Newsletter*, I met the late Br. Basil Elmayergi. Through conversation, I came to know that he published a regular newsletter for an organization. I then asked him if he would be willing to lend his expertise and assist in publishing a newsletter for the Muslim community; he agreed. I volunteered to be an interim liaison until Basil could manage on his own, after which I would step down. He



chose *The Manitoba Muslim* name and published a few issues bi-monthly. Due to other commitments, Basil couldn't continue. As a liaison, the choice for me at that point was to either assume the role of chair and editor or to let the *Manitoba Muslim* be discontinued. I chose to stay, and *alhamdulillah* with a team effort, it has survived for 25 years, becoming the longest publication of the community.

The magazine went through a transition from a newsletter to magazine. It became bigger, colourful and over time self-sufficient through increased business advertisements. The magazine provided a forum for discussing community issues, it regularly featured community members, it provided project updates etc. For new Muslim businesses, the magazine provided an avenue for publicizing their businesses. It also provided politicians a medium to reach out to the community. As an extension, an e-newsletter was created. Since the magazine was published bi-monthly, the e-newsletter was a quick bulletin for community announcements, funerals and notices.

For many years, the magazine was consistently published 6 times a year. In later years, given the prevalence of social media, the magazine became a bi-yearly publication and recently an annual publication for Eid al-Fitr and special occasions. The magazine has continued all these years because it was a team effort. Many came and went, but the magazine continued with new members. As it stands, the magazine serves as an indispensable historical archive for the community. When I published my first book, *Manitoba Muslims, a history of resilience and growth*, the magazine was one of my primary references.

Impressively, the magazine has lasted for a quarter of a century, and *in shaa' Allah* it will continue serving the community for generations to come. However, much has changed since the establishment of the magazine in 1999. Accordingly, in the next phase, the magazine needs new ideas and more involvement from the younger generation.

*Ismael Mukhtar is editorial member of *Manitoba Muslim Magazine* and author of *Manitoba Muslims, a history of resilience and growth*.

Manitoba Muslim Magazine volunteers over 25 years (alphabetically):



Abdo Mitiku

Abdul Aziz Mian

Abdulraheem Abuljabar

Adeel Mirza

Aisha Awan

Ali Taliani

Amna Burki

Ashmede Asgarali

Autumn Crossman

Basil Elmayergi (late)

Bilal Rana

Bokhari

Don Trim

Farnoosh Ali

Golam Kibria

Hayat Azmat

Hayat Azmat

Idris Elbakri

Imran Khan

Ismael Mukhtar

Kauser Najmee

Khaled Al-Nahar

Khaled Iqbal

Kimberley Turman

Lisa Kibria

Lubna Usmani

Luqman Rana

Mohammed Hussein (late)

Mohammed Maremi

Naeem Akhtar

Nusraat Masood

Osaed Khan

Raja El-Mazzini

Rehan Riaz

Ryan Ramchandrar

Sadia Durrani

Sana Khan

Sana Rana

Shoib Khan

Sophia Ali

Taibah Awan

Tasneem Vali

Usman Mohammed

Yasmin Ali

Yunus Lubega

Zahra Abhari

Archive



1971
MIA Newsletter



2013
Manitoba Muslim
E-Newsletter



Congratulations on 25 years of Manitoba Muslim History



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MUSINGS AND REMINISCENCE ON 2 DECADES IN WINNIPEG

DR. IDRIS ELBAKRI*



It is hard to believe that the Manitoba Muslim Magazine turns 25 this year. We ask God to reward all of those who contributed to its publication for so many years.

The magazine was one of the first opportunities for me to be involved in the Winnipeg Muslim community. I wrote for it after moving to Winnipeg and was later invited to join its editorial board. I had the privilege of working alongside individuals such as Shaykh Ismael Mukhtar, Sr. Yasmin Ali, Br. Hayat Azmat, Sr. Lisa Kibria, Br. Abdul Aziz, and others. I also co-organized with Sr. Yasmin Ali the 10th anniversary dinner for the magazine. That event was held on February 28, 2009, at the Wildwood Golf Club. The main speaker was Imam Mohamed Magid, from Washington DC. He spoke on the topic of "Diversity of Opinion, Unity of Purpose". When I picked up the Imam from the airport, I was sure that he had never experienced such cold as we had in Winnipeg in February.

Those seemed like simpler times. The community was smaller but growing. It had a core of community workers who all knew each other. The Winnipeg Central Mosque was just 4 years old and the Waverley Mosque had opened its doors in 2007 after a long struggle to get the project funded and completed. Having arrived in Winnipeg in 2005, my small family and I were beneficiaries of these initiatives that started many years before we ever knew Winnipeg even existed.

I really appreciated the Manitoba Muslim magazine. In addition to providing a platform for sharing ideas (and back then, news of births and marriages), it provided me personally with a space to be active and to get to know the community. The volunteer editorial board was warm and inclusive and welcoming. The volunteers were diverse in age, ethnicity and gender. This contrasted with my impressions of other spaces of community life. I felt many of the leaders back then were very protective of their organizations and "turf". A new person was not easily trusted or offered opportunities to contribute. I concluded, and this was later confirmed as I learned more about the community's history, that there was "history" between leaders and organizations that created that atmosphere. This also reflected the fact that then, and now, our community organizations lack professional means to recruit volunteers and provide them with meaningful opportunities. This is an area that remains haphazard, based on word of mouth and personal relationships, and leaves many talents outside of the limited pool of those who do get involved.

However, when needed, people put things aside and worked together. I fondly remember people coming together to collect items and ship them via PIA to Pakistan when Azad Kashmir suffered from a massive earthquake in 2005. Another example was when the Muslim youth spearheaded a creative fundraiser for earthquake victims in Haiti in

2010 called Haircuts for Haiti. This tradition of stepping up to support those afflicted and less fortunate is a strong feature of the Muslim community in Winnipeg.

Another special (physical) space for my family and me was the Winnipeg Central Mosque. When we moved to Winnipeg the mosque was only recently open. We found it to be a very open and family friendly space. Our toddler could walk freely and the relaxed nonchalant congregation did not seem to mind at all. At WCM I also stumbled into giving a Khutba once and that led me to become one of the regular khatibs of the community.

I did not get heavily involved until 2010. The MIA experienced a major governance breakdown that led to two difficult years of community infighting. Initially I remained out of it. My friends, who had been in Winnipeg longer and were more invested in community affairs pressed me to get involved and I ended up being right in the centre of the whole affair. What happened then is a subject for another time, but I know that I made many mistakes and learned valuable lessons. A key lesson was that when necessary, one had a moral imperative to take a position in a conflict and neutrality was not an option. To this date, I have an aversion to those who do not take a clear position when a position is needed.

In 2014 I was prevailed upon and nominated for the position of president of the MIA. I served 3 years from 2014-2016. I learned further lessons from that experience. I learned that I was terrible at balancing work, family and community involvement. Community responsibilities seemed to always come on top. It was not that I was a selfless volunteer, but more that I was addicted to the dopamine released when dealing with community drama. The fact that my marriage emerged from this intact was a testament to my wife's love and loyalty. With time and her help I got better at it. I got better because I also learned to not internalize failures (especially of others) too much. I took it to heart when other leaders and volunteers did not carry out their responsibilities fully, or to the level that I expected of them, and then I stepped in to fill the gaps. With time I learned this was not sustainable and I learned to let go.

Another area of growth for me was learning to handle praise and criticism. I was not prepared for how mean and unfair some people would get when they disagreed with me. I also had a hard time with exaggerated praise. Both got to me and made me very uncomfortable. Overtime, I accepted that criticism can be unjust, and praise can be hypocritical. This helped me to process criticism objectively and to separate emotions from it. I also learned that one cannot lead from complaints. We have this view that our leaders must be nice people and agree with whatever complaint or suggestion we are given.. That sort of leadership had disastrous results in our community. Leaders must listen to people but must also have the backbone to do and decide what they believe is right.

So, "criticism can be unfair, and praise can be hypocritical" and "don't lead from complaints" became personal mottos of mine that I shared with new and emerging leaders, probably to their dismay and surprise.

Another lesson I learned was that sometimes a false sense of spiritual humility pushes us to prematurely step aside or not step up at all. If I could go back, I would have served another term from 2017-2019 and then called it quits! I also strongly believe in the Prophetic teaching of not seeking positions of leadership. I found it unbecoming when people requested to be put in leadership positions or even lobbied for them, from giving khutbas, to leading prayer, to serving on the board. If you're sought for leadership by those who are knowledgeable, sincere and invested in the community and you think you can offer something then accept it, but never seek it yourself.

I also became a strong believer in term limits. I am really worried about several Muslim community organizations that have been defined by the individuals who founded them and led them since their inception and show no sign of stepping aside. While there is value in long-term stability, I believe in the long run it weakens the organization



and the community. We need to have an attitude of detachment (Zuhd) towards the community work we do. If we are sincere, it is God's work not ours. Just like we will leave all our material possessions and loved ones in this Dunya when God calls us back to Him, so we will leave our titles and positions and organizations. It is good to practice letting go and it is good practice to let go. The Ummah survived the worst loss it could ever have: the Prophet's (S) death. We will survive your resignation.

I stepped down from the MIA board after being involved for almost a decade, on and off the board. I saw younger (and older) folks eager to do things differently. While there was still vigorous debate and discussion in boards and committees, I got a sense that others felt stifled when I pushed for a certain position. I also realized that the community was changing and needed new and different leaders. I also saw that I was guilty of the same disease of wanting to "protect" the work and bring in people who I trusted or felt comfortable with. Stepping down was not easy for me as one does become attached. The work, or the organization, becomes "one's baby" and it hurts to see it not do well or go in a different direction. However, God said: "O believers, when you are told to make space in a gathering, then do so". I made space and Insha Allah it will be filled by those who are better and more effective.

I also learned to appreciate friendship, especially the friendships that I lost. Some people stopped being my friends because they disagreed with what MIA did when I was on its board. I really appreciated those lost friendships because they showed me the value of the friends that remained.

If anything, the genocide in Gaza showed just how much more work Canadian Muslims have ahead of them. For Manitoba, I offer the following ideas:

1. Muslim organizations must find ways to work together in a structured and systematic manner all the time, not just in crises.
2. All our organizations need to have strategic plans with a strong succession planning component.
3. We are focused too much on politicians and politics. While that is important, grassroots Da'wah is more critical in my humble opinion.. Look at the rallies you had for Gaza, how many politicians joined you and how many regular good folks who want to see a better world?
4. It is time to have a dedicated, funded and staffed advocacy organization.
5. I estimate we have \$5 - \$10 million annually in running costs for Manitoba Muslim organizations. That means that our initial endowment goal should be more than \$100 million.
6. Mosques are the line of first defense against ideas and practices that are contrary to our values. Strengthen them. Look around at Isha prayer or on the weekend. If the mosque has people with white hair and white beards, then we have a problem.
7. Professional staffing of community work is key. I will say this about MIA since I know it from the inside, although I think it is probably true of other organizations. You can easily double the staff and still not have enough people: double the imams, double the community resource officers, double the admin and caretaker staff. When are we going to have a resident psychologist, an audio-visual department, a research department, youth department and an academy for full time study of Islam? There is so much more to do.
8. Jumu'a prayer is a time when there is a captive audience but not a captivating message.
9. Manitoba in the Manitoba Islamic Association should stand for something. MIA risks becoming the Waverley Islamic Association because of so much attention that the building on Waverley and the community around it requires from the organization. That's why it is important to invest in and encourage the establishment of satellite chapters in rural areas, grow the operation in St. Vital, provide services out of the MIA Connections building downtown, establish centers in other parts of Winnipeg and maintain a large, unified Eid prayer that brings Manitoban Muslims together.

10. We need to promote, teach and live a big tent understanding of Islam that welcomes pious and sinner, Sunni and Shia, male and female, young and senior and that prioritizes the higher values of the Sharia and community unity over the particulars of a madhab (school of thought). Further it must promote Canadian Muslim culture (over immigrant Muslim culture) as the means for Islam to strike strong roots and for future generations to positively synthesize being Muslim and Canadian.

On a light note, community work came with its share of comic relief. A young brother once bought a horse and tied it to a structure on the mosque property. Before Islamophobia was a thing the MIA office received an envelope with bacon in it. People threw a fit on social media because the winning cake of a baking competition looked like the Ka'bah (totally halal btw). As I was about to get up to give Khutba once a brother pulled down my sweater to make sure my back was properly covered. Someone who was upset with the sister's prayer space not having a full barrier snuck into the mosque overnight and built a wall, with studs and all. During COVID when there were strict limits on gathering size, a brother propped the mosque door open and let tens of people in. When MIA was in a tight financial position a brother called me and asked me to let go of the cleaning staff and offered to arrange for families to clean the mosque bathrooms. I asked him to go ahead and arrange it but never heard back. Numerous times I heard that people believed I was controlling and puppeteering the community from behind the scenes. Please continue to believe that. It gives me great satisfaction that you think I am capable of that 😊.

If any of the above offended you, come to Palestine. There is nothing that a dish of Maqluba or stuffed grape leaves cannot fix, Insha Allah.

God bless Manitoba and its funny quirky Muslims and help them get it right.



Congratulations

Manitoba Muslim Magazine

CMWI celebrates with you this 25th anniversary!
Wishing you many more years of success and growth.



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COLD LAND, *Warm People*

ABRAR LATIF

As someone who's just recently moved to Toronto and before that Ottawa, from humble old Winnipeg, Manitoba, ancient locked away memories get reawakened every time I meet someone here from our modest prairie lands.

A usual conversation goes something like this:

"Hey, where you from?"

"I'm from Barrie, but I grew up in Winnipeg."

"Oh that's amazing, I also grew up in Winnipeg! Don't you find it so funny when people complain about the cold here?"

"Oh, all the time, they act like negative 3 is Antarctica itself."

"This is basically our coldest spring day."

We both say while desperately fastening our coats tighter as the Toronto wet and sharp cold inexplicably pierces through multiple layers of both our winter apparel and our bravado.

Despite the frigid temperatures often endured by the Winnipeegers on a semi-yearly basis, the people themselves are some of the warmest and kindest I've ever met. There's a popular saying in the States, that people on the West Coast are nice but not kind, whereas people on the East Coast are kind but not nice.

That is to say that West Coasters would probably say, "sorry you're going through such a rough time" and walk away if they saw you with a flat tire whereas an East Coaster would call you an idiot who couldn't check tire pressure if their life depended on it while helping you fix said tire. I believe people from the Prairies fall smack dab in the middle of that. They'd say, "sorry you're going through such a rough time of being an idiot," while fixing your tire.

Which is to say nothing of the stark beauty found during those winters, where the land and sky are painted a sheer white, with only the dark bark of bare trees slashing the skies like dark lightning bolts from the ground. It's a mesmerizing sight that is only emphasized by the bracing cold air that shocks your lungs as it enters and exits as frozen flame. Your body's reminder that outside, you are the closest and only source of heat and warmth.

This feeling of warmth is emblematic of the Muslim community I have found here in Canada. Every single *musallah* that I've visited welcomed me with open arms and a cup of tea. Living in downtown Toronto, everyone's so busy in life, dealing with work, family, the Toronto housing market etc. It's nice that these places offer a place of respite. One of my favourite memories going to an Ottawa *musallah*, was seeing this very put-together young man finally looking at ease once he melted down on the prayer mats.

As someone originally from Bangladesh where we were constantly encompassed in heat, this was a shock to me. What I later found to be even more shocking, was the vast diversity of Winnipeg. One of my favourite pastimes at meet and greets is showing people my high school graduation pictures, where there is a veritable medley of skin tones present. This display often prompts comments such as, "Oh wow! I really expected less diversity" or "It's not all white people in Winnipeg?"

This diversity is on full display in Winnipeg during Ramadan. *Iftaars* from different cultures were always a highlight. Don't get me wrong, there's absolutely nothing wrong with a Bangladeshi *iftaar*, but the best part of Manitoba being such a hub for multiculturalism is being able to experience all the different cultures. It really shows the ties between countries, all united under Islam.

I don't have a lot of national pride, much less provincial pride. I have moved four times in the last year and a half and I am still in the process of updating all my personal info as we speak. My sense of home is as muddled as the mini lakes at the ends of driveways after the initial spring melt. As an immigrant, my identity is often bisected between my birth place and the place I grew up, which always leads to an essay-equivalent answer to the question, "So where are you from?" I remain forever grateful towards my little frozen wonderland full of warm people and I am proud to call it one of my many homes.



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Inside the Bison Superstore
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Norwood Medical Centre Inc.

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(204) 233-9477

Bison Family Medical Clinic on Pembina

1686 Pembina Highway
(204) 202-1223

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Ruheen Aziz, CEO (204) 291-9556 or Dr. Timothy Ross, CMO (204) 298-8215



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*Congratulations on 25 years
of Manitoba Muslim History*



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City Councillor | Waverley West Ward

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SEEDS THAT WERE PLANTED

ALI BUKHARI*

It was a late night, very late, around 11:30 pm. The TV dial was turned to VPW. The inaugural show had the host lying back in his chair sleeping, then waking up and looking into the wrong camera. That’s how the once cancelled (maybe twice?) “Pillar The Show” began back in the ‘90s on local TV.

The Host: “So what brings you here?”

The Guest: “You do Ray!” (Rehan Huda, Host of “Pillar The Show”).

Some guests included Imam Siraj Wahhaj, Jawad Shah, Saira Rahman, Doc, Sports Mufti, and Sh. Muhammad Alshareef.

This was just one of the many efforts of our local Muslim community at the time. From Dear Slick, Muslim Side Cartoons, Pillar The Show, Pillar Magazine (see pic), Power Halaqa, sports nights, ISNA trips, weekend Islamic school, Taekwondo classes and local camps and conferences, boot hockey, to table tennis nights. The memories and reminiscing are endless. Every weekend and holiday throughout the year was filled with activities from our amazing young and older leaders of Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA), Muslim Youth Council (MYC) and Muslim Students’ Association (MSA).

Thinking back, I can immediately bring to mind two quick stories that elicit an incredible amount of joy:

This was just one of the many efforts of our local Muslim community at the time. From Dear Slick, Muslim Side Cartoons, Pillar The Show, Pillar Magazine (see pic), Power Halaqa, sports nights, ISNA trips, weekend Islamic school, Tae Kwon Doe Classes and local camps and conferences... boot hockey, to table tennis nights... the memories and reminiscing is endless. Every weekend and holiday throughout the year was filled with activities from our amazing young and older leaders of Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA), Muslim Youth Council (MYC) and Muslim Students’ Association (MSA).

Thinking back, I can immediately bring to mind two quick stories that elicit an incredible amount of joy:

The first is travelling to Regina for an ISNA Conference. The brothers were in one van, sisters in the other, when the sisters’ van broke down. It



THE PILLAR, MANITOBA MUSLIM YOUTH PUBLICATION

was late at night, so it was decided that we would send the late-night TV host to the rescue. Ray went and asked someone on a farm in the middle of a Manitoba Highway for help. The owner opened the door and asked, "Hey Boy! How did you get passed my electric fence and dog?" Ray didn't see or feel a thing! Moving along, in the middle of the dark and cold night, 20+ brothers and sisters all had to squeeze into a 12-passenger van. Sisters were in the rear half, brothers in the front half, including an additional passenger between the driver and the door. We eventually reached the conference, *Alhamdulillah*.

On another trip to ISNA in Toronto. The Ameer (leader) of the group, who will remain nameless, overbooked the group... our capacity was 12. However, he decided to STILL pick up all 18 passengers (including a brother who nobody knew). We only had a 12-passenger van for a 24-hour drive to Toronto, through the USA (the border too). On this same trip, my brother and I were the last pickup before commencing the trip to Toronto. My parents watched all these young teens pushing the van down the street to pick us up because the Ameer, thought the fuel was half full (he was reading the oil gauge).

Oh, one last story, there was a time when I almost drowned at MIA Summer Camp. Can't forget that drama! Thanks to Gamal for saving me. I wonder if the new rules of MIA Summer Camp are still in place. (*Editor's note: There is always a certified lifeguard in attendance at the Youth Awakening summer camp these days.*)

As a parent now myself, I am not sure what my parents were thinking all those years! Haha! They really placed their trust in Allah. *Masha Allah, Tabarak Allah*. Years later, I was able to work with the MIA on their *Manitoba Muslim Newsletter*. I had the pleasure to work on advertising sales and printing under the supervision of Sh. Ismael Mukhtar and Imran Khan. *Alhamdulillah*, we took it to the next level.

Thanks to all the experience gained from my time in Winnipeg, my wife and I started the Muslim Link (www.muslimlink.ca) in 2002. Our team included Imam Yasin Dwyer and Amira Elghawaby, who is currently Canada's Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia. We also partnered with CAIR CAN (now NCCM) on publishing content in our newspaper, as well as educating and supporting their advocacy work early on. At the Muslim Link 10-year anniversary, I was amazed to see how it benefited so many in their education and careers. We had so many who have used this platform as a stepping stone to bigger things in business, journalism, law, Islamic activism, etc.



I end off with this hadith. Something for which I am thankful for is all those who really put in the countless number of hours for our community, planting seeds. Narrated by Anas bin Malik: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him." *JazakAllahu khairun* to all those who planted the seeds.

**Ali Bukhari is an avid runner with a passion for Real Estate Development and Islamic Activism. He grew up in Winnipeg and was member of the Manitoba Muslim Editorial Board. He currently resides in Ottawa with his wife, mom and three children.*

CUSTODIANS OF HISTORY - REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF THE MANITOBA MUSLIM MAGAZINE

SHAHZAD MUSADDIQ*



The Manitoba Muslim has always had a special place in my heart. It is a chronicle of our community's history since the magazine's inception 25 years ago. Over those years my family has diligently acquired each new issue as it was released, often times at Eid or other special events. I fondly remember running to the back of the Convention Centre to get my hands on the newest copy.

The excitement began with the cover page. My favourite covers were collages of photos from community events. Like a game of "Where's Waldo?", I would crowd around with friends trying to spot people we knew, or if we were lucky, maybe even a photo of ourselves. I would pour through the pages looking at the different articles written by people I recognized as speakers or volunteers in the community. These were our local heroes and it was incredible to see their words printed in a magazine.

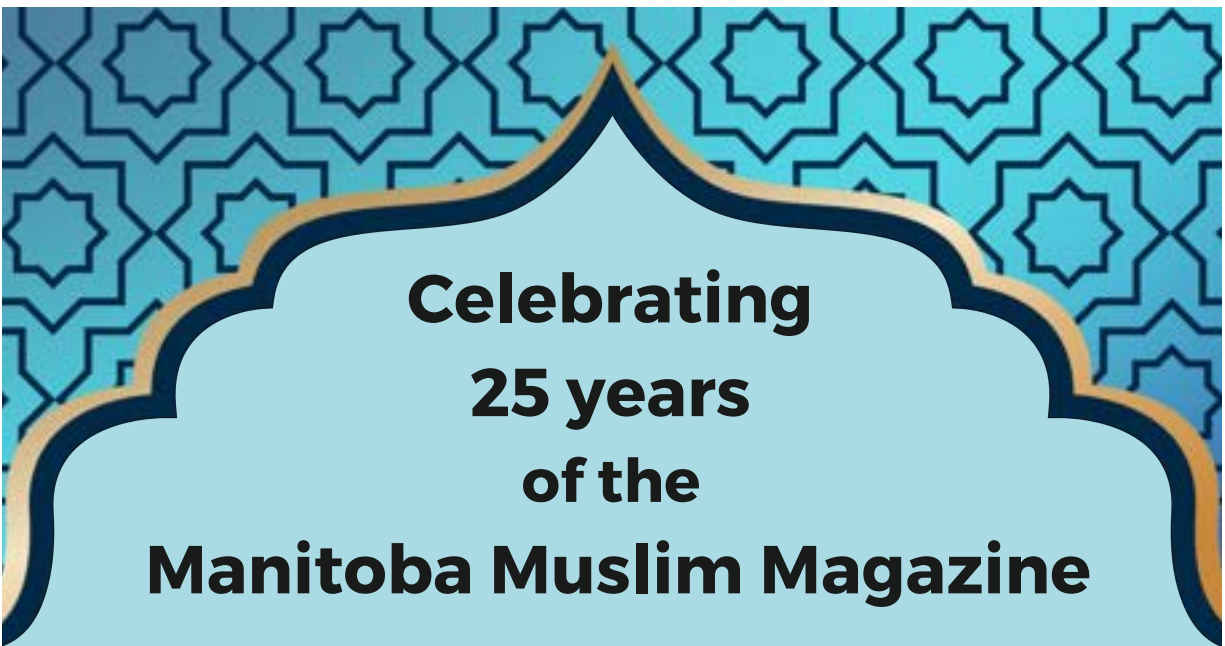
There were plenty of interesting articles, but I would always turn first to the Community Profile. They made me appreciate the richness of the community and its members. The nameless elder we saw in the front row was suddenly a realized personality with so many layers to their life. Even when it featured people I thought I knew, I was amazed to learn about their history. Growing up I would rarely see an honest representation of Muslims on television or newspapers. At best we were portrayed as a strange novelty, and at worst we were villains who had to justify our very existence. A local grassroots magazine that presented our own narrative was the refreshing ray of hope that I needed.

In the early 2000's being a Canadian Muslim was challenging. It was easy to feel excluded and being proud of your identity was difficult, but seeing those people, and sometimes myself or my friends, meant so much. Even if it was only in the background of a blurry group photo, we were seeing our reality published in media. This magazine wasn't just a document released for people to enjoy. This was history, printed and preserved. I didn't realize it at the time, but years later, all those previous issues of the magazine kept safe at my parents' home were a time capsule that brought those memories to life.

Before social media, the only way to experience these publications was when they were printed and physically distributed at events. In the digital age, it's easy to take for granted how we share these moments. Social media posts only enjoy a brief moment of attention before we scroll to the next page. Things are rarely cherished; they are fleeting and constantly eclipsed by the never-ending flood of content. That is why physical media, specifically a tangible copy of a magazine is so much more impactful. You can literally hold these memories in your hand.

A quarter century later, the Manitoba Muslim remains a preservation of that history. These moments were of critical significance to me and to many members of this community. To have them documented and preserved on beautiful glossy pages, means they were immortalized. Anyone who owns even a single issue of the Manitoba Muslim magazine is a custodian of that history. We are keepers of moments of true significant meaning and we have a responsibility to share those memories with future generations. I pray that we will continue to excitedly peruse those pages, to see our stories told in real time and to learn about this community and it's wonderful people for another 25 years.

**Shahzad Musaddiq was born and raised in Winnipeg. He graduated from the University of Manitoba and served on the executive board of the Muslim Students' Association. He was chair of the Canadian Muslim Leadership Institute and volunteered with the Manitoba Islamic Association.*



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FOUNDATIONS IN Food and Community

MAHWASH RAJPUT



Cooking lessons in the basement of Hazelwood Masjid weren't just about learning to make doubles and *channa* (chickpeas). Being taught recipes by our Aunties tied us to our ancestral legacies. Observing the hands of our Aunties knead dough was witnessing the strength and power carried in them. Plating a tower of dates together at student *iftaar* was speaking to the importance of supporting those in need. Staying up after Fajr to help our Aunties at summer camp to prepare a pancake breakfast was teaching us deep love for the sake of Allah. These moments with our Aunties were always filled with laughter and the sharing of little stories. I know now that these were sacred experiences that connected us to the Divinity of Allah and our faith.

Our spiritual guide, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was asked who we should give our honour and kindness to. He said, "your mother." Then again, "your mother" and again "your mother." There is wisdom in this advice, as it is our mothers who are at the root of cultivating our character. We are so blessed to have grown up in a community that fostered us with many mothers. These mothers of mine are dear to my heart and they are whom I am most grateful for when I think about my memories in Winnipeg. I reflect on this as I'm about to prepare dinner now and realize my Aunties are a part of my everyday - 3 meals and snacks in between.

Cooking does not just have a simple intent to feed. There's a spiritual interrelation to food. It represents care, comfort and reliance upon Allah and His provisions. The kitchen is said to be the heart of the home and for me, the kitchen was often the heart of the masjid - a masjid that truly was a community centre.

Our many mothers were foundational in fortifying the centre and the community it housed. It is these Aunties who stood by our side, who guided us, who led us to become the people we are today - these Aunties who we are grateful to call our friends. Aunties who we, in present day, call to chat with on the phone, exchange messages with over WhatsApp or invite out for a brunch date.



How blessed are we to have been raised by many powerful women. How blessed are we to have well wishes for us by the most pious of souls. How blessed are we to have friends who are like family.

I would like to take this moment to make a sincere *du'ah* for our Mothers who have *Jannah* beneath their feet. Those who have returned to Allah and those who may be reading this now. May Allah (SWT) give you the most beautiful of abodes in *Jannah tul Firdaus*. May all of our successes in this life be your successes in the Hereafter. May we continue to strive for goodness as you taught us. May we eat the most beautiful of fruits of *Jannah* together. Ameen.

Standing for Peace and Justice in Palestine

Photos from "Journey to Palestine" event on December 16, 2023 at Waverley Grand Mosque



REFLECTIONS

Nilufer M. Al-Rahman

My memories of growing up as a Muslim youth in Winnipeg are vivid and varied. I remember so much – the good, the bad, the funny and the sad.

I remember our famous biweekly Friday night youth halaqas. First there'd be a speech – often by Jawad Shah who would inspire us to try and change the world for the better – followed by snacks and a show. With squinted eyes and cricked necks, we'd look up at the small, old-school TV to watch a VHS tape of Tareq Suwaidan telling stories from the *Seerah*. To end the evening we'd play a few rounds of ping-pong. Sometimes Br. Waheed Mustapha would lead us in group-style sessions – always engaging and fun. Whatever the theme was – media, identity, education – he'd always wrap up with something to the effect of, "We could talk about this for 10 days but here it is in 30 seconds." He was the king of capturing a topic's essence. His goal wasn't really to teach or preach. He wanted us to *think* critically and to communicate.

I remember cutting and pasting articles, drawings, crossword puzzles and comics into a newsletter format for our youth magazine "the Pillar."

I remember Sheikh Ismael Mukhtar teaching us *Seerah* everyday for a whole summer. He gave us photocopies that he prepared himself, of handwritten notes in a neat font of all caps.

I remember a man at the mosque telling my sister she couldn't become a doctor because she was a woman but, Alhamdulillah, with Dad's encouragement, she became one anyway.

I remember being thrilled after breaking my first board in Taekwondo class in the masjid basement.

I remember a teacher at weekend Islamic school rebuking a kid for not knowing how to pray. That kid never came back.

I remember helping Auntie Zolikha make cookies and pizzas from scratch in preparation for summer camp.

I remember shopping for camp supplies with my sister and Auntie Zolikha. We were all laughing hysterically from trying to calculate how much toilet paper we'd need to buy. We decided each kid would need at least six sheets per washroom visit and we purchased accordingly!

I remember when a few of us girls argued with a man about the barrier. I'd get so angry when men would knock loudly on the partition wall if the women were making too much noise. The women could not see the speaker, yet we were expected to pay attention. At that time in my life, I was learning so much about





how Islam honoured women, yet I did not always feel or see that being reflected in some people's behaviour. That was hard.

I remember helping in the kitchen at camp and sabotaging a muffin with an overdose of salt to pull a prank on my friend, Ferdose Sheikheldin.

I remember some brothers passing us a thermos of the most delicious Ethiopian tea during Tahajjud prayer in Ramadan. It was black spiced tea and very sweet. I can still taste it. It was different to how we drank tea at home. The masjid was so incredibly peaceful in the middle of the night. I remember feeling calm as we prayed.

I remember being a brat, imitating Auntie Fathiya's Egyptian accent, changing my p's for b's. She fired back with, "Well at least I know two languages!" Boy did she school me! I also remember going to her restaurant, Falafel Villa on Dakota St. She and Uncle Helmy Alshareef would always greet us with a warm smile and give us free kanafa - the best I ever tasted, made fresh and with love.

I remember Muhammad Alshareef rapping on the bus to summer camp – "across the country, longitude and latitude, we are Muslims, Muslims with an attitude...everybody do the *tawbah*, the *tawbah*!"

I remember Auntie Zebi Shah inviting us for Eid Open House. It was always a strict two-hour window: 1-3 or 2-4 for "Eid Snacks!" She'd hand each of us an "Eidy" - a nice fresh two-dollar note!

I remember praying *taraweeh* prayer during Ramadan and making Saima Nasim laugh when we bowed down for *ruku'* and my thick winter socks would puff up at my toes.

I remember Auntie Zolikha taking some of us gals for downhill skiing lessons at Springhill. The first few times, when I didn't know how to descend gradually, I sped down the hill at top speed. It was petrifying and exhilarating at the same time. I felt like I was flying.



I remember so much from those days. In retrospect, there was a lot of joy, but also anger and frustration. We're not a perfect community. We're not all the same. We learn, we strive, we stumble and hopefully, we grow. Allah encourages us in the Qur'an to always ask questions, to think and to reflect. He doesn't want us to be stagnant.

I pray that our Muslim community in Manitoba grows and thrives in a good way. I pray that we are kind with one another. I pray that we acknowledge our diversity so that we don't leave anyone behind. I pray that we create safe spaces for everyone. I pray that we hold ourselves accountable to injustices *within* our community just as much as we call for justice outside of the community. May Allah give us courage for the challenges ahead. May He help us to cherish moments of joy, no matter how big or small. May He bless those in our community – our village – who fed us, showed us love and raised us.

Ameen. Ameen. Ameen.



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An Editor's Perspective on the Manitoba Muslim



By Raja Elmazini*



I joined the Manitoba Muslim magazine editorial board in the summer of 2008. I was still in high school and at that time was the youngest board member. I was excited and overwhelmed with my new role as the secretary. I learned what meeting minutes were for the first time, as I became responsible for recording them, which at that age felt like a huge responsibility. I remember sparsely participating in the discussions in my first few meetings as I was so focused on naively recording every little detail I heard. I wrote my first article for the magazine in 2009, a report on the Muslim Girls' youth camp that I had attended over the summer. I continued to contribute to the magazine with reports on camps, community events, interviews and articles over the years. I was then given the task of creating a 'Family page'; a page in the magazine dedicated to families that included recipes, crossword puzzles, trivia, etc. The goal of the page was to be more inclusive and attract readers of all ages.

After several years, I created a Youth page in the magazine. This page was specifically targeted towards the youth as the editorial board realized there was a lack of youth readership and participation in the magazine. This page would include book recommendations, technology updates, Islamic trivia, etc. As a youth myself, this was more up my alley and I enjoyed putting together this section of the magazine. I continued with this contribution until my time on the editorial board came to an end in 2016. It was so special to be a part of an integral component of the Manitoba Muslim community. I grew along with the magazine, as it was an outlet for me to improve my writing and editing, both of which were huge interests of mine.

The Manitoba Muslim magazine is celebrating 25 long years of keeping the Manitoba Muslim community together. Opening an issue of the magazine told you who got married, who gave birth and who had moved on to the next life. Each issue is a direct reflection of the most current community and world events; the magazine has kept us all in the loop and informed for the last 25 years. I stepped down from my role when I moved abroad, but while I no longer contribute to it, I ironically read it even more as it is my window into the Manitoba Muslim community. From time to time I have a peek at the most current issue to read up on what I may have missed. It has been a privilege to watch the magazine evolve over the past two and a half decades. The heart of the Manitoba Muslim magazine has always been the dedicated staff that has worked tirelessly to provide our Muslims with a magazine we can call our own. Many editorial board members, like myself, have come and gone but Sheikh Ismael Mukhtar (editor-in-chief) has been the constant driving force behind the magazine. He has inspired many dedicated members, both past and present, that have contributed to the magazine and *in sha' Allah* the Manitoba Muslim magazine will continue its legacy for many years to come.

**Raja Elmazini is a former Manitoba Muslim editorial board member. She was born and raised in Manitoba and currently resides in Toronto with her husband and son.*

BEING MUSLIM: The Manitoban Perspective



For most of my childhood, the Pioneer Mosque was where we spent many days and evenings. It was the center of our small, but active community of Muslims. From Taekwondo classes to day camps, weddings, iftaars and taraweeh prayers, this was our masjid. The image of small groups of people chatting outside around the masjid after prayer is something I will never forget. Even now, whenever I visit Pioneer Mosque the scent takes me back to my childhood and memories of the past. Praying there reminds me of praying with my childhood friends.

Sophia Ali



As an active member of the Muslim community in Winnipeg, and many years of service on the MIA (treasurer 2004 to 2007 and office manager for approximately 2 years afterwards), I have many memories in this community. One time that stands out in my memory occurred one Ramadan during the last ten nights. Several brothers spanning various age groups—youth, young adults, seniors and middle-aged—were staying at the masjid for Itikaf (religious retreat) for the entire last ten nights of Ramadan. In the course of my attendance, I noticed a few of the brothers present were laughing so hard, they couldn't focus on anything else. The reason for this was the audible snoring that emanated from several sections within the masjid, with each snoring person producing a distinct pitch and rhythm. Many brothers were unable to pray, recite the Qur'an, or fall asleep due to this symphony of snoring and were forced to relocate for the night. This was an unforgettable time spent at the masjid filled with the sincere worship of Allah, hearty laughter and true brotherhood.

Khaled Alnahar



In winter I love to go sledding/tobogganing, make snowmen at school, go on slides that are made of snow/ice and ride on horses. This year, there was less snow, like really less, so I still have so much winter activities to do. I love the people in Manitoba! Whenever you're walking past someone you'll hear a, "Hi!"

I also love Ramadan and Eid, going to the mosque in Ramadan for iftaar, and celebrating with friends for Eid. Growing up in Manitoba, I have experienced different events such as TeaFest where different people come to represent their country. You go around stalls, eat yummy food and get papers with facts about the country. I also love the Manitoba Museum. There's a whole section (when I went there) about dinosaurs, there's also a ship, and fur of animals! There are many street festivals where I get to see the 'Prairie Culture'. We have road trips around the province to see the prairie sunsets, farmers fields, bison, horses and cows grazing, farmers markets and enjoyed the bed and breakfasts!

Ayza Waleed, Grade 4



People always ask what it was like to grow up in Winnipeg. I usually start with how cold it was, how we plugged in our cars to keep the engines warm and how our eyelashes would freeze while waiting at the bus stop. Then I remember all the warm aspects of our community. The Eids spent open house hopping and the Friday night youth halaqas. We loved them so much my parents would tell us we couldn't go if they wanted to discipline us. It's pretty amazing that our punishment was that we couldn't go to the masjid. That's how much we loved our community. The most memorable times were at camp Al Hijrah where we made lasting friendships. We loved playing pranks, watching skits, singing songs and telling jinn stories around the bonfire. The camps made me proud of being Muslim and shaped my Muslim identity.

Sabah Iqbal (Lived in Winnipeg from birth - 2001)





We were beyond blessed to grow up in a vibrant, strong and diverse community. My family moved close to the Masjid while I was in middle school, making it easily accessible. It was just a ten-minute walk for us! A few fond memories include playing with my dear friends in the basement as a child, creating our own "girls group" in the storage room, attending the yearly youth camp and all Friday night youth halaqas. My family, including my parents, were regular volunteers and attendees of the masjid. The dynamic and serene environment during the blessed month of Ramadan, I will never forget. As a teenager, I joined MYC (Muslim Youth Council) helping to organize and initiate various youth programs throughout the city such as camps, halaqas and the West Zone youth conference, attended by speakers such as Imam Siraj Wahaj. These impactful memories and the life-long values gained during these experiences have stayed with me into my adult life. I have the honour of carrying these values into my own community here in San Diego, California through volunteer work. The Muslim community in Winnipeg is a truly distinctive community, that I am proud to say I was a part of!

Saima Nasim



We were known as the Khans of Altona! We were the only Muslims in that rural town but my father, Dr. Ahmed Hassan Khan, was determined to keep us connected with the Muslim community. So when I think of my childhood, I think of us 5 kids packing our bags every Friday and driving the 1.5 hr commute so we could be part of the Muslim community and build a strong bond with many Muslim families there. I will cherish the Friday night halaqas, picnics and the bond of friendship during Taraweeh prayers at the Pioneer Mosque. The community instilled in me many leadership skills as I organized Dawah Academy, where youth from all over the United States and Canada spent a summer together not only increasing our Tarbiyyah, but also creating bonds of friendship that I have to this day! I was encouraged to be part of the Muslim Youth Council and was involved in organizing many events, especially our annual summer camps! These skills continue to be of use to me to this day as an educator in Toronto, with the Muslim youth and even my own children. I was blessed to have these memories Alhamdulillah. Often I will reminisce the wonderful memories with my childhood friends and the Aunties of the community who were like family as they saw us growing up! The Muslim Winnipeg Community will always have a special place in my heart!

Zenab Hassan Khan



I am one of the fortunate few who knew our community as a small, tight knit group of people that gathered in the Pioneer Mosque (Masjid on Hazelwood) and was also able to witness it expand and grow into the large community it is today. As it grew, I remember attending numerous "New Mosque Land" fundraising dinners with my grandparents, Denise and Riaz Usmani. Finally, in 1994 that "new mosque land" vision became something tangible. Some of my earliest memories were of running around Pioneer Mosque and the memories of my childhood all come rushing back anytime I step foot in the masjid—it still smells the same! However, the prospect of a new, larger masjid was one we were all very excited about.

Coming from a family who helped establish the Manitoba Islamic Association, I have always taken a deep pride in carrying on that tradition of participating in, and giving back to, our community. I remember being a child and having the opportunity to volunteer at the annual Eid Carnival. My first "job" was making cotton candy. To this day, whenever I have that opportunity, I remember the exact place I learnt to make it!

Community dinners, sleep away camps, day camps, fundraising for Al Hijra Islamic school, attending Saturday school at Churchill High School, attending numerous iftaars in the basement of Pioneer mosque, visiting a succession of open houses on Eid, welcoming new Winnipeggers, volunteering and forging life-long friendships, are all things I hold deep and dear to my heart. For this I thank the pioneers of our community, our elders, both near and far. Your contributions and sacrifices as well as the donation of your expertise and skills will always be remembered. I am so fortunate to have had these opportunities and my hope is that you too will embrace and continue to embrace our community, and cultivate its growth!

Lubna Usmani



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Traumatic Stress

Dr. Khaled Al-Nahar

War news overwhelming you? Get out of a funk.

Have you been keeping up with the distressing and sorrowful news from abroad? Then you may be experiencing a state of despondency or melancholy (i.e. being in a funk).

Funks often resolve spontaneously; nevertheless, it is important to undertake appropriate measures to enhance one's well-being and prevent the onset of a mental condition.

If you recently noticed any changes in your mood, sleep patterns, attitude, behavior, appetite or other psychological or physical aspects, then the constant stream of war-related news reports could be getting to you.

The protracted conflict abroad has caused millions of people to feel appalled and profoundly distressed. Mental health professionals are concerned about the overall mental well-being of people who constantly follow the news and observe the tragic scene. These individuals may experience anxiety, melancholy, dread and traumatic stress due to watching or learning about the brutality and complete lack of humanity. Devastating daily news reports from overseas can contribute to more serious and enduring psychological issues including depression and trauma disorders.

Trauma, under the framework of stress, pertains to a distinct kind of stress that arises when people are subjected to emotionally distressing, highly intense and unsettling occurrences. These situations often fall beyond the range of experiences that individuals commonly encounter.

Everyone feels the effects of stress at some point in their lives. Stresses may have both internal and external sources such as those you have within you, or those taking place in the world around you and they can take several shapes and forms. Yet, the effect on the impacted individuals is universal. Although some stresses may be short-lived, others might linger for quite some time. Since the duration, nature and severity of stresses vary from person to person, it may be helpful for a person to first be aware of and assess one's internal symptoms in order to recognize stress. The somatic symptoms include trembling, agitating, a rapid or irregular heartbeat, fast breathing, choking sensations, stomach-churning, vertigo and an abnormal body temperature. Emotional symptoms include sadness, extreme sensations of shock, racing thoughts, anxiety, disbelief, fear, anger, helplessness, guilt and embarrassment.

Traumatic stress is a psychological state that may arise after the experience or observation of a distressing incident. Traumatic stress may lead to the occurrence of repetitive nightmares, flashbacks, intense tension or anxiety and uncontrollable rumination. These symptoms may lead to significant social, professional, interpersonal challenges and they may impede one's daily activities. Although initial difficulties may arise, the good news is that most individuals who have experienced traumatic stress ultimately achieve recovery with the passage of time along with diligent self-care. If one's symptoms worsen, last for months or even years and significantly hinder the individual's everyday functioning, it is possible that the person is experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Although it is often believed that individuals may acquire trauma as a result of personally encountering scenarios involving real or impending death, serious harm or brutal violence, it is important to note that trauma may also occur when a person observes such occurrences. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that individuals may experience trauma when they become aware of such incidents or have repeated and extended exposure to the painful aspects of the traumatic event, such as the constant news coverage across various media platforms.

If this is something you recognize in your life, or in the life of someone you care about, here are some basic recommended steps to take if you are experiencing traumatic stress, which can also be useful for trauma disorders:

First, ensure the maintenance of your physical and mental well-being. Learn to recognize the significance of any symptoms you may be experiencing. They are mostly an innate reaction to an extraordinary event.

Second, practice basic mindfulness techniques, even if it is as simple as using specific breathing exercises, which can be utilized anywhere and are easy for anyone. They are uncomplicated and might be used at any given moment. For instance, the recommended respiratory rhythm is inhaling for a length of four beats, retaining the breath for two beats, and then exhaling for a time of seven beats. By engaging in this activity, you activate your body's parasympathetic nervous system and that triggers a state of tranquility. As a result, you will be capable of engaging in logical reasoning and sustaining a level of awareness.

Next, engage in endeavors that evoke contentment and joy inside you. Make sure to partake in activities that you have a strong preference for, whether it be by yourself or with others.

Finally, lean on a close person for assistance or support. Dependence on loved ones or reliable friends is quite important.

Nevertheless, if your emotions or methods of dealing with stress are hindering your daily tasks or causing concern among your loved ones, it is recommended that you seek treatment from a mental health expert.

**Dr. Khaled Al-Nahar is a Clinical Psychologist in the Community Safety Division, Manitoba Justice*

ARCHIVE:

Poetry

Excerpt from *Pillar Magazine*, published in the 90s by the Muslim Youth Council in Manitoba

AWAKENED BY THE DISTINCT SOUND
OVERTAKEN BY THE LIGHT
FEELING THE LOVE INSIDE
GRASPING THE KNOWLEDGE IN SIGHT

HEAR IT, FEEL IT, SEE IT MY FRIEND
OUR GUIDANCE, OUR LIFE, SHOWN TILL THE END
GRASP IT, ACQUIRE IT, LET IT BE KNOWN
TO US MY DEAR FRIEND, IT SHALL BE SHOWN

THE WORDS OF WISDOM
FILL OUR HEART WITH CONTENT
TO THE BELIEVERS OF THE BOOK
TO WHOM IT WAS SENT

THIS BOOK CALLED THE QUR'AN
FILLS OUR LIFE WITH LIGHT
BRINGS TEARS TO OUR EYES
WHEN THE SINCERE RECITE

AS WE ALL BIND TOGETHER
REACH OUT AND GRASP IT FOREVER
CAPTURING IT IN THE HEART
TRYING TO NEVER DEPART

TREASURE IN MEMORY TO PRAY
THROUGH DAYS OF EVIL AND CRUEL
BY THIS THE HEART REMAINS RICH
NEVER WAVERS, NOR GRIEVES, STAYS COOL

FINALLY THROUGH ALL THE STRUGGLE
WITH QUR'AN HELD IN OUR RIGHT HAND
THE TEARS CAN FINALLY FLOW FREELY
ACROSS THE ENTIRE LAND

THE ATHAN IS HEARD WORLDWIDE
BROTHERHOOD EXISTS AT OUR SIDE
OUR HEARTS ALL JOIN AS ONE
A DREAM WOKEN UP, BY GOD'S WILL, HAS COME

NADIRA MUSTAPHA
- WRITTEN AS A TEENAGER





Social Isolation and Seniors

Mian Hameed*

Humans are social beings. We spend much of our lives around the people that we care about and enjoy being with, like our family, friends, co-workers, etc. Isolation is a term that is used to describe a lack of social connections. Individuals who are socially isolated have limited connections with others throughout their daily lives. Social isolation can affect anyone, it can occur for many different reasons and it can lead to a variety of adverse health outcomes. The potential effects of social isolation include:

1. Loneliness
2. Depression
3. Poor sleep quality
4. Accelerated cognitive decline
5. Poor cardiovascular function
6. Increased risk of premature death

Signs and symptoms of isolation can include:

1. An inability to communicate with others and connect on a deeper level
2. Not having any close or best friends
3. Feelings of isolation, no matter where you are and who you are around
4. Negative feelings of self-doubt and self-worth
5. Feeling unseen or unheard when you reach out to others
6. Feeling exhausted or burnt out when trying to engage socially

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced many people around the world to social isolation and the effect it can have as billions of people were locked down at home. However even before the pandemic there was a certain group of individuals that have always been at a higher risk of experiencing social isolation. Allah S.W.T. repeatedly mentioned in the Quran the importance of love and care for parents. Whether in the U.S. and Canada, or anywhere else in the world, day in and day out parents often devote their lives to raising their children but when it comes to taking care of parents we do not find enough time.

Isolation among seniors is alarmingly common and will continue to increase as the older population grows. It has been documented that the prevalence of social isolation among community-dwelling older adults—seniors who live at home rather than in seniors’ communities—may be as high as 43%. With the overall number of elderly people projected to climb in the near future, the number of those experiencing this phenomenon is likely to increase as well. Social isolation will likely impact the health, well-being, and quality of life of numerous older persons now and in the foreseeable future. Considering the demonstrated risk and the increasing prevalence of this issue, it’s certainly worth addressing how we can promote social integration at the larger societal level.

There are several ways to promote health and connectedness among older community members:

1. Availability of Transportation: Lack of adequate transportation is a primary cause of social isolation, as many seniors do not drive. Anything that helps seniors get around and make independent choices about travel can aid in promoting their social health. At the societal level, creating a solid public transportation system and providing special transportation options to seniors and disabled people will help promote their social integration. Individually, people can offer rides to seniors or to help them learn to use public transportation in order to help them maintain social connections and a healthy sense of independence.

2. Promote a Sense of Purpose: Seniors with a sense of purpose or hobbies that really interest them are less likely to succumb to the negative effects of social isolation. Besides providing a sense of purpose, many hobbies and interests are inherently social in nature. Anything that involves a group, for example, playing bridge or lawn bowling, could be socially healthy. There are always planned events at the Grand Masjid and these can be extended to the Pioneer Masjid as well as MIA Connections (downtown), or any other place MIA supports. Volunteering is also a great way of maintaining and expressing a sense of purpose. Seniors must remain active in their hobbies and interests. Socialising with like-minded people will keep them from becoming isolated and lonely.

3. Maintain Attendance at Their Regular Place of Worship: For seniors who have been regularly attending the masjid, this social connection has been shown to be quite beneficial. They will not only benefit from the social interaction and sense of purpose that regular worship at the masjid provides, but they also benefit from the watchful eye of other community members who would likely recognize a decline in an isolated senior that may have gone unnoticed otherwise.

4. Encourage Seniors to Go For Hearing and Vision Tests: Seniors with undiagnosed or untreated hearing problems may avoid social gatherings because of embarrassment and/or difficulty communicating. Vision tests are also important as difficulty seeing can limit opportunities for social interactions.

5. Make Adaptive Technologies Available: Many seniors do not take full advantage of mobility aids such as walkers or wheelchairs. Sometimes they may be embarrassed because they do not want to look or feel old, or the device may be prohibitively expensive.

6. Encourage Eating With Others: The act of eating with others is inherently social. Robin Fox stated in his research that eating with others is an inherently social urge. Food is almost always shared; people eat together, mealtimes are events when family, settlements or even villages come together. Food is also an occasion for sharing and giving, as well as for the expression of altruism, whether from parents to children, children to in-laws, or to visitors and even strangers. Encourage seniors to share a meal with others whenever possible, whether it is with a masjid or seniors’ group. Dining with others is also likely to help promote better nutrition, which is crucial for elderly people.

**Mian Hameed is chair of Manitoba Muslim Senior’s Association*





Food and Identity: A Legacy of the Pioneer Masjid

By Safiya Thiessen*

As someone born and raised in Winnipeg, there are so many of my core memories that take place in the Pioneer masjid. When I was a child, aside from a few prayer areas sprinkled throughout the city, this was essentially the only masjid in Winnipeg. Everyone that regularly came to pray taraweeh fit in that masjid and it was a place where community members of all ages, and from all over southern Manitoba, gathered and interacted with each other. There was food, laughter and even sometimes tears, but above all there was a sense that this place was ours. As a religious minority in this country, the masjid was central in fostering a sense of Muslim identity for those of us who grew up here.

One of my earliest memories at Pioneer masjid is of sitting beside my mom, Zahida Khan (Thiessen), at jumu'ah. She was sitting in her corner by the window where she was usually found, whether it be for jumu'ah or taraweeh. Anyone who knew her always looked to that corner as soon as they walked in to see if she was at the masjid. I was really young, so I eventually became tired and lay down with my head in her lap. I can still remember the fuzzy feel of the green plush carpet beneath my fingertips and the dust mites swirling in the sun that streamed through the window as I looked up, watching the brown ceiling fans spinning against the background of the wooden ceiling. At that age, jumu'ah was pretty boring for me. It was peaceful and comforting, but a bit long for a small child. The draw of the masjid was the activities that were constantly going on.

Even when there wasn't a specified program for kids, the older youth would often run some ad hoc activity for us little ones. There was one time when I must have been 4 or 5 years old, a maybe university-aged Dr. Jawad Shah taught a few of us a short song that we sang from the Imam's spot in the musallah. There was some program or activity going on, the details of which have long since faded in my memory (if I ever paid attention in the first

place), but I still remember the words of that song: Allah's your God; Allah's my God; He is One; and only One; hasn't got a partner(x2); nor a son (x2). It was sung to the tune of Frere Jacques and there were accompanying hand motions too! There was also the teenaged Sh. Muhammad Alshareef (founder of AlMaghrib Institute) who could frequently be found tapping out a rhythm on the folding wooden tables downstairs as he shared his latest Islamic rap song. If I recall correctly, there may have been beatboxing involved...



Aside from the seemingly continual activities, everything seemed to always involve food and eating together with friends. Starting from when I was young, every Saturday morning after Fajr my mom used to begin making a dozen large pizzas, from scratch, for all the students at the Saturday school that was held at Churchill High School. She would leave in the middle to drop me—and a couple of my friends she picked up along the way—at the school, before heading back home to finish making these pizzas (with our one standard-sized, home oven). She would somehow time it so she would arrive with a trunk filled with warm pizzas just in time for lunch. She was met by a line of Libyan university students, who were the Islamic school teachers at the time, waiting by the parking lot to carry all the pizzas in to serve them to the students. I have friends that still talk about that pizza!

When I was a little older, I remember hearing school friends complain about the food at their sleep-away summer camps. I could never relate. Some of us went to camp Al Hijra for the food! Aunty Zulaikha Mustapha used to make everything from scratch. She treated us to things like doubles and channa, Trinidadian paratha roti, fried chicken, fresh apple pies, pancakes, cookies and of course her famous Provision soup (the one with the dumplings), just to name a few. All these years later, my mouth still waters when I think of camp food. We grew up eating delicious foods from all corners of the world. May Allah reward the aunties and uncles who made those experiences possible!

In the mid to late '90s, some of my favourite memories are of the daily iftaars during Ramadan at the Pioneer masjid. Aunty Zulaikha, my mom, Aunty Firdaus Rahaman and Aunty Razia Rajput used to organize daily iftaars for university students. At least one of these ladies was there every night to make sure things ran smoothly, drinks were made, all the dishes were washed and put away, etc. As a young teen, I would usually go with my mom to help out at these iftaars. Aunty Razia often used to make pakora and we'd serve them, along with dates, to break the fast. I still crave pakora every Ramadan!

The logistics of making sure there was an iftaar at the masjid every night, must have been formidable. Aunty Zulaikha put a calendar up near the masjid entrance where people could sign up to provide iftaar on specific days. I think Saturday was community potluck night, but every other night of the week was open for sign-up. People were able to invite whomever they wanted to their iftaar, but they were asked to provide enough food to not only feed the people they invited, but for 40 university students as well. Aunty Zulaikha would call each person the night before their scheduled iftaar to remind them and confirm that they would be providing food on their chosen night. Sometimes the person would back out at the last minute, so she'd call up my mom and Aunty Firdaus. Between them, they would cook enough food to feed the university students that were coming. I remember my mom rushing home from work, quickly whipping up something hearty and tasty, and packing it all up to take to the masjid to feed those students. I'm sure it was much the same in Aunty Zulaikha's and Aunty Firdaus' houses.

We had many university students that were here on their own so they didn't have family members to break their fast with. These iftaars provided a place where they could go and find a sense of community, break their fast with their Muslim brothers and sisters and taste many different kinds of food over the course of the month. I remember there was one brother that was studying dentistry at the University of Manitoba. His classes often didn't finish until after Maghrib, so he would arrive late. They always put a plate of food aside for him so there would be a meal for him to break his fast, even if he didn't manage to get there until most of the dishes were washed. This is just one example of the community of aunties that was there to care for and look after everyone, even those who were just transitioning through our community; maybe especially those.

There was also the time my mom decided it would be a nice surprise for the kids if we distributed goody bags at Eid prayer. Starting when I was small, we always used to take candies to give out to all the kids who came for Eid. There were many children of newcomers to Canada or from underprivileged households, so she always wanted to

make sure all the kids got some sort of treat at the Eid prayer. One year, she had the idea that it would be really nice to give goody bags to all the kids. She spoke with Auntie Shahina Siddiqui who was able to procure funding from the MIA to prepare goody bags for all the kids that attended Eid prayer. Given a modest budget from the MIA, my mom walked into the Nutty Club, a local wholesale candy and snack distributor and used her decades of sales experience and bargaining to finagle a deal on candy for these goody bags. She continued to do this for several years. Somehow she always seemed to get some boxes of candy for free and discounts on much of the rest. She would bring home a trunk filled with candy and chocolates, which my friends and I then divided into individual goody bags in our dining room. We were usually up late the night before Eid doing this. I'm proud to see the MIA carrying on this tradition to this day!

Growing up here in the Winnipeg Muslim community had its ups and downs. Like everything else in this life, it wasn't perfect. We had the standard problems common in groups of young people, especially in the '90s; there was bullying and a pervasive cliquishness among the youth that often left kids who weren't part of the "in-crowd" feeling excluded. There were political disagreements from time to time at the organizational level in MIA. However, through it all there was a dedicated group of people quietly doing the work to instill in us a strong sense of a Muslim identity, as well as a pride in, and an understanding of, our great Faith. May Allah reward all our aunties and uncles for their many years of tireless work and dedication, laying the groundwork for the growing community we have here today.

**Safiya Thiessen was born and raised in Winnipeg. She grew up attending the Pioneer masjid, served on the University of Winnipeg Muslim Students' Association executive and has raised her 2 children in this community.*

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ARCHIVE: Community Profile

The Abas family is one of the pioneer families in Manitoba. This profile was first published in the Manitoba Muslim Magazine in 2014 in recognition of their contribution to the community. It is being reprinted in the 25th anniversary issue as a reminder that Muslim families have been a part of the fabric in Canada for almost a century now.

According to official statistics, between 1882 and 1992 a total of 215,331 immigrants from the Arab world arrived in Canada. Of these, only 7 percent arrived during the eighty years from 1882 to 1961. This first period of Arab immigration to Canada is labelled the "pioneer wave".^[1]

Pioneers have a willingness to endure hardship in order to establish their homes in new places. Ernest Abas's parents were pioneers in the real sense. His father was originally from Lebanon and his mother from Homs, Syria. They arrived as part of the 'pioneer wave' of immigrants in 1914. His parents were married and were supposed to come to North America – USA on the Titanic, but as luck would have it they didn't get tickets. They arrived in Nova Scotia in 1912 on the Cunard Steamship Liner and travelled to Minnesota where they lived for 1 1/2 years. In 1914 Ernest's father bought a ¼ section of land in Hodgson for \$5 or \$10, known as a homestead, and his wife joined him to settle down and bring up a family on their farm.

The family of 3 boys and 5 girls, with Ernest being the youngest of the boys, was raised on the farm. At that time there were only 2 other families of Arab descent. They moved away eventually and the Abas's are no longer in touch with them. The children in order of birth are: Joseph (late), Freda (late), Lilian who is 98 yrs old and currently resides in Winnipeg, Annie, Dora (late), Omer, Ernest (c. 1926) and Irene.

Mr. Abas describes the period on the farm when they were kids, growing up in a country new to their parents. He says, "Times were very difficult, there was no money but what mattered was that people helped one another. They were kind, helpful and honest." He reminisces about the people, "The John Ross and Peter Sinclair families were first and foremost in offering their help. They helped my father get started with the farm and didn't charge him anything for their time." "Our parents worked very hard and brought us up with good values – honesty and truthfulness. All of us went by what our parents taught us about religion and worshipping God. As we grew up and learned to read and write, the Quran was available for us to read and understand."

"My father made a living on the farm, my mother worked alongside him. We all went to a one room schoolhouse (grade 1-9) that was a 3 mile walk one way. The teachers I recall, because of their dedication and thorough way, were Addie Shergold and Beatrice Selden. Ms. Addie taught not only my siblings but also my nieces and nephews. She was a teacher for about 40 years."

Q: Describe your home environment growing up.

There was no electricity in Hodgson then and we had to heat our home using wood. Most people were farmers; we milked cows and grew our own vegetables. I cut wood to earn some money. Later, times became even more difficult in the 1930's when the Second World War started. I had two brothers who were old enough to join the Canadian forces during the war, but they were not accepted due to medical reasons.



I asked about what language they spoke growing up, "I speak Arabic, but now am out of practice. In fact I have never been to Syria or Lebanon, even though we have relatives there that we are in touch with." So, how did you meet your wife? "She came to visit her sister who lived here in Manitoba. That is how we met and then got married."

Q: Describe the changes you have witnessed over the years.

When I was being raised, we were thankful for what we had and it was enough but not much. Nowadays everybody is into the latest gadget and that makes for poor citizens. Our one-room school taught us discipline and honesty. Parents today do not know how to discipline their children and that is a shame. A strapping sometimes is needed; there is nothing wrong with that. Also roads are better and in general the standard of living is higher and easier.

I am amazed at all the things that Mr. Abas has done, he has a part time job as a jail guard for the RCMP, he was a Councillor for the RM of Fisher for 30 years and still collects weather data, he has been doing that for 45 years. He helps people file taxes and is also a Marriage Commissioner. I asked him about his most memorable marriage ceremony, he replied, "A couple wanted to get married on a raft floating in the middle of the lake, everyone was standing on that raft and I was trying not to fall off while performing the ceremony." Ernest has always lived on the farm and says he doesn't care for city life. The farm is home, winter is hard, but summer is gorgeous.

Family is very important to the Abas household. Ernest and Anne have 3 children and lots of grandkids. They have 2 boys Alec and Austin and a daughter Lillian. Austin is an accountant with KPMG, married to Siham and they have 4 lovely children, Selwa, Mohammed, Besama and Besam. Alec works at Fort McMurray in Alberta with his wife Ameni and they have 7 amazing kids, Murwan, Waled, Marwa, Obedia, Jeehad, Safa and Rema. Lillian is married to MT Ahmed with 3 adorable kids, Carole, Sabiha and Naceeb. Ernest and Anne are also great grandparents. Their first grandchild is Carole, who has 2 very sweet children. She is married to Jehad and they live in Winnipeg. Carole's first child Malik is their first great grandchild.

I asked him whether his kids miss the farm. He replies, "The kids left the farm at an early age and so do not miss it as it is hard work living on a farm. But the grandkids love it and visit us very often. Together we enjoy the fresh air, sitting in the cool shade and outdoor barbecue."

Q: What advice would you give to parents today?

Do not give into your children's unnecessary demands. Teach your children to respect adults, teachers and parents. Also, because everything is easier in general, you do not have to work for everything like when we were growing up, most kids do not have a sense of responsibility and parents need to teach them that with actions come responsibility and consequences.

Q: Your parting thoughts.

Take your parents advice and also use your own judgement to guide you through life. Respect and live according to the law of the land. You have freedom of worship as well.

[11](http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/a21/3) <http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/a21/3>

“Spend (in charity) out of the sustenance that We have bestowed on you before that time when death will come to someone, and he shall say: “O my Lord! If only you would grant me reprieve for a little while, then I would give in charity, and be among the righteous.”

The Holy Quran, 63:10



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