

Integrating Muslim Youth into Canada



**Canadian Council of Muslim Women
(CCMW)**

**Ottawa Community Immigrant Services
Organization (OCISO)**

Background of the Project

The Canadian Council for Muslim Women (CCMW) partnered with the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) to undertake a Project on Muslim Youth.

The project was initiated by CCMW based on feedback from women at their focus groups and conferences who identified concerns that some of their children were having difficulties adapting and integrating as well as maintaining their Muslim and ethnic identities. The concern was that the loss of identity could lead to difficulties, alienation or disengagement and would have a long-term effect on their education, health and other aspects of their lives.

Initial research supported their observations. Muslim children are not doing as well as their parents in terms of integrating into mainstream society. This phenomenon has been identified as the responsibility of Canadian society as well as the adaptation patterns of the immigrant family. The findings show that a strong sense of belonging must be fostered to achieve integration. Collaboration is required by a whole community to eradicate racism and discriminatory practices that can undermine the development of a strong identity. Given the research, CCMW concluded that there is a need to develop resources and build partnerships between educators,

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parents and social services to ensure that an effective integration process for youth can occur.

This project was designed as a pilot project and has sought to identify some of the issues facing young Muslims such as discrimination, racism and navigating multiple identities. It also sought to develop strategies that would involve the whole community including families, youth, schools and social services, to assist young people to develop a strong sense of their multiple identities as Canadian Muslims.

The Partner Organizations

Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO)

The Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) is a non-profit service agency that has been assisting immigrants and refugees with settlement issues since 1978.

OCISO is a multi-service agency with award-winning programs for students and schools, learning English, immigrant women, job seekers, victims of torture, families and communities.

Annually, more than 8,000 immigrants and refugees land in Ottawa to make it their home, with approximately 4,500 newcomer students in Ottawa's schools. OCISO serves more than 16,000 people every year.

OCISO services help newcomers to help themselves by providing information, counselling, and support.

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www.ociso.org

Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) is a national non-profit organization of believing women committed to the equality, equity and empowerment of Muslim women. CCMW promotes Muslim women's identity in the Canadian context, and encourages mutual understanding between Canadian Muslim women and women of other faiths.

CCMW was founded in 1982, when Muslim women from across Canada attended the founding conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

CCMW is a national organization with chapters across the country. The national board works to further CCMW's vision and objectives countrywide, while local chapters are active in their communities.

CCMW believes that Muslim women must develop their Muslim identity while being a part of and making positive contributions to Canadian society and that they must provide positive role models for Muslim Youth.

www.ccmw.com

Tool Kit Contents

Issues

- Identity
- Gender
- Muslim Diversity
- Racism and Discrimination
- Relationships and Family Dynamics
- Violence

Community Building

- Creating a Steering Committee
- Organizing Muslim Youth Focus Groups
- Organizing Focus Groups for Parents
- Organizing Focus Groups for Teachers
- Organizing a Muslim Youth Conference

CD of Tools and Materials

- A: Introductory Presentation on Muslim Youth Project
- B: Materials in English for Organizing Focus Groups
- C: Materials in French for Organizing Focus Groups
- D: Materials for Organizing Muslim Youth Conference
- E: Presentation on Results of Focus Groups
- F: Materials for Steering Committee
- G: Keynote Speech from Muslim Youth Conference
- H: Annotated Bibliography

Being a Facilitator for this Project

If you want to organize a workshop or conference to facilitate a dialogue with and about Muslim youth, this kit sets out a few helpful tips to bear in mind.

When you are recruiting facilitators you want to ensure that the group can really identify with them. Some suggestions would be to have facilitators who are:

- Muslim
- A woman for the girls focus group, and a man for the boys' focus group
- Somewhat close in age to the youth (e.g. in their 20's or 30's)
- Experienced in facilitating groups, and ideally experienced in facilitating youth groups, as the language and the dynamics of discussion is different among those in this age group than for adults.
- For the parents group it is important to have an adult who can relate to their issues.

If you have trouble getting a Muslim person, select someone who has lived and worked with Muslims and has a comfort with the Muslim community.

Facilitation Tips

1. **Check your assumptions at the door.** The Muslim community is very diverse. As with those of other faiths, how people choose to practice their religion and how much it informs their day-to-day decision-making varies widely. It is important to be open to the range of people who identify as Muslim.
2. **Include food for** all of the events from steering committee meetings to focus groups or conferences. Food is a way to socially connect and a sign of respect.
3. **Ensure that your logistics are attended to** so that you are not disorganized at the event. Buy your supplies well in advance. Arrive early and set up your room.
4. **Have a recorder for the discussions** so you don't lose the key points that are being shared. If you can get a camera, take pictures of the particular events. If you can videotape any skits or presentations then you have a lasting record of your event.
5. **Show respect for all points of view** even the ones you don't necessarily agree with.
6. **Deal with disrespect in a respectful way.** If someone else is judging or criticizing another participant you can

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emphasize that it is fine to have different points of view and the focus group intends to draw from the diversity of the Muslim community.

7. Remember that you are the facilitator and not the expert. The people in the room are the experts on their experience. You may have a pressing interest in the issue and even some strong opinions but it is not your time to share your thoughts. You play a key role that no one else can play. You are responsible for the process of the meeting and facilitating everyone else's participation.

8. Have ways to draw out all the participants. Facilitators have many techniques to encourage discussion, such as breaking into small groups, exercises, doing rounds so everyone is heard and managing people who dominate the discussion. When you plan your agenda, consider different techniques for different discussions. This is really important for youth who can get bored easily and prefer activities that get them up and around.

9. See the Facilitator's Guide in section B of the CD for the details on the exercises that we used.