



**Canadian Council of
Muslim Women
Le conseil canadien des
femmes musulmanes**



***MUSLIM YOUTH CANADA:
A NATIONAL FORUM ON IDENTITY,
FAITH AND
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT***

OCTOBER 31, 2009

***HOTEL NOVOTEL
3 Park Home Avenue
Toronto, Ontario***

Appreciation

***Canadian Council of Muslim Women gratefully acknowledges the
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CANADIAN COUNCIL OF MUSLIM WOMEN

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We are guided by the Quranic message of God's mercy and justice, and of the equality of all persons, and that each person is directly answerable to God.
- We value a pluralistic society and foster the goal of strength and diversity within a unifying vision and values of Canada. Our identity of being Muslim women and of diverse ethnicity and race is integral to being Canadian. As Canadians we abide by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the law of Canada.
- We believe in the universality of human rights, which means equality and social justice, with no restrictions or discrimination based on gender or race.
- We are vigilant in safeguarding, enhancing our identity, and our rights to make informed choices amongst a variety of options.
- We acknowledge that CCMW is one voice amongst many who speak on behalf of Muslim women and that there are others who may represent differing perspectives.
- We aim to be actively inclusive and accepting of diversity among ourselves, as Muslim women.

OBJECTIVES

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

P R O G R A M

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.	Registration	
9:00 - 9:10 a.m.	National Anthem Recitation of Quran Translation	Sana Khalil Ziadh Rabbani
9:10 - 9:15 a.m.	Host Chapters' Welcome	Rehana Begg Adeela Qureshi Chapter Presidents
9:15 - 9:20 a.m.	National President's Remarks	Razia Jaffer President, CCMW
9:20 - 9:30 a.m.	Introduction to Muslim Youth Canada Project Introduction to Youth Breakout Facilitators Rizwan Mohammad, Project Coordinator	
	SESSION 1 – IN MY OWN SKIN: Exploring Canadian Muslim Identities	
9:30 -10:10 a.m.	IN SEARCH OF CANADIAN MUSLIM IDENTITY Abdul-Rehman Malik	

- 10:10 – 10:40 a.m. **PANEL: IN MY OWN SKIN**
Rehana Begg
Salima Ebrahim
Humera Ibrahim
Iman Zebian
- 10:40 – 11:15 a.m. **BREAKOUT WORKSHOPS**
- 11:15 – 11:30 a.m. **HEALTH BREAK**
- 11:30 – 12:15 p.m. **BREAKOUT WORKSHOPS continue**
- 12:15 – 1:30 p.m. **PRAYERS AND LUNCH**
- 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. **SESSION 2 - FOR THE COMMON GOOD:**
Broadening the Definition of Civic Engagement
Abdul-Rehman Malik
- BREAKOUT WORKSHOPS**
- 3:00 – 3:15 p.m. **HEALTH BREAK**

- 3:15 – 4:15 p.m. **SESSION 3 – HONESTY FOR A CHANGE:
Artistic Expression as Civic Engagement**
- 3:15 – 3:30 p.m. **OH CANADA: ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
FAITH, ART, AND CHANGE
Boonaa Mohammed**
- 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. **BREAKOUT WORKSHOPS**
- 4:30 – 5:45 p.m. **SESSION 4 – TOOLS THAT WORK:
Developing a Toolkit of Resources for Change
Irfan Chaudhry, Toolkit Developer**
- 5:45 – 6:00 p.m. **FORUM CONCLUSION**
- 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. **DINNER**

**Classical Music from Azerbaijan
Live Auction**
- 9:30 p.m. **AFTER PARTY**

Executive Summary

Founded in 1982, the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (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 as Canadian Muslim women we must develop our Muslim identity while being a part of, and making a positive contribution to Canadian society, and that we must provide positive role models for Muslim youth.

Although our emphasis is on Muslim women, we are strongly committed to enhancing our families which include our children.

CCMW is grateful for the financial support of the federal Multiculturalism Program of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

As part of its vision, CCMW committed to ensuring that youth would have a meaningful role within the project by having a leadership role from the beginning. A steering committee of youth is guiding the project and had a significant role in organizing the forum. The Forum report's actions, which lead to the Strategic plan, are based on the discussion and recommendations of youth. It is their voices which one hears throughout this report.

There are clear outcomes of this project which we based on our vision for our youth. We feel strongly that we must help them to learn the value of:

1. Active engagement in both the Muslim communities and in the larger society. We acknowledge that youth must be convinced of the value and benefit of engagement because this will counteract the racism and discrimination against themselves and their fellow co-religionists, as well as enhancing their role in creating societal changes.
2. The development of a sense of belonging and self confidence so that they are involved in civic participation with an understanding of the role they can and should have in their communities and in the country.
3. The development of a strong identity, inclusive of multiple aspects such as Canadian, Muslim and their specific ethnicity or race, rather than an emphasis on only one single identity. This nuanced and complex identity can be built on the principles of multiculturalism which promote pluralism and which strengthens rather than weakens citizenship.
4. The development of leadership and communication skills, including knowledge of democratic rights and responsibilities, which will provide them with tools for active engagement.

5. Collaborating with fellow Canadians on shared issues so as to create positive change in Canadian society.

6. Volunteerism which can increase our social capital and provide youth with opportunities for education, employment, and involvement in politics.

This forum report represents the discussion of 150 participants (mostly youth) at a national strategic planning forum hosted by the CCMW in Toronto on October 31st and November 1st 2009.

The forum's intent was to bring together diverse Muslim youth so that they could have a safe and welcoming space for open discussion on issues of concern; to assist with ideas for the tool kit; and to provide ideas for the next steps of the project, including the local sessions.

The local sessions will be done in collaboration with CCMW local chapters, as well as with other organizations, so that the reach would be as inclusive as possible. These sessions are to include non-Muslims and "at risk" youth but not be limited to only these groups of people.

At the forum, youth and adults participated in a number of discussion groups and it is their suggestions which have been incorporated under the eight desired outcomes of the project.

This then led to the development of a strategic plan, as well as providing ideas for the toolkit.

The eight desired outcomes are:

1. Increasing civic participation in Canada
2. Alternative ways to find self-fulfillment
3. Leadership
4. Using the rule of law more effectively in Canada
5. Combating radicalization
6. Web 2.0 and New Media
7. Belonging and Identification with Canada
8. Strengthening self-confidence and communication skills

Introduction

Context and Background

Since the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, Canadian Muslims have been subjected to a marked increase of racism, discrimination and anti-Muslim sentiments.

This in turn has led to a sense of alienation and disengagement for some families, and youth. We have heard of many anecdotal incidents and know of the forces which are influencing some of our disillusioned youth. Instead of engaging in creating positive changes, they have been influenced by some so called Muslim leaders who are preaching a literalist and restrictive interpretation of Islam.

To combat these negative influences, our organization thinks we must present positive alternatives, such as increasing the active engagement of Muslim youth in the civic life of Canada. However this will only be successful if youth can develop a strong sense of belonging, a feeling of safety, and of empowerment. There is a critical need to develop strategies to help Muslim youth to combat harassment, racism, and discrimination on the basis of their religion.

This can be done by engaging them in a dialogue in which they themselves identify the issues and solutions, including strategies for engagement with key partners in Canada's educational, political and social systems. Technology can be a key enabler in promoting a Canadian Muslim identity that encompasses the multiple identities that Muslim youth possess – identities they can be proud of.

From March 2007 to November 2008, the CCMW implemented a pilot project in Ottawa, in partnership with the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, and with schools and other community organizations. This project's purpose was to identify some of the issues facing young Muslims with a focus on navigating multiple identities, dealing with racism and discrimination. The pilot project sought to develop strategies that would involve the whole community including youth, their families, educators, and social service providers to assist young people to develop a strong sense of their Canadian Muslim identity as one that is inclusive of their multiple identities, e.g. racial, cultural, linguistic identities.

We built on this pilot project, and in April 2009, this project –Muslim Youth Canada – MY CANADA, was initiated with funding from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Multiculturalism Program.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the Muslim Youth Canada Project (MY CANADA) is to develop a coordinated strategy that will provide opportunities for Muslim youth to:

- a) Strengthen their Canadian Muslim identity (inclusive of multiple identities) and
- b) Increase their participation in the civic life of their local communities.

Although the project has a research dimension, it is not a research project. It is a project designed to promote positive civil action. The project will not be delivering social services but rather educational materials and web tools that serve to open up more spaces for a dialogue amongst Muslim youth on what it means to be Canadian Muslims, and online resources that can support an increase of their civic engagement.

Project Structure

There are 3 major stages of the MY CANADA Project (focusing on but not limited to the following activities):

Phase 1:

The development of the project itself – developing various terms of reference, hiring of the coordinator, consultant, and the creation of a steering committee of 9 members comprising youth, the partner organizations and the CCMW. A work plan was initiated and the steering committee, under the guidance of the CCMW board, and with the coordinator, will lead the development and oversight of all elements of the project.

Phase 2:

To ensure that a collective and unified approach will be taken, Muslim youth will work with fellow Canadians of other cultures and faiths, in their local communities.

To initiate the project, a 2 day major Muslim youth "Strategic Planning Forum" in Toronto will be held that will bring together 100 Muslim youth and 70 CCMW chapter delegates from 12 different Canadian cities.

The intention of this Forum is to gather youth from across the country in one setting. This will provide them with a safe space for open and honest discussions on various issues, leading to the development of an internal work plan and a set of guidelines that will be used in the future stages of this project.

Phase 3:

The final major stage of the project will involve 17 inter-faith, inter- culture sessions or activities for youth to take place across Canada, led by the youth who attended the Forum along with regional partners. The partnerships with YOUCAN, the Canadian Centre for Diversity and the Afghan Women's

Organization will be initiated immediately after the Forum to help support the youth to develop and organize these sessions with local CCMW chapters.

Other local organizations will also be approached to assist in the local sessions. YOUCAN already has a well-developed training program to teach youth conflict resolution, peace building, and inter-cultural dialogue.

The 17 sessions will be presented in the following places:

Greater Toronto Area - 4 sessions
Ottawa - 2 sessions
Montreal - 2 sessions (1 of which will be in French)
Waterloo/Wellington - 1 session
London - 1 session
Niagara Region - 1 session
Windsor - 1 session
Winnipeg - 1 session
Calgary - 1 session
Edmonton - 1 session
Vancouver - 1 session
Atlantic Canada - 1 session

These sessions will take place in schools and community centers and will involve an estimated 20-30 youth at each one, comprised of diverse backgrounds (inclusive of other faiths). The participants will be identified through publicity and marketing campaigns as well as word of mouth referrals aimed at those youth who are considered at-risk, but not specifically designed for only youth at-risk.

Project Outputs

1. 50 toolkits produced as a result of the Forum, will be provided for the youth in order to help them deliver the appropriate messages during the public sessions they will lead.
2. A web based media site will be developed by the youth on the already existing website of the CCMW as an aid in delivering messages that counter literalist and narrow views of Islam.
3. At the end of the project there will be a compendium of stories and experiences by Muslim youth about their identities and what helps them navigate and cope with some of the problems within Canadian society.
4. As a result of the steering committee meetings, a guidebook will be developed for the youth, establishing a proper work plan for the future stages of the project.

5. Included with the toolkit, participants will receive 50 videos (one per toolkit) produced as a result of the Forum that will act as a training guide to develop approaches and strategies to combat radicalization.
6. Throughout the evaluation process, surveys will be administered and delivered to all participants.
7. The strategic planning forum will include 100 youth participants, primarily from communities with a high concentration of Muslim youth at the secondary and post-secondary levels. The communities include Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal, Calgary, Vancouver, Waterloo, London, Niagara, Windsor, Edmonton, and the Maritimes.
8. There will be 17 public sessions at educational institutions, held by the youth mentors (or "youth leaders") who have attended the Strategic Planning Forum in Toronto. Leaders at the sessions will mainly include students, teachers, principals, but may also be attended by elected officials, and social service providers. Participants will include Muslim youth from the local community.
9. In order to involve youth from the beginning of the project a steering committee will be developed comprised of CCMW members, representatives of the partner organizations, and youth themselves between 16-25 years old. This committee will meet to discuss and develop a roadmap that will be used to guide every stage of this project.

Forum Report

To ensure that the next steps are guided by the youth's own voices, we have organized the Forum report with their discussion/comments and suggestions, under the headings of the project's Outcomes. These will also form the basis of the tool kit.

The Muslim youth at the workshops made many useful suggestions of how to participate in civic life, we have incorporated an abbreviated listing of these actions for future implementation through the tool kit.

Some comments are that youth should use their own voices for change; learn to negotiate their multiple identities; accept the fluidity and complexity of identity; and that they should determine their identity rather than it being explained by others.

The Project's Desired Outcomes are:

1. An Increase the Civic Participation of Muslim Youth in Canada
2. Provide Alternative Ways for Muslim Youth to Find Self-Fulfillment

3. Gain Leadership Skills
4. Understand How to Use the Rule of Law More Effectively in Canada
5. Learn New Strategies to Combat Radicalization of Muslim Youth
6. Learn How to Use Web 2.0 and New Media to Engage Muslim Youth
7. Gain a Sense of Belonging and Identification with Canada
8. Develop Stronger Self-Confidence and more Effective Communication Skills

1. Increase the Civic Participation of Muslim Youth in Canada

Like some other Canadian youth, some Muslims growing up in Canada have expressed apathy towards, and a lack of knowledge about, civic institutions in Canada. Others have expressed indifference toward civic engagement, defined as interacting more often and more meaningfully with others in respect of civic issues. Some youth also experience difficulty understanding how that engagement can be meaningful and fulfilling for them as individuals.

However, many of the youth at the CCMW's youth forum demonstrated by means of their resumes, as well as sharing their experiences with their peers, that they are dedicated to creating positive social change. Many of them are volunteering in their communities to address social and civic issues. Many reported coming to the forum to understand how to diversify and broaden their civic engagement, and how to more effectively coordinate with others across lines of faith and race to participate in the civic life of their communities.

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action

Values of Civic Participation:

By our engagement, we can create a more just and peaceful society, and can address social issues such as poverty and racism.

It empowers us with a sense of control, a sense of belonging and a sense of accomplishment.

It is part of our faith; it encourages us to develop a sense of responsibility for oneself and others, and allows for solidarity with our other fellow citizens.

Civic participation includes involvement with community organizations, service providers, scouts, neighbourhoods, schools, and workplaces.

It reinforces Canadian values of civic service within the country and around the world.

We can be role models by our actions for other Muslims and non-Muslims.

Find your passion and turn it into a civic project.

Look at humanity as a whole, the shared values of Islam and Canada -not just as Muslims helping Muslims – don't alienate people.

Activities in local communities can include:

Internal actions to create changes within the Muslim communities by:

Discussing the Islamic values we want to share amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims;

Finding scholars who teach an inclusive perspective on Islam, and to create leaders within the Muslim communities;

Addressing the unwelcoming environment of many mosques to inclusion of diversity, esp. of women;

Bringing about change requires engaging the community by attending the mosques and making our presence known, including organizing open-houses and hosting inter-faith discussions that lead to interfaith cooperation in activities aimed at positive social change;

Seeking alternative safe and welcoming spaces;

Facilitating inter and intra faith dialogue;

Challenge power structures within Muslim communities and in mainstream society as well;

Correcting misperceptions of Islam and Muslims

External actions can include:

Volunteer to demonstrate faith in action: e.g. organizing/volunteering at soup kitchens, making Ramadan baskets for hungry non-Muslims as well as Muslims;

Support those that are taking action;

Bring artists and sports activities into schools;

Write, establish websites and produce documentaries,

Find common ground and put forward a positive way of life and general universal messages as opposed to Muslim-specific ones;

Set an example to youth and other community members and correct misconceptions;

Organize social education projects/events and get Muslims and non-Muslims involved in the community to care and take actions together;

Engage as Muslims to make the community better at least in part by joining political parties;

Engage in advocacy;

Engage with the larger society by raising funds for mainstream causes and not just Islamic ones. Give to all, not just Muslims;

Value people for who they are (not according to how similar they are to you)

Develop more effective listening skills to apply to dialogue across lines of faith, race, gender, and age;

Participate in grassroots movements already underway;

Engage politicians -- learn from them but educate them as well;

Abandon victim syndrome and explore ways to engage in constructive conversation, even when under attack;

Let the foundation of any work rest on principles of sincere commitment, knowledge, determination, and courage;

Engage in effective networking professionally, navigating systems, institutions, and processes towards clear objective;

Rock the boat and understand how small actions can make a big impact;

Constructive and effective civic engagement requires service to the civil society which is broader/not limited to one particular organization or another;

2. Provide Alternative Ways for Muslim Youth to Find Self-Fulfillment

Given the racial, cultural, and sectarian diversity of young Canadian Muslims - further complicated by a diverse spectrum of conservative, moderate, liberal, progressive, or radical attitudes - self-fulfillment is pursued in many ways and takes many forms.

To work towards self fulfillment, we have to have a personal mission and guiding principles for our lives. This allows us to set goals to achieve the purpose and give meaning to our actions.

Self-fulfillment or self actualization – defined as contentment or happiness from personal work, initiative or talent – can be found in many forms, including the arts. This was the focus of a keynote speech and a workshop which emphasized this form of self expression. Sadly, among some Muslims, the recent prohibitions against forms of arts such as music, dance, and inter-gender activities, is limiting this form of self expression. This is in contradiction to the rich history of arts in the Muslim world.

The majority of youth at the Forum stated that faith – Islam and its teachings- formed the basis of their lives. This means that self fulfillment can be the realization of these teachings.

The values of Islam are belief in God, in charity, and helping others through social justice actions. A comment which reverberated for many was the “Islam defines the characteristics of our lives.” How do we incorporate our faith into our lives in ways which lead to greater self fulfillment and greater participation?

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action:

The young people at the workshop suggested this self-fulfillment could be found in many ways including:

We are facing questions which the Prophet or earlier Muslim societies did not face, and some things are not explicitly stated in the Quran. This means we must use ijihad – critical thinking;

Focus not only on being good Muslims in terms of ritual practices but in being good human beings – ethical, just, merciful and compassionate;

Try to determine what kind of artistic expression strengthens Canadian Muslim identity and what does not;

It may be more difficult for some hijabi women to go out and perform because of the stereotyping;

Be more self-reflexive so we can determine what artistic expression is natural and necessary and in harmony with Islam, and considering what is “Islamic” about some arts and not others;

Try to determine what kind of artistic expression strengthens Canadian Muslim identity and what does not;

Choose a career you would like, in keeping with your values for your life. The example of Boona Mohamed who is a musician but who defines his own boundaries by not performing in venues where alcohol is served;

Encourage our struggling artists by letting them know they have an audience;

Understand more clearly what we mean by art in order to effectively use art as a tool for social change;

Prepare ourselves for criticism from all around, if we use art as a medium to express ourselves;

Some parents/elders don't understand and their concerns need to be addressed respectfully. Involve parents and elders to get them to embrace and support change because they are a vital part of that change;

Expose the Muslim community to our artistic works in a respectful way and when trust is built to experiment some more;

Consider how to engage at-risk youth and new immigrants through artistic expression by getting around language barriers and by using visual means to gain their contributions;

Seek out and engaging at-risk youth through art forms that appeal to them, like spoken word;

Create spaces for youth to express themselves artistically and encouraging Sunday school kids to compete in art contests, e.g. for designing Eid cards;

Reach out to private schools and full-time Islamic schools to organize school trips to museums to view art of other civilizations but also of Muslim history;

Teach kids about Islamic architecture, and encouraging them to study art, theatre, literature;

Obtain translations of poetry of various writers from diverse Muslim traditions, and donating the translations to school and public libraries;

Invite local artists to teach workshops to the local community;

Learn how to perform drama and comedy as great tools to bring change in community and how to set-up a theatre group or a screenwriters group;

Form book clubs for literary discussions on Malcolm X, Islam, and women, for example;

Be a role model in demonstrating how following Islamic values and involvement in the arts can be self fulfilling, and be part of a Muslim identity;

There was discussion about making documentaries of Muslim youth, and the problems of organization, finances etc;

The tool kit will have a video of interviews with some Muslim youth;

3. Gain Leadership Skills

Some of the forum participants who were national youth delegates or "youth leaders" had experienced at least some leadership skills training in elementary and secondary school, if not at their institutions of higher learning. They can form a pool of mentors who can train youth in their local communities with the skills they possess. By teaching other youth what they know, they can sharpen their own leadership skills;

What are leadership skills and what makes a person a leader that other may see as a role model?

There are some "leaders" who should not be followed, so how does one distinguish characteristics of those who could be emulated? What are the qualities?

A person of moral integrity and standards; be motivated to do good, is compassionate and has the interest of others as a primary focus, be an effective communicator, instil confidence in others, have the ability to inspire, and be a role model. A true leader does not preach hatred, intolerance or arrogance.

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action:

How to integrate religion/faith principles/virtues into our communities?

For example, what are we talking about when we talk about "Islam"? Explain it in its most broad, general, and inclusive form;

There are few leaders who appeal to all kinds of Muslims;

We are also responsible, as we choose to conform to stereotypes;

Sometimes we lean too much on others to define who we are;

As we are the leaders in this project, we need to learn the skills;

Leadership training is needed prior to holding the local sessions;

Showcase the similarities between core Islamic values and core Canadian values and incorporate these into the project. For example the CCMW Guiding Principles can be adapted in more detail for this project;

Let's not reinvent the wheel; there exists tips on project management & how to organize local community sessions;

We should develop the toolkit without reinventing the wheel on project management and organization of local community sessions. What other partners can contribute existing resources in an adapted form?

Develop strategies for how to capture our target audiences, with clear straightforward guidelines to follow. Include strategies for how to address community specific concerns;

Strategies to train others, for capacity building, and identify mentors/volunteers to assist youth with "Public speaking" skills; "Physical Education" activities, organizing sports tournaments; communicating civic values and the importance of civic engagement through application of good sportsmanship to wider community, or activities such as videos, spoken word, theatre;

Role models and mentors who understand the value of social capital (people and other assets) in our own communities, and help others develop this;

List of key Muslim and other community organizations that can provide support;

Some specific suggestions for inclusion in the tool kit:

MY CANADA PROJECT "swag" (promotional and educational materials)

MY CANADA PROJECT fact sheet and scripts to use in different situations

Fundraising tools and people who are experienced fundraisers

Identify mentors to advise youth about effectively creating budgets for local session organization

Money (approx. \$500/per session) "No money, no honey": money is an important resource but it shouldn't limit our ideas

4. Understand How to Use the Rule of Law More Effectively in Canada

Youth in pre-forum focus groups, as well as those at the Forum, gave positive feedback about learning how to "use the rule of law more effectively" when it was understood in the context of empowering them to more effectively combat racism and discrimination and exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities.

Young Muslims at the forum were not asked to directly address the question of how to use the rule of law more effectively, but some of them nevertheless expressed a desire to learn more about how they can combat racism (especially discrimination in the workplace) by legal means. Some Muslim youth indicated that they are poorly prepared with inadequate knowledge of their democratic rights and responsibilities to contest discrimination when faced with it. A question worth pursuing with youth is how do we demonstrate active acceptance of others' differences?

Sessions can be held regarding the legal framework under which citizens live and are granted equality under the law. Canada is a signatory to many international agreements which safeguard the rights of citizens. This would include the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which can form the discussion on rights and responsibilities of individuals.

Organizations like YOUCAN and others which train youth in peace-building and conflict-resolution will be engaged as key partners to facilitate this process based on their experience and established best practices.

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action:

The project tool kit should have practical suggestions regarding information/discussion sessions on the Canadian legal framework, the rights and responsibilities of citizens and how to effectively use the laws to create positive change;

Hold local workshops with other community organizations and politically active individuals regarding creating changes within the rules of law. For youth they need to understand that this does not mean blind acceptance of how things are, and if there are injustices then social activism can change the situation;

Parents and communities' elders need to learn about the Canadian legal framework and to teach youth to think with their conscience.

5. Learn New Strategies to Combat Radicalization of Muslim Youth

The best alternative to counter the factors that could lead to radicalization is to provide positive and attractive alternatives such as this project is aiming to do.

There is a great deal of idealism amongst this age group - 16-25, and it is critical to acknowledge their idealism and passion to fight against injustices. What needs to be discussed with them is how to re-direct this motivation into constructive rather than destructive actions. There are many groups who welcome youth and develop the sense of belonging to a specific group.

There are many social justice issues which require actions and resolutions, without violence or hatred.

One suggestion from Muslim youth interviewed so far has been to sharpen their persuasive and critical thinking skills to dismantle the ideology, orally and in writing, of young Muslim bloggers and activists with radical ideas so that there is a strong presence in schools among their peers who can counter the kind of ideological thinking that leads to radical extremism in its most primitive stages.

Another suggestion offered by some youth is to simply draw the attention of their peers to other priorities they might have. If they are young and unemployed, to help them seek gainful employment in rewarding work that is beneficial to the social fabric of the community.

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action:

On Sep 11th, nineteen Muslims made a big impact on this world. There are more than nineteen of us in this room and we can also make a big impact;

Islam changes reactively: "911 helped me realize who I am as a Muslim."

Define what it means to be a Canadian Muslim. We shouldn't be defensive, we should be proud. We need to put into practice the Qur'anic line that God created different tribes so we can know one another;

What are the contributions Muslims can make to Canada to address any issues which negatively impact on minorities/majority. Get involved to create changes;

To understand an issue, we have to find the source of the problem, ignorance is the problem, and knowledge is the solution;

If we were civically engaged would we still have so much against us?

What are the successful methods to captivate/build audiences to hear our messages?

How to win the hearts of the vocal minority;

We are also responsible, as we choose to conform to stereotypes;

We subject ourselves to beliefs if we feel people have assumptions of us, and this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy;

We need to be more proactive in addressing issues in our community. Too often we are reactive. We can improve our ability to proactively address issues by better educating ourselves about the issues certain issues, e.g. violence;

There are issues within the Muslim communities and these should also be addressed. Some Muslims are very judgemental and will not interact with others who are not considered "Muslim enough." Ethnic differences often complicate ability of Muslims to relate to each other;

Muslim communities are alienating our own Muslims, including youth. Instead there should be actions taken by community members to empower young males to be more comfortable in the community and participate in it;

We must reach young males on the edges of our society by being "conduits" of mercy, i.e. organizing and inviting men to participate in merciful activities;

Seek opportunities throughout the community. In school environment, women can be more active and speak about their beliefs and who they are. Raise our voices of moderation in the mosque;

Cultivate imams/leaders from amongst ourselves (no more imports please)

Labelling has bad connotations, concern about not being boxed in by categories or labels. We need to open the dialogue so as to avoid polarization, and be ambassadors in our community to build bridges to create acceptance;

Elders need to teach youth to think with their consciences;

Persevere and believe in yourself.

"At-Risk" Youth

Ensure that local sessions are held in geographic areas where these youth are comfortable and feel safe to discuss their issues;

Build trust by spending time, offer concrete resources, and provide alternative activities that can appeal to them where they are -- e.g. at their schools, introduce them to/involve them in other activities taking place in their local neighbourhoods/communities;

A key is to have a safe place of contact for them and for you;

Explore community centres and alternative venues with this in mind.

Understand what separates those who have opposing views to your own from those who are your allies;

Connect with people by talking to them in a way they can relate (sometimes necessary to change the language to get them to listen and persuade them to become allies)

Add to the Toolkit scenarios that include conservative people and issues and how to tackle them.

6. Learn How to Use Web 2.0 and New Media to Engage Muslim Youth

While web 2.0 technologies like Facebook, YouTube, Blogs, and Twitter are used by young Muslims mainly for entertainment and social networking (and occasionally for educational) purposes, relatively few young Muslims interviewed reported understanding:

(a) How to use web 2.0 technologies to bring about social change of benefit to them, their families, friends and communities, and

(b) How to communicate outside of their peer groups (e.g. with their parents, teachers, or other representatives of civic institutions by means of these technologies).

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action:

Tool kit should address the issues identified at the forum

Work with media organizations that are alternatives to mainstream media that can express our perspective;

Want a road map on how to create an independent media organization;

We need to understand the negative effects of preconceptions;

How do the media distort our identity?

Young people in our communities are better skilled and better equipped today. For example, Boonaa's approach is more effective for outreach because his performances are on YouTube;

How to create media on our own for our local Muslim community - update/adapt material from existing materials from CCMW and draw on existing material from specialist organizations like CAIR-CAN;

Require media relations training - modules on how to conduct an interview, how to handle being interviewed, how to write a persuasive article;

Tips on how to effectively use web 2.0 like Facebook and YouTube as tools for social change;

Create a big website, or a blog that links interested groups, or develop a web portal;

Compile a roster of delegates to be shared on the web and include with it an activity profile of each delegate;

Use Google Groups to organize local sessions planning;

Use an e-Forum to share thoughts and stories and post questions and challenges;

Use blogs, maybe in a Blog Ring set up in Word Press. Use Facebook for networking;

Set up a website for the project. Use a wiki tool for the project;

Create an online hub for workshop organization, toolkit modules, and to compose documents collaboratively

7. Gain a Greater Sense of Belonging and Identification with Canada

The youth participants reported varying degrees of belonging and identification with Canada ranging from strong to weak. It is obvious from the depth of discussion that the issue of identity and belonging is a crucial one to be addressed.

The discussion demonstrates the complexity of defining identity, as felt by each person. There are manifold factors that influence identity and sense of belonging, such as acceptance by the majority, racism, the immigration/adaptation experiences, and the celebration of multiple identities.

Does this intense focus on identity inexorably lead to a sense of belonging to Canada?

There is another powerful element in our identities, and that is the loyalty and caring for the global Community of Muslims – the Ummah. This has a strong pull and can create tension between the faith community and a country.

Some said that Muslims can be comfortable in many environments because of a shared faith. Some participants observed “I like the concept of a global soul,” referring to Abdul-Rehman Malik's discussion of the concept of the "global soul" which can be at home in many different places.

However another felt that “A universal culture of Islam does not exist. We are products of our experiences and the places/environments we lived in. Therefore our perception of Islam is subjective. There has never been a universal Islamic culture throughout history.”

“It's more important to identify yourself with your faith than your country. For instance when we go to hajj we all wear the same clothes, it is more powerful to identify with one main group –Islam- than with a smaller divided group –country.

Too many immigrants are too aware and concerned about the issues of their countries of origin and show little interest in issues here. Here, Boonaa Mohammed's observation about barriers related to language and education in his poem "Green Card" was taken by some participants to provide a motive for compassion and love to be shown for immigrants to Canada and for a lesson to be learned from them in not being afraid to take a chance.

"As Muslims we should support each other."

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action:

It is important to define the terms. Being a Muslim doesn't have to contradict other identities. We have to understand then what are our sources are from which to define this identity. "I can choose to be both Canadian and Muslim."

Identity is an operational definition, there can be conflicts in one's own identity, and identity can also be ambiguous. The concept of identity is dynamic;

Do we identify ourselves, are we identified? Do we accept these definitions that are put upon us?

If you identify yourself with the principles this country was founded on, you have a Canadian identity;

There's a fear of having multiple identities, fear of immigration and dilution of identity;

Is there conflict between an Islamic religious identity versus cultural identity?

Multiple identities are healthier than a single identity because they subvert people's ability to categorize and discriminate against the;

Question of "where are you from" implies that you are not from "here" or from Canada;

Canadian history – vast immigration experience, Irish and Italians became part of the country eventually and you become accepted (differences don't disappear);

Where you are from originally doesn't take away from your Canadian identity;

"I don't feel Canadian with other Canadians."

We are Canadian – we have a passport and we are Muslim and we don't have a choice (the label is forced on us at times);

We seem to be ambiguous about Canadian identity inside of Canada, but our understanding solidifies outside of Canada (we seem to know what it means to be Canadian outside of Canada);

Why can't we work for justice and be human – why does identity of Canadian Muslim have to be out there (why justification) - get to action;

Sept 11/01 made many of us realize what our identity is as Muslims;

The crimes of 9/11 and the way they have been covered in the media have challenged our ability to identify ourselves on our own terms;

Racism can weaken our ability to maintain strong plural identities, but so can discrimination within the Muslim communities affect our identity formation;

Wearing or not wearing the hijab - a visible marker of being Muslim – can affect identity formation. “I feel forced to discuss issues.” “Canadians don’t identify me as a Canadian because I wear the hijab.”

We can no longer stand on the shoulders of our parents; we have to learn more than the identity and belonging with one culture;

“I am proud to be Canadian, to disprove myths of ‘people of the West.’”

“Our differences are what make us Canadian.”

What separates and defines us is very different for each person;

Canadians don’t have a look, language – it is a work in process, maybe in the future we will have a look, but not right now;

Canada does not treat all its citizens equally. However, it is the 4th best country in the world and there are strategic values in identify ourselves as Canadians;

Canadian Muslim identity is not stated daily, but in reaction to other labels;

The disconnect is between our efforts to better our wellbeing and the lack of acceptance from other Canadians;

“I recognize how much this country is giving me and on the other side how much it is taking from me.”

Integration is not a new concept; it is similar to that of the time of the Prophet, when he had to migrate from Mecca to Medina where the societies were so different. He embraced the difference in culture;

It is un-Islamic to be ungrateful to Canada and the opportunities it has provided us;

Identities evolve over time...can’t happen over night!

At times difficult to identify within the Muslim communities because they can be judgemental based simply on the clothes someone wears — not Muslim enough;

Abdur Rehman talked of being alienated in Mecca during the hajj. This demonstrates the diversity and issues within the Muslim communities;

People with mixed backgrounds are now becoming more of a norm;

We are also responsible, as we choose to conform to stereotypes;

Muslims need to figure out who/what we are, and we need to be part of society and stop being divided and create a collective identity;

In Montreal it is different. In Montreal / Quebec – you are seen as a Somali who lives in Quebec or Canada, however in Ottawa there is more a sense of Canadian-ness and belonging. Once I moved to Ottawa, I felt more Canadian. I

also felt more of a connection to the Somalis all over Canada because we have lots of similarities;

8. Develop Stronger Self-Confidence and more Effective Communication Skills

The majority of the young Muslims - encountered in pre-Forum focus, as well as at the forum – are fluent in Canada's national languages of English and/or French. In addition, many were fluent in a heritage language, spoken with family.

At the Forum, the youth were confident to express their views and were not hesitant in disagreeing with each other. However, many youth reported lack of confidence to effectively communicate orally and in writing in more formal situations like a media interview and others kinds of formal communication.

Participants' Discussion and Suggestions for Action:

Need the means to communicate with each other;

How to captivate/build audiences?

How do we address incorrect perceptions of Islam by non-Muslims that are reasonable?

How do we respond to questions by non-Muslims in a way that is consistent and coherent?

Participating in our society requires us to move beyond our comfort zones;

We have to speak the lingo of the culture today;

Become the vocal majority;

Would like assistance to develop a creative writing workshop;

The request is for more learning/training in effective communication skills, along with facilitation skills, as part of the leadership training.

Tools that Work: Developing a Toolkit of Resources for Change

Irfan Chaudhry, Toolkit Developer

The final session of the forum was a presentation by the media consultant on possible ideas to include in the toolkit. Below is a narrative of the ideas presented to the youth at the forum.

The first aspect of the tool kit will serve as a guide for facilitators at their local sessions. This would be a physical guide book that the facilitator can refer to in order to make sure they are going to have an effective session. It can be thought of as leadership training 101 – a training package for the youth who will go back from the forum and train fellow youth to become effective and creative leaders. The idea is to give facilitators a “how to” guide in having a successful session, but also have the youth create something meaningful that can be shared on the MY CANADA web portal (which will be accessible to everyone).

Additionally, the guidebook will serve as a means to motivate and encourage the youth at the local sessions to think critically and address some of the concerns that might come up at the local sessions in a creative way.

This toolkit will rely on encouraging youth to use new media and web 2.0 technologies to encourage them to “let out” what they are thinking about in terms of the various issues they may be facing in their home communities. What they create will also be shared on a national (and hopefully) international level.

The steering committee suggests the following things that might be included in the guidebook as a way to encourage youth to utilize new media and web 2.0 technologies in a creative way giving us the broadcast power available to us as a result of these things:

Media Literacy:

How to write a persuasive op-ed/blog/article for a media outlet.

How to give or perform an effective an effective interview.

How to issue an effective Press Release.

Storytelling:

How to effectively tell your story- either in written form or in a photo essay.

Tips on how to make and use short films as a way to address issues of identity, faith, belonging, civic engagement.

Finally, how to use social networking sites such as Twitter, Face book, YouTube, etc, as a way to gather momentum for a cause and actively engage people to get involved in different issues.

The second component of the toolkit will be a video that is created to supplement what will be discussed at the local sessions. The general framework will be to showcase individuals or groups who are positive examples of civic engagement, leadership, and the other areas this project will consider. This video will encourage discussion at the local sessions (through guided activities which will be included in the facilitator's guide), and hopefully inspire youth to implement similar programs in their community, or understand the lives of other Canadian Muslim youth.

After the presentation, the youth leaders at the forum were given an opportunity to comment on what they heard and also offered insight into what they would like to see in a toolkit. After reviewing the ideas expressed by the forum participants in their own voices, the following structure of the toolkit evolved into the following:

STRUCTURE OF TOOLKIT

1. Facilitation 101

A guide for the youth leaders at the local sessions. A quick reference guide they can rely on in case they get stuck or need help in motivating discussion. This could serve as a supplement to the training received at the forum, and the follow up training sessions planned in Montreal, Calgary, and Toronto.

2. Media Literacy Training and Activities

From my reading of the comments from the forum, below are the most common elements I found youth wanting guidance/support/ideas/training on how to:

- write an effective blog/newspaper article
- interview skill/media relations training
- film making to get your message out there
- develop an alternative voice (through an alternative press)
- spoken word poetry/poetry workshop
- non profit budgeting training

Using this strategy, the toolkit, combined with the video, will address many of the issues discussed at the forum dealing with identity, faith and civic engagement. The youth at the forum expressed an interest in having personal stories captured in the video component of the toolkit, and this is something the steering committee and CCMW board feel will be a valuable component of the project and will compliment the guidebook well. The eight expected outcomes and indicators of the project (mentioned on page 8 of the report) will serve as the framework for the toolkit, and will guide the content for what is included in the final toolkit and video.

The forum proved invaluable in terms of comments and suggestions provided by the youth participants and their voices have directly influenced the direction that the development of the video and toolkit component of the project will take.

Strategic Plan: Implementation of Next Steps

Period: November 2009 to February 2011

The national board, the project coordinator, the project's steering committee and the toolkit developer will continue to provide direction and guidance to youth leaders and local CCMW chapter members in the implementation of the next steps of the project based on the issues identified and actions suggested in the forum report.

Based on the issues identified and the strategies explored at the forum, and with consultation from the key stakeholders (see appendix) the toolkit will be developed from January to August 2010.

To meet the need identified by youth at the forum for further training in skills of leadership, communication and facilitation required for them to lead their local workshops, three leadership skills training workshops will be held in Montreal, Toronto and Calgary for youth from eastern, central and western Canada respectively.

Following participation in a leadership skills training workshop, youth leaders and the CCMW's local chapter members will engage in planning their local sessions. Participants in these local sessions or workshops will evaluate the workshops. The end results of the local workshops will be reported in a workshop report submitted to the project coordinator by January 2011.

More details of the implementation of next steps after the national forum which have taken place and will take place are described below:

Activity	Timeline	Outcome	Responsibility
1. Interim Report to Multiculturalism Program	OCT - NOV 2009	Submitted 22-NOV-09	Project Coordinator, Executive Director, CCMW national board
2. Compilation, drafting, revision, and production of the forum report to be distributed in January 2010	NOV - DEC 2009	First and interim drafts produced	Project Coordinator, Executive Director, CCMW national board
3. Forum report review	20-DEC 2009	Revisions suggested	Steering Committee Project Coordinator and Executive Director

<p>4. Completion of forum report</p> <p>5. Organizing of meetings in Greater Toronto Area, London, and Niagara Falls to identify and recruit additional youth leaders</p> <p>6. Communication to local chapters and youth leaders about next steps</p> <p>7. Meetings in GTA, London and Niagara Falls held</p> <p>8. MYCSC meeting to review coordination of youth leaders, toolkit development plan, and plan for leadership skills workshop</p> <p>9. <i>Leadership Training Sessions held</i> The training session will provide youth leaders with templates for their local workshop report (including workshop follow-up action plan) and evaluation of workshop participants</p>	<p>DEC 2009</p> <p>DEC 2009</p> <p>05-JAN 2010</p> <p>From 06-JAN 2010 to 12-JAN 2010</p> <p>14-FEB 2010</p> <p>21-FEB 27 or 28-FEB 13 or 14-MAR 2010</p>	<p>Completed 05-JAN-10</p> <p>Meetings scheduled</p> <p>Google group to facilitate communication activated</p> <p>Additional youth leaders selected</p> <p>Feedback for toolkit plan and leadership workshop</p> <p>Youth leaders equipped with requisite skills to lead their local workshops</p>	<p>Project Coordinator and Executive Director with CCMW local chapters</p> <p>Project Coordinator and Executive Director with CCMW local chapters and youth</p> <p>Project Coordinator and Executive Director with CCMW local chapters and youth in GTA, London, and Niagara</p> <p>Project Coordinator, Toolkit Developer and Steering Committee</p> <p>CCMW Board and project steering committee</p>
<p>LOCAL PLANNING</p> <p>Refer to <i>Appendix C</i> on roles and responsibilities of project coordinator, project steering committee, CCMW national board, their local chapters, and youth leaders with respect to local planning</p>			
<p>10. Review of local planning session template (provided in hardcopy at the national forum and in electronic copy afterwards) as well as forum report by youth leaders who meet with local CCMW chapters to engage in preliminary planning of local workshops based on the forum report</p>	<p>JAN - FEB 2010</p>	<p>Forum report serves to sustain momentum of youth to prepare to do follow-up work</p>	<p>Youth leaders and CCMW local chapters</p>
<p>11. Project coordinator to provide support to youth leaders and chapters by means of project documents and other resources to help youth and chapters understand the purpose, structure, activities and desired outcomes of the project clearly. Records will be kept of local meetings between youth and CCMW chapter members and copied to the project coordinator</p>	<p>JAN 2010 and ongoing</p>	<p>Youth empowered to take further ownership of the project</p>	<p>Project Coordinator, youth leaders and CCMW local chapters</p>

TOOLKIT DEVELOPMENT			
<p>12. Content Identification</p> <p>A) Identification of contributors of toolkit content, e.g. speakers, project partners</p> <p>B) Review of other models of similar toolkits by project coordinator and toolkit developer</p> <p>C) Project steering committee review forum report to make recommendations for content of toolkit</p>	JAN - FEB 2010	Content confirmed based on forum report, contributors, Research by Tool Kit Developer.	Project Coordinator, Toolkit Developer, CCMW Board, steering committee, youth leaders and CCMW local chapters
13. Drafting of toolkit	MAR 2010	First draft of toolkit produced	Toolkit Developer, Contributors, Project Coordinator
14. Consultation on the Draft of the Toolkit Submission of preliminary and interim drafts of the toolkit to the project steering committee with Project Coordinator and the national board, and local chapters and youth leaders	APR - MAY 2010	Feedback on toolkit received	Project Coordinator, Toolkit Developer, CCMW Board, steering committee, youth leaders and CCMW local chapters
15. Revision of Toolkit	JUN - JULY 2010	Toolkit revised	Toolkit Developer, Project Coordinator
16. Finalization of the Toolkit	Mid-AUG 2010	Toolkit produced in hardcopy	Toolkit Developer, Project Coordinator, Executive Director
17. Youth leaders to participate in a toolkit webinar (online seminar) on how to use the project toolkit in the local workshops. All volunteers preparing to use the toolkit in the local workshop sessions should participate in a toolkit webinar.	Mid-AUG to mid-SEP 2010	Users of toolkit guided how to use it effectively	Toolkit Developer, Project Coordinator
18. Youth leaders hold local workshops (17 workshops in total nationally)	OCT - DEC 2010	20-30 participants engaged per workshop	Youth leaders and CCMW local chapters
19. Local chapters and youth to meet and de-brief including identifying any follow-up activities of local workshops, e.g. For additional sessions with local partners	DEC 2010	Follow-up activities of local workshops proposed	Youth leaders and CCMW local chapters
20. Prepare a workshop report including action plan for continuing local work	JAN 2011	Workshop reports submitted to project coordinator	Youth leaders and CCMW local chapters

Appendix A: Synopses of Presentations

IN SEARCH OF CANADIAN MUSLIM IDENTITY

By Abdul-Rehman Malik

Abdul-Rehman Malik, a Canadian Muslim journalist and educator, addressed issues of identity at the forum. The following is a summary of his main points.

Abdul-Rehman began by invoking the traditional Muslim saying from the Qur'an "In the Name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful" and observed that this saying for him encapsulates the most important dimension of being human: mercy. "It was through God's mercy that we were created, it is through God's mercy we are sustained, it is God's mercy that we seek to magnify and amplify on earth and it is God's mercy that we hope for when we die." Abdul-Rehman stated his bias by identifying himself as "a believing person" and that his faith was "at the very heart of a discussion about identity."

What does it mean to be a Muslim?

Abdul-Rehman then proceeded to observe that while many Muslims travelling to Mecca on the Hajj (pilgrimage to the Ka'bah) anticipate that they will be returning to a spiritual home, some have reported to him that they have felt like aliens. While they felt a spiritual connection to the Ka'bah, they nevertheless felt "out of place". Abdul-Rehman observed that "maybe being there made them realize that Muslimness is a vast idea and concept and that when you are in the sacred mosque of Mecca, surrounded by this dazzling, confusing, amazing, diversity, that at one sense you feel connected to humanity but at the same time you can feel awfully alone." The idea of being an alien in Mecca is actually a really important way of describing the dilemma of Muslimness because each and everyone of us, although we may come from a specific tradition within Islam, we at the same time recognize that the way in which we define and live our Islam certainly is different from the way in which other people do so at a very personal, individual level. When we begin to recognize that, we begin to recognize that the idea of being Muslim, of living Muslim, of thinking Muslim if you will, is actually something that is not entirely straightforward. While we grapple with questions of national identity, of global identity, of political identity, many of us at a very fundamental personal level grapple with the idea of what is our relationship with our religion, what is our relationship with our spiritual community, and how does that inform, interact, synergize, and argue with the other aspects of who we are.

What does it mean to be a Canadian?

Abdul-Rehman contended that for Canadians this is a fundamentally difficult question. When you think about what it means to be Canadian, more often than not, our definition of our national identity is in basic opposition to that of

Americans. The meaning of being Canadian is often expressed as not being American. In the Trudeau era, being Canadian was sometimes expressed as a "mosaic" composed of little coloured squares, each square a little different than others. Alternatively, being Canadian was sometimes likened to being a tossed salad. We, living next to "an elephant" (to quote our former Prime-Minister) have always defined ourselves in opposition or in apposition to the United States of America. But that's not a really good definition of citizenship nor is it a good definition of national identity. Over the years, we Canadians have really tried hard to develop better definitions using terms like "multiculturalism," "diversity," "distinct society," "two founding nations," "First Nations," but let's just be honest. We are a nation with an identity crisis.

In the 1970s we had an idea of Trudeau's just society, that's something we could get behind, but soon that was overtaken by political realities. Each generation has had its own debate over what it means to be a Canadian. We live in societies where the issue of who we are as a national identity is a prominent issue. But I also believe that the issue of national identity, of being Canadian, these are terms that are being constructed all the time, these are ideas which are being debated. This is "a work in progress." The Government of Canada, agencies, officials, may want to tell us that there is some priority on what it means to be Canadian. But the truth is that "Canadian" is as *contested*, is as *in progress*, is as *being shaped* as any other identity out there. When we get to talking about things like "integration", when we get to talking about things like "belonging", realize that what we are integrating into or what we are seeking belonging of, or what we feel we already are, is something that is not on firm ground. It is something which in fact is on shaky ground, and which actually is a great opportunity for us. Why? Because then we are not being engaged in merely defining ourselves but we are actually getting engaged in a very dynamic process of defining the future of the way this nation looks at itself. By engaging actively, as many of our fellow citizens are not, by engaging actively in issues of national identity, we are in fact "taking the bull by the horns" and saying that we, as "young Canadian Muslims" are engaging in the great work of defining the future of not just our faith, but what the future of our country will be.

IN MY OWN SKIN

A PANEL DISCUSSION

By Rehana Begg, Salima Ebrahim, Humera Ibrahim, and Iman Zebian

This panel brought together 4 women who were part of the original group of women that got together to work on a kit consisting of a manual and video. They went across the country to get the stories of second generation Muslim women in the areas of identity, relationships and family dynamics, racism and discrimination, gender issues, and violence against women. The themes covered in a manual based on feedback from the women above were presented through various scenarios that reflect real-life situations faced by young Canadian Muslim women. The scenarios aimed to involve readers (Muslim and non-Muslim) in the hope that they may understand the dichotomy which often permeates the lives of young Muslim women in Canada, that is, Muslim women's struggle to belong to mainstream society while maintaining a sense of tradition and belonging within their communities of origin.

Based on this and feedback from the Muslim Youth Canada Project's steering committee, it was felt that having this panel speak about *In My Own Skin*, the identity struggles of the young women that participated in it and the way they managed them over the past 10 years would be a good introduction to the day to demonstrate some successful techniques that worked for some young Muslims in dealing with the issue of plural identities.

Each panellist spoke about her personal experiences and out of the discussion, two key points emerged:

1. On identity and double lives: In our discussions of *In My Own Skin* we coined the term “double-life syndrome.” Rehana Begg observed that in medicine, the term syndrome refers to the association of several clinically recognizable features, or signs that often occur together, so that the presence of one feature alerts the doctor to the presence of the others. This term was used to refer to the double lives young Muslims are often coaxed into leading and the multiple identities we assume. But we displayed many signs or clues – either in our vocabulary or in the way we behaved – that spoke to the double-life dichotomy. For example, at home we could have one persona and assume another when we are with our school friends. Some of the panellists observed that these contradictory qualities have become less prevalent with age. Perhaps it's the wisdom of hindsight, or confidence, but they found that they were more comfortable with who they are and can express themselves better on their own terms.

2. Juxtaposition of *In My Own Skin* video clip with September 11, 2001.

The *In My Own Skin* project and video was presented to the WCAR in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. This conference took place in the months

leading up to September 11. An introductory clip was also shown at the Muslim Youth Canada forum to preface the discussion of the panel. The issues discussed in the *In My Own Skin* kit and video could arguably have been markedly different had the aftermath of 9/11 been taken into account. However, the kit did deal with many of the issues (identity, discrimination, Islamophobia) that were part of discussions and concerns post 9/11. While "terrorism" was not yet a part of our lexicon, the immigrant stories were considered of those who felt they were ostracized and for this reason became stereotyped for their religious and cultural backgrounds.

3. Strengthening Identity through Civic Engagement in the Work Place.

Iman Zebian talked about her work as a school teacher and broadening the minds of her students in the classroom. Humera Ebrahim focused on her experiences as a social worker dealing with family violence. Salima Ebrahim voiced the importance of taking issues of racism and discrimination to the top leadership in an organization and that these are issues they need to be aware of. She also spoke about the importance of getting involved in boards and civic engagement in general, which she defined as larger than just political. In essence, it could cover things such as sports, on-line, advocacy, etc.

FOR THE COMMON GOOD

BROADENING THE DEFINITION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

By Abdul-Rehman Malik

The following is a summary of Abdul-Rehman Malik's presentation on civic engagement at the Muslim Youth Canada Forum.

Abdul-Rehman began with an observation about the meaning of the term "radical". He said that when we go back to where the essence of being a radical is, it is not being a so-called radical who blows up buildings and undermines human rights. A real radical is one who can go to the root of things, to the essence of things, to re-connect communities to things that are genuinely, truly important.

Looking at the life of the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) and that community, Abdul-Rehman suggested that it was a project of radical transformation, of theological transformation, of social transformation and the fact that the Prophet's mission was a mission of mercy, he was "a mercy to our world," his behaviour was merciful, even when he was confronted with obstacles, that he was truly committed to returning people back to the most important and essential roots of faith. When we see the way the Prophet deals with the neighbour who is abusive to him, the way he dealt with the poorest in his community, the way he encouraged us in neighbourliness saying if your neighbour remains hungry while your own stomach is full there is something wrong, there is a weakness. The Prophet says "I came to do nothing except perfect good character" and the Prophet said "I'll tell you something even better than prayer and fasting, it is to be of service to other people." This is a man whose mission, and we believe divinely directed mission, is to re-connect people to what is essential, not only the relationship with the Creator, but to ameliorate the difficult conditions that we live in.

Abdul-Rehman said that we need to redefine what it means to be radical, and redefine what it means to have a radical agenda because he as a Muslim believes that his faith gives him no choice but to dedicate his life to the amelioration of poverty and oppression. To giving more than he receives, to living with chivalry which entails engaging in service with disregard for yourself, that your pockets are open, that you have strength and discipline, that your discipline means you do service, that you are always on the ready to serve other people, that even nature, even the animals have rights over you in terms of service. That is a message that is conveyed in the Qur'an about the army of Solomon and the ants, the idea that there is an imperative to caring for the smallest creature in the kingdom. That's a pretty radical idea.

Abdul-Rehman called people to commit to social transformation, to make their civic engagement about social transformation. While that might sound dangerous

to some, Abdul-Rehman contended that if Islam does call Muslims to a higher worldly purpose, then social transformation must go along with that. The social transformation isn't for one community or for one group of people, it must be engaged with at a very public level which involves all Canadian citizens. Naturally there will be disagreement but that's the nature of transformation. Transformation requires vitriolic dialogue and vitriolic engagement. Engagement isn't easy because "you're gonna break the plates". Abdul-Rehman said that our whole idea of civic engagement is "like you go and vote, you do little bit of charity work, it's all good." He contended, however, that real civic engagement means that at some level there's going to be some kind of social change, change that affects day-to-day life in school, at work, in neighbourhoods, on street level. He said, "if you are committed to changing injustice around you, then you're going to break some plates. There's going to be some heat, there's going to be some tension."

Abdul-Rehman suggested that when we talk of the tension that can come about from civic engagement, maybe that tension is going to be within our own communities, maybe it means taking on the leaders at the mosque, or taking on your local MSA. When you begin to challenge ideas and ask questions, know that dialogue is not easy, dialogue is difficult. Dialogue means that there's going to be some measure of conflict, so if we want to civically engage, we have to keep in mind that civic engagement is not an easy exercise. Civic engagement means that you are going to come up against powerful obstacles, other opinions, other perceptions. Being civically engaged means that the process of engagement, the process of becoming engaged means it has to be based on our understanding of why we are becoming engaged. Why are you becoming engaged, to what end is this engagement, what's the vision of our engagement, what do we want to achieve out of this and how are we going to achieve it and who are we going to engage and how are we going to raise the civic value of our communities, our neighbourhoods, our societies by the work that we're doing. That's hard work and you're going to break some plates, you're going to step on some egos, you're going to get angry, there's going to be some tears, but that is the hard work of social transformation and social engagement and any anti-racist activist, any gender activist, anyone who's worked on social justice issues knows that.

Abdul-Rehman observed that he is convinced that in Canada we have remarkable resources. We have a remarkable resource because in our communities there are men and women, mostly who aren't Muslim, but they are dedicated, committed, activated, mobilized to make change. How can we find our place alongside with them? How can we become brothers and sisters in arms with them in the work that they are doing. And that's why I think place is so important, the idea of where you are. Each one of you is going to go back to your communities, we have people here from Edmonton, Montreal, and even Inuvik, you're going to go back to your communities and ultimately your work is going to be in a place, it's going to be at the level of real people, real people's real hurts, real emotions, real love, real desires, that's the place where you're going to work.

So, understand the power of the place today. How you mobilize the activists that are there, how you create solidarity that is meaningful to achieve what you want to achieve. How do you come to a vision of what you want to achieve, how does your Muslim Canadian global political spiritual identity enforce the kind of change that you want to make?

In the end, Abdul-Rehman came to three main points and questions that are important for us to explore:

1. Mercy, *rahma*, the emblematic principle of Islam. How are we guided by mercy and how do we enact mercy where we live in our interactions with others?
2. Service, *khidma*. How do we make our work service oriented? Giving without wanting to receive. Giving for a goal rather than for personal gain.
3. Action. How do we transform these high principles and this vision into actual actions? How do we make it happen?

HONESTY FOR A CHANGE

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

By Boonaa Mohammed

Boonaa Mohammed, a poet, story-teller, and journalism student, gave a presentation at the Muslim Youth Canada forum on faith, art, and change. The following is a summary of his presentation.

Boonaa began his presentation by reciting his poem *Green Card* (transcript follows);

Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim

(In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

We are the children of hope

Folks came here floating on a big plane or a small boat

From the banana republics and rainforest cafes

Saving up their little pay just to see some better days

I am the first

Born onto this land I navigate with ease

For my parents' sake I will survive by any means

If that means physics, bio, calculus, and chemistry

These boring subjects encompass their every single dream

At fifteen I translate between the judge and the jury

My teacher says I'm doing bad

I tell my dad not to worry

Plus I can't translate all the hate that she gives me

Racist curriculum I'm not dumb and don't need your pity

Maniacs rule your cities while geniuses drive your cabs

And I've had to work twice as hard for every single thing that I've had

From selling my stash

Trying to make that quick easy cash

From dead end jobs that might leave you

Dead on the job

Poverty is like love

It makes you do some crazy things

Like using a fake gun to stick up the stick up kids

Babylon system leaving no options

So it's get rich or die trying

Either that or just dying

So you work!

And you work and you work

*And you work for jerks
Bosses who don't see people
But see profits
And not the holy kind
I'm talkin' dollar signs
And I slowly begin to see why
Poverty like love is blind
Or maybe just colour blind*

*A tiny inconvenient truth
About labour groups and the masses
Of the working classes
But then again some people say that
Race doesn't even exist
Well tell that to the trees still sore from hanging lynchies!*

*But during this day and age
We have fresh new waves
Of semi-paid slaves
Willing to work for less
Than our minimal wage
And these "foreigners"
Don't understand
These foreign concepts
They thought they were Canadian
But slowly dismissed that nonsense
And I hate to be the one to say it but
I mean, this is it
This is your land of dreams!
A place where you can still live third world
In a first world country*

*Love has cupid
And poverty has stupid*

*This is a place where we can grow up to learn nothing about ourselves
This is a place where they insist that sex should sell
This is a place where we can grow up to want what we definitely do not need
And this is a place where your kids can become addicted to alcohol and weed
And I bet they didn't tell you this on your immigration applications
Because sadly this may still be better than some of your former locations
So if you won't say it, I guess I'll have to say it for you
Besides I'm used to translating your dreams and hopes too
Aside from un-America's most wanted
We are not wanted here
Because my colour and last name still spark fear
The same kind that can easily become violent*

*And you can't be protected by studying science
Because even our nerds aren't good enough for them
I was born here and I'm screwed
But you? You have an accent*

*So you get the same respect as fat kids in gym class
First to get cut and always picked last*

*But don't get mad
Because you're doing the best that you can
And I love you
Because you were not afraid to take a chance
So the next time someone tells you to go back to where you came from
Tell them that we should all go back
And finally let the Natives have some fun*

In solidarity

In sharing the background of how he composed it, produced a video for it, and uploaded it to YouTube, Boonaa discussed how his poem *Green Card* (above) enabled him to interact with others who shared or opposed his beliefs about justice in the work place, citizenship and belonging. He commented that some people viewing the video had a negative response because they thought his critical observations in the poem about life in Canada from an immigrant's perspective proceeded from hatred of Canada. In response to that, Boonaa remarked "in reality I don't hate Canada, you know I'm not anti-Canadian. In fact, I love Canada so much that I am willing to speak out to make it better." Commenting further on why he crafted his poem the way he did, Boonaa observed that "some people they really like it, they really feel everything I've said. Other people get offended by it and are really mad, but that's art. That's why I did it. I want that conversation. I want people to think."

Boonaa asked everyone to "imagine you're in this room, and the whole world is in this very big room. You have everyone here. You have everyone's attention. What are you going to say? Are you going to say something that's relative to you and your four friends? Or are you going to look for universal values and messages that reach out to the most amount of people at one time?" Boonaa suggested that this is a point to keep in mind as an artist and as anybody committed to dialogue and civic engagement that aims to bring about social change.

Boonaa contended that it is amongst people that may disagree with you and amongst people that don't know your experience that the artist needs to engage. It is those people who need to hear you, those people who need to be challenged even if it is uncomfortable to do so at times. "As human beings we like comfort and we don't like to be vulnerable and that's normal." However, Boonaa found it more rewarding to take himself out of that comfortable mode and put himself in a

situation where people might want to him get off the stage but where his message most needed to be heard.

For Boonaa, this was a battle. "I don't just want to be selling words to crowds," he said, "I want to say something at the same time. And if you don't like what I've said, I'm cool with that too." Boonaa contended that if you are not making people feel uncomfortable, you're probably not doing your job very well as an artist or a person engaging others in social transformation. Boonaa affirmed that we all have different comfort levels. We all have things within our faith that we are not willing to compromise. He stressed that young Muslims have to have that integrity and know themselves so that they can make decisions that they're comfortable with regardless of the different kinds of pressure others may put upon them. For some people, especially artists, there are financial pressures. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught that the richest person in the world isn't going to really have what they have and if we're using money as a way to shape our integrity, then something is wrong. "In art this will not fly," Boonaa said. It is important to realize what your intentions are, your *niyyah*. Ask yourself often: why am I doing this?

Boonaa observed that while he was talking about art, this question about intention could also apply to other things--everyday life: what do you want to do and why? Boonaa suggested that this question is imperative because young Muslims in Canada have specific advantages and obligations that their parents as first generation Canadians did not. One advantage young Muslims have is the ability to combat stereotypes about Islam. Following from that ability is the obligation to put it in action by combating misconceptions about Islam and Muslim life. Growing up here, many young Muslims understand the country well. All young Muslims can play a part, everybody has a role. Not studying the arts and humanities doesn't mean that you can't speak out, doesn't mean you can't do something about seeking change. You may not even be that good at it, but there's still room for you and for your contribution. "There's still room for everyone that steps up to the plate and really takes a swing at it," said Boonaa.

Boonaa then quoted from a *hadith* (a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) to drive his message home: "If a person sees something wrong, he should try to change it with his hand. If he cannot change it with his hand, he should try to change it with his tongue. If he cannot change it with his tongue, then he should try to change it with his heart." Boonaa observed that even the act of speaking out, using your tongue to engage people in a meaningful manner, is an important way of bringing about change.

Boonaa ended his presentation with a performance of a new poem called *For the Love*. His poem *Green Card* and *For the Love* can be viewed on YouTube.

Appendix B: Forum Participant Evaluations

Of the approximately 150 who attended, 75 completed the evaluation forms.

These forms were designed by the Project evaluators.

The group was divided by age -16-25; 26-40 and 40 plus.

Ages 16-25: 41 evaluations

Comments:

Speakers were liked a lot. The information presented was seen by some as overwhelming so that the questions were rushed. Some suggested that there was a need for more defined goals for the forum. Some complaints, some praise for the breakout discussion sessions.

Some participants suggested more facilitation training for some of the youth.

Comments included:

“very friendly people, felt welcomed and therefore comfortable to share”

“All people contributing in the environment created by the organizers.”

“Appreciated the gender mix”

“Very professional, well organized, friendly atmosphere, well lit and good food”

Other participants added that they enjoyed the diversity of opinions and found the topics “fantastic”

Ages 26-40: 14 evaluations

All comments were positive.

Ages 40 +: 20 evaluations:

Positive comments but some found the questions complex and others wished there was more time. Still others said the variety of different points of view was appreciated. Some commented as follows:

“A good start”

“Discussion was diverse and learned”

“Free to express ourselves in a friendly group”

“Embrace the mess.”

Appendix C: Roles and Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders

Youth Leaders

Plan to hold local workshops (Jan - Feb 2010) Identify and engage participants reflecting the diversity of the local communities (Mar – May 2010)

Keep Project Coordinator informed of issues (once a month)

Keep Project Coordinator informed of progress at key milestones

Contact a mentor (a member of the steering committee) for advice as needed

Stay in touch with local CCMW chapters and the national board for further support

Conduct outreach to promote workshops (Jun – Sep 2010)

Hold workshops (must be held between Oct – Dec 2010)

Submit written reports on workshops conducted to include for example, who and how many attended, what worked well, what were some key challenges (a template to be provided, submit by Jan 2011)

Project Steering Committee

Lead development and oversight of project

Provide advice and support to Project Coordinator

Research issues to address at the forum

Outreach to identify and engage partners and forum participants

Plan strategic planning forum, including identification of topics, speakers, resources for toolkit, facilitator training

Collaborate in drafting of strategic plan

Act as mentors to youth who will be carrying out local workshops

Support local youth at workshops where possible

Participate in project evaluation

Toolkit Developer

Lead development of a project toolkit which will include a guidebook of resources (identified in part at the national forum) and an educational video

Provide support for the steering committee

Provide support to the project coordinator

Review media websites relevant to the project

Mentor youth leaders interested in learning new skills that will enable them to make better use of new media and web 2.0 applications

Help the project coordinator administer the web 2.0 tools of the project

Lead development of the web portal of the project

Project Coordinator

Research issues facing Muslim youth, including websites and Web 2.0

Liaise with partner organizations to identify tools and strategies

Use web-based tools to engage Muslim youth in identifying issues and strategies to be discussed at the forum

Co-ordinate the planning of the strategic planning forum; arrange for recording and reporting of forum proceedings; prepare forum report

Draft strategic plan that will include concrete strategies for positive engagement

Co-ordinate the development and production of materials and toolkit for use by youth in local sessions

Guide the youth who will be attending the forum and advise and support them when they deliver public sessions in their communities across Canada

CCMW Board

Provide guidance and oversight for all aspects of the Muslim Youth Canada project

CCMW Staff

Support Coordinator and the Steering Committee to engage in project activities

CCMW Chapter Members

Support local youth in preparation and presentation of follow-up sessions, especially with respect to support and guidance for the planning activities listed in the following section.

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