

in the footsteps of
Canadian Muslim Women
1837–2007

Dr. Daood Hamdani

equality, equity, empowerment



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



preface

Over the years, I have received many inquiries, mostly from young women, about the history and contributions of Muslim Canadians. The volume of e-mails has increased lately. Last year, a university student from Toronto summed up the reason for this surge in interest:

“I wanted to let you know how much of a difference your research has made to me, as a second generation immigrant to Canada. Much of the discourse since 9/11 has been that Muslims/Arabs are new immigrant communities and cannot integrate. Your research provides a foundation in believing that we do belong here. Thanks so much for embarking on this kind of research....”

When her e-mail arrived, I had just completed the manuscript of a report, *Engaging Muslim Women: Issues and Needs* and was looking forward to resuming my consultancy work full time. Needless to say that plan changed. Inspired by her personal testimonial, I thought of making available to interested people as quickly as possible what I have learned over the years. This brochure is the outcome.

It is intended to be a quick reference to some of the significant events which affected, or were influenced and shaped by, Muslim women. Their contributions are far too many to be covered here or even in a book. This chronicle only focuses on precedent-setting events; subsequent extensions or developments of the same events are not covered. There are many more stories to tell and I hope this brochure will serve to stir readers’ curiosity to explore and advance our knowledge of this uncharted but important part of Canadian history.



I am grateful to many people for their help. Karen Hamdon answered my numerous questions patiently and graciously. Her unique vantage point as the granddaughter of Hilwie Hamdon and as leader of the Al Rashid mosque preservation committee, gave me unique insights into the two most magnificent moments in Muslim history of Canada. Razia Jaffer, who also was a member of the team that preserved the first mosque, and Alia Hogben, who has been active in women's issues for decades, shared their first hand knowledge of the events. Najet Hassan and Shaheen Ashraf guided me to very useful sources of information. My thanks also go to a committee of three professionals, all non-Muslims, who selected the entries included in the brochure from a bigger document

Finally, neither the Canadian Council of Muslim Women nor any of the individuals mentioned necessarily share the views expressed here nor do they bear responsibility for the contents.

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Ottawa, Canada

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1837

1858

1867

1837

The matriarch of Muslim Canadians is born in Scotland. At 15 years of age, she marries a Scotsman, and the young couple, Agnes and James Love make their home in North Wellington in Ontario. Agnes manages a large household on a tight budget. At home, she is a mother, a wife, a healer and a teacher. Outside the home, she helps her husband with his work.

1858

Helen Love is born. She is the first known Muslim female born in the territory that in 1867 would become part of the Canadian confederation. Helen is the eldest of three daughters and second of eight children born to Agnes and James Love.

1867

Agnes and James Love welcome the Canadian Confederation with the arrival of their youngest daughter. Elizabeth is the first Muslim baby born in Canada.

1871

1922

1871

There are five Muslim females in the country. Martha Simons was born in the United States and moved to Canada with her husband. She is of English descent and her husband is French. Agnes Love was born in Scotland and her three daughters, Agnes (named after her mother), Elizabeth and Helen were all born in Ontario.

1922


Hilwie Hamdon (nee Hilwie Taha Jomha), a 16-year old bride from Baka'a Valley in Lebanon (then Syria), arrives with her husband, Ali Hamdon, and they settle in Fort Chipewyan, a fur trading post in northern Alberta. Born and raised in a small village, she has little formal schooling and knows no English, but her community spirit and neighbourliness transcends these barriers. A decade later, as she prepares to leave Fort Chipewyan for Edmonton with her family, the Indian chief describes her as "the finest white woman in the North". She goes on to play a prominent role in establishing the roots of Muslim community in Canada.




1930s

1930S

The Muslim community begins to formally organize with the active participation of the women. The Arabian Muslim Association is registered on January 4, 1938 in Edmonton. Six of its 32 chartered members listed in the incorporation papers are women: Hilwie Hamdon, Mimi Darwish, Mariam Mohammed Teha, Rkia Mahmoud Saaid El Hage Ahmed, Margaret Ali El Hadjar and Vira Samuel Jamha. Their vision for the future of the community, formulated and expressed in their organization and in relations with other groups in the 1930s, will be invoked in the twenty-first century to reorient and reposition Muslims within the broader Canadian society.

 *On May 15, 1938, the City of Edmonton issues a building permit that will change and enhance the Canadian landscape. The permit marks the beginning of the construction phase of the first mosque in Canada and, by some interpretations, in North America. Muslims will go on to build bigger and beautiful places of worship, but the simple and small (1,200 sq. ft.) structure that will result from this permit, looking more like a church than a mosque, will live in the hearts of Muslims and Canadian history. Muslim women will have a critical and prominent part in building it.*

 *Hilwie Hamdon motivates the community and energizes the campaign to build the mosque. She and her team convince a reluctant Mayor John Fry of Edmonton, with their skills of persuasion to donate a piece of land. Neither the economic depression of the 1930s nor the crop failure in the prairies stands in their way to raise money for construction. Her infectious enthusiasm involves the entire community, and not just the Muslims. Donations come in from people of all faiths whether they are farmers from the countryside, as far away as Saskatchewan, or Jasper Avenue merchants.*

After years of perseverance, a building rises at the corner of 101st Street and 108th Avenue in Edmonton. On December 12, 1938, Muslims gather along with their friends, neighbours and colleagues to celebrate. It is a community, not just a “Muslim” affair. People of all faiths participate. The person chosen to conduct the proceedings, I.F. Shaker, is a Christian. A non-Muslim presiding over the dedication ceremony of a mosque, the first in the country no less, may sound bizarre even in an accommodating society. However, it is in keeping with Hilwie Hamdon’s character who, after overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers in her personal life, is engaged in building bridges across communities. Evelyn Hamdon recalls, “My grandmother insisted that the person who was master of ceremonies be fluent in both languages [Arabic and English]... because the dedication ceremony was open to the entire Edmonton community [and it was necessary that he should] be able to engage everybody.”

The etiquette adopted in the mosque reinforces the pioneers’ vision. Men and women use the same door to enter the mosque; no physical barrier separates male and female worshippers; and the house of God is open to everyone, regardless of their faith. “The spirit with which the mosque was built and used was inclusive”, says Karen Hamdon, granddaughter of Hilwie.

But slowly, cultural conventions begin to supplant Islamic traditions. After coming face to face with the ugly consequences of parochial thinking, Muslims will rediscover the openness defined and embodied by the pioneer women. Inviting other faith communities into mosques and taking part in interfaith dialogue will rank high among Muslims’ priorities in the twenty-first century. A conversation will begin on making mosques user-friendly for women and opening up religious organizations to them.

Al Rashid mosque is more than a symbol of devotion, a marker of identity and a bridge between the past and present; it is also a constant reminder of the foresight, enduring legacy and the irrepressible spirit of these remarkable women.



1948

1971

1980

1948

First wedding is celebrated in a mosque. It is befitting that it should be the nuptials of Hilwie's daughter. Helen Hamdon marries Eddie Youssef in Al Rashid mosque. She and her husband raise seven children. They move to the United States where Helen lives in Toledo, Ohio.

1971

Confident of their religious footing and comfortable in the new society, Muslim women engage in civic and political participation as a prelude to their involvement in other mainstream institutions. Lila Fahlman wins the New Democratic Party's nomination to run in the provincial election just before the first Muslim man is elected to a legislature. Her bid for a seat in the legislature is unsuccessful, but later she serves in positions at the local government level.

1980

Mona El Tahan is the first woman to graduate with a master's degree in ocean engineering from the Memorial University of Newfoundland, which is a leader in this field of study. An engineer and an entrepreneur, in 2002, she wins the Sara Kirke award, given by the Canadian Advanced Technology Alliance. It is presented to her, in the words of the citation "for outstanding technological innovation and corporate leadership... resulting in the creation and industrial acceptance of significant world class products." Her innovations make marine navigation safer and more economical for the ships.

1982

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) is founded in Winnipeg. It goes on to play a critical role in advancing women's issues within the community and in the broader society, fostering female leadership and shaping the Muslim identity. Prodded by it, the community begins to discuss issues still regarded taboos in Muslim societies and its serious research work is instrumental in raising Muslims' concerns about discrimination, high unemployment and civic disengagement.

The founding of the Council, whether intended or not, is the first formal reaction to the traditional norms of gender boundaries of authorities still practiced and protected by many Muslim organizations. Previously relegated to minor and auxiliary roles, Muslim women begin to compete for and win leadership positions in male-dominated organizations. Several of CCMW's executives go on to rise to prominence in the country's public life.

The Council's central role in promoting the integration, inclusion and involvement of Muslim women in the broader society is recognized and seen a fit topic for scholarly inquiry. On its twentieth anniversary, academics at McGill and Concordia universities write critical reviews of its place, plans, progress and performance. Their findings are published in the two leading periodicals on Muslim affairs, London-based *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* and the U.S.-based *The Muslim World*. One of the oldest and largest Muslim national organizations with chapters across the country, CCMW is governed by a national board of directors. The board membership is representative of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Muslim Canadians. Razia Jaffer is its current president and Najet Hassan serves as the treasurer. Alia Hogben is its first executive director.



1988

1988

After a group of men gives up in frustration, the Edmonton chapter of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) takes over the task of preserving the Al Rashid mosque, in collaboration with the descendents of the pioneer settlers. The mosque has been out of use since 1982, requires extensive repairs and faces imminent demolition to make room for the expansion of an adjacent hospital. These women do not see it as a financial liability; to them it is a consecrated religious space, a part of Muslim history and a piece of Canadian heritage that must be preserved for posterity.

Raising money, difficult as it is, is but one part of the challenge facing the project team, led by CCMW members Karen Hamdon and Mahmuda Ali. Finding a new site fit for a place of worship and historical building, looking after the logistics of moving a building through city streets avoiding traffic on the ground and electric cables overhead, and renovating the mosque in compliance with the strict guidelines prescribed for heritage buildings test their negotiating, persuasion and consensus-building skills. It takes four years to raise enough funds, lobby city officials to designate the mosque as a landmark, bring the broader community onside on the controversial issue of the new site, and successfully complete this mammoth undertaking. Karen Hamdon and Evelyn Hamdon recall with admiration the support of Jan Reimer, then mayor of Edmonton, and city councillor Helen Paul, which was crucial in overcoming opposition to the relocation of the mosque to Fort Edmonton.

Finally, one summer night, as Edmonton sleeps, a group of women watches in awe as Al Rashid mosque begins its journey into history to stand alongside other buildings in the city's living history park, Fort Edmonton. On its original site, it was a

1988

1991

II

marker of Muslim identity; in the new location, it is a piece of Canadian heritage. Speaking at its re-dedication ceremony on May 28, 1992, Soraya Hafez, then president of CCMW Edmonton chapter, describes this transformation as an affirmation of the Muslim roots in Canada. Civic leaders pay tribute to the women who built the mosque and the women who preserved it to remind future generations of Muslims of their deep roots and all Canadians of the diversity of their heritage.

In 2003, the city of Edmonton celebrates its Muslim heritage by paying homage to the pioneer Muslims, honouring builders of the first mosque, and recognizing the women without whose foresight and determination this rare artifact of Canadian heritage would have been lost for ever. The Edmonton Historical Board Recognition Award for 2003 goes to pioneers and the Edmonton chapter of CCMW, whose executive included, in alphabetical order: Mahmuda Ali, Fatima Dalal, Amatul Danial, Mumtaz Ebrahim, Lila Fahlman, Soraya Zaki Hafez, Evelyn Hamdon, Karen Hamdon, Zohra Husaini, Razia Jaffer (current CCMW national president), Nasim Kherani, Amatul Padsha and Nargis Zaver. The award honours persons or groups who have made "substantial, voluntary contribution to the City of Edmonton by contributing to the history of the City...."

1991

A typical Muslim woman, according to the 1991 census, is young, in mid-20s, well educated and married. Those in the labour force earn on average \$24,250 a year. One in five Muslim women looking for work cannot find a job, although they have qualifications and skills in leading edge technologies. Mothers with preschoolers find it particularly hard.



1992

1994

1992

Nurejehan Mawani is appointed as Chair of the Immigration and Refugee Board. In 1993, she introduces guidelines for evaluating asylum claims made by women alleging persecution. These guidelines recognize that fears experienced by women are often different – from those experienced by men – and arise, among other things, from family situations in the privacy of home, such as domestic violence and forced marriage. Her pioneering work brings Canada worldwide attention and many countries, including the United States, adopt similar guidelines. At the time of her appointment, she is the highest ranking Muslim – male or female – civil servant in the country.

1994

Nearly a quarter century after their formal entry into party politics, a Muslim woman is elected. Fatima Houda-Pépin wins a seat in the Quebec National Assembly. A well-regarded and very popular politician in her riding, she goes on to win a fourth consecutive term. In spite of her party's heavy losses at the polls in 2007 and campaign by some right-wing Muslims against her re-election, she defeats her closest rival by a big margin. She is the longest serving legislator among current Muslim politicians in the country and is poised to surpass, during her current term, Larry Shaben's previous record of 15 years of public service in the Alberta legislature.

1995

2000

2001

1995

Mobina Jaffer is appointed to the Senate. A former president of the British Columbia chapter of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, she is the only Muslim senator.

2000

At 24 years of age, Reema Rafay is featured by the leading weekly newsmagazine, *McLean's* in its *Millennium's 100 Faces of the Future*. Her personnel recruitment firm, started with an investment of eighty thousand dollars, grosses one million dollars in revenue within a year.

2001


Jamelie Hassan wins the prestigious Governor General's award in visual arts. Her artwork has been exhibited internationally and is found in the collections of major agencies patronizing and promoting the arts, including the National Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada Council Art Bank and the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City. Her billboard "Because... there was and there wasn't a city of Baghdad", depicting the glory that Baghdad once was and the havoc visited upon it by the 1991 Gulf war, adorns the outer wall of Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.



2001

2002


 *Nelofer Pazira – a journalist and filmmaker – stars in the movie Kandahar. The film is shown in more than forty countries and wins ‘lavish praise’, according to a BBC report. She is later featured in the Gemini award winning documentary Return to Kandahar, which she also co-produces and co-directs.*

 *The portrait of a Muslim woman unveiled by the 2001 census challenges the stereotype. Statistics published by the government show that Muslim women are the second most highly educated group among some three dozen major faith and ethnic communities, and proportionately twice as many as all women hold doctoral or equivalent degrees. A higher percentage of Muslim women graduates compared to all women graduates, specializes in leading edge technologies like the Internet and biotechnologies. Contrary to the traditional view confining them to household work, many Muslim women in Canada are the sole or primary income earners of their families. Moreover, a larger percentage of Muslim women compared to their non-Muslim peers who work outside the home are mothers with preschoolers.*

2002

Monia Mazigh launches a long campaign to free her husband, a Canadian victim of the U.S. practice of ‘rendition’, from a Syrian jail and to prove his innocence of terrorism charge. Her struggle culminates in her husband’s release and the appointment of a commission of inquiry into the Canadian agencies’ role in his incarceration. In 2006, Maher Arar is cleared of any links to terrorism, the prime minister publicly apologizes to him and his family, the chief of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police resigns, and inquiries are ordered into other cases involving Muslims. The media applauds Monia Mazhig and Alexa McDonough,

former leader of the New Democratic Party, pays her tribute in the parliament, "... this remarkable woman [has] inspired Canadians... [and] we are all deeply indebted to [her] for her devotion in fighting for the rights and freedoms that all Canadians prize so dearly". In 2007, Maher Arar is named by *Time* magazine in its list of one hundred most influential people, but he is unable to attend the gala event in New York because he, Monia Mazigh and their two small children remain on the U.S. watch list.

 *The aftermath of 9/11 has a major impact on Muslim women. A study released by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women reveals that Muslims are the main target of the sharp rise in crimes motivated by religious hatred in 2001. A survey shows that some Muslim women are driven to hiding their identity out of fear. Traumatic as physical injury or vandalism is, degradation of characteristics that define an individual's religious identity leaves deep psychological scars.*

2003

A debate breaks out over the application of Muslim family law in the Canadian context. At issue is a plan by a group (all men) to appoint boards to conduct arbitration in family, and subsequently other, disputes based on Muslim law. According to the media reports, arbitration decisions "will be binding and enforceable by Canadian courts", under the Ontario Arbitration Act. CCMW, supported by a number of other organizations, argues, among other things, that Muslim women's rights are better protected under Canadian law than the Muslim law as it is presently interpreted in Muslim countries.




With the country watching how Muslims conduct themselves, men and women share their thoughts and experiences in the Canadian way: through the print media, over the airwaves, in conferences and by making written submissions to government, for well over one year. After considering arguments and reviewing the report of an inquiry set up by the government to study the issue, the provincial premier announces in September 2005 that all Ontarians will be subject to one law.

The process produces several positive outcomes of strategic importance. First, a precedent has been established to discuss religious matters in a dispassionate manner. Second, the initiative has increased awareness of women's right to partnership in community building, which they enjoyed in the early Muslim history until it was abrogated by patriarchal cultures. Third, a unique opportunity has opened up for religious leaders to demonstrate, in mediating family disputes brought before them, that they can adapt Islamic teachings to new situations rather than transplant practices from other Muslim societies, which are often tempered by their rulers' political exigencies and reflective of their particular socio-cultural environment.

Some Muslims seize the opportunity to make use of the knowledge gained from this experience. A number of organizations, currently recruiting imams, express preference for home grown candidates who can better relate Islam to contemporary issues and societies. Immersion courses are offered in Canadian law, history and political system for imported imams. The Canadian Council of Muslim Women publishes a comprehensive primer summarizing Canadian and Muslim family laws.


2004

Yasmin Ratansi is the first Muslim woman to win a seat in the national parliament – and she does it in style, polling more votes than the other five contenders combined. Her winning margin of 55 per cent is the highest among Muslims. Her big victory margin demonstrates that Muslim women articulate and represent the views of a diverse electorate. She is re-elected in 2006, by the same margin, while her party loses the general election.

 *The 2004 federal general election brings to surface difficulties Muslim women can expect to face from within the community in their effort to engage in the democratic process. Ithrat Syed is not welcomed at her mosque – which she and her parents have been attending for years – after she launches her campaign for a seat in parliament. Instead of being given a chance to speak at the mosque, as she says she had requested and was promised, she has to sit through a tirade on her political position by the imam, although he resiles from mentioning her by name. But she spurns the pressure to dissociate herself from her party's support of equal rights for all Canadians, as guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and upheld by the courts.*

However, an enlightened imam, who can make a distinction between a Muslim's religious beliefs and their respect for the laws and constitution of their country, calls on Ithrat, and not only pledges his personal support but also offers his congregants' help for her campaign. In the end, she receives a larger share of votes than any of the other three Muslim NDP candidates, including Monia Mazigh who was billed as a star candidate and whose riding has one of the highest Muslim concentrations in the country.



 *A young woman makes history in Canada. Maryam Mirza, a 20-year old university student, is the first woman to deliver khutba (sermon) in a mosque. With her mother proudly watching, she tells a mixed congregation of male and female worshippers on Eid al-Fitr “to keep an open mind”. Traditionalists say this should not have happened. Others are pleasantly surprised that at last it did.*


Dramatic as this development may sound to some, to the imam of the mosque, Jaber Ally, it simply means practising Islam. He not only invited Maryam to give the *khutba* but in an apparent public show of support also shares the podium with her.

Disagreement with his position, as reported in the mainstream media and posted on the Muslim websites, is muted. Rather than citing religious texts to back their stand, critics assert that there is no evidence of similar occurrences in the past. Imam Jaber Ally dismisses this approach: “If the holy Qur’an permitted and allowed this, who am I to deny that right to our sisters?” He is not alone in his interpretation; his congregation and others share his view.

The community is increasingly realizing and speaking out that if the Muslims do not define themselves, others will. For the first time, a major survey shows that those who believe there is only one true human interpretation of religious teachings find themselves a minority. “A 60 per cent majority of [U.S.] Muslims believes that there is more than one true way of interpreting the teachings of Islam”, says a 2007 survey of Muslim Americans conducted by the well-regarded Pew Research Centre.

Calls for reform have become more frequent. The community is beginning to ask: What practices derive their authority from the principles of Islam and what is rooted in the socio-cultural environment of the interpreters? What is fundamental and what is adaptable? How much can or should historical practices change to reflect contemporary realities? Who is the legitimate arbiter of these questions?


Muslim Canadians are the best positioned of all communities to take up these questions because they have the knowledge and, more importantly, freedom to discuss them, and set example for other societies. The women are leading the way. Will the 'leaders' follow?

 *First full-length documentary on Muslims, entitled New Life in a New Land: Muslim Experience in Canada premieres. To mark the occasion, President of the University of Saskatchewan holds a reception for the guests, including diplomats, politicians and civic leaders. This three-hour award-winning documentary, produced by Michael Milo, is researched by Saira Rahman who also writes the script and an educator's guide for use in schools. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade sponsors its screening in a number of Muslim countries as part of its initiative designed to promote understanding and dialogue.*



2005

A controversy erupts after two women, Canadian Raheel Raza and the American Pamela Taylor lead mixed congregations of males and females in Friday worship on separate occasions. This follows the example of Amina Wadud, a well-known professor of Islamic studies in the United States, who led a mixed congregational prayer in New York. It too generated an intense debate among North American Muslims and scholars from Muslim countries also got involved. In Canada, the worship is held in a home, after city mosques refuse space on both occasions.

 *The Canadian Council of Muslim Women releases three landmark studies, which reveal a discouraging picture of high unemployment, political disengagement and high incidence of discrimination. The findings draw media attention and invite inquiries from numerous other countries, as far as India and New Zealand. The studies become reference documents for the media, government and others, and university and public libraries add them to their collections.*

2006


The Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) publishes a groundbreaking report entitled *Engaging Muslim Women: Issues and Needs*. Based on country-wide consultations and a landmark survey, under the direction of Nuzhat Jafri, its findings are the theme of a conference of international experts. The conference and the report draw attention rarely accorded a Muslim event by the media.

Their findings influence the way the media reports about Muslims. Deflecting from its fascination with *burkas and niqabs*, some media outlets pay attention to real issues of discrimination, unemployment and the lack of civic participation facing Muslims. In its editorial, entitled "Time to look beyond the veil" the Calgary Herald writes, "... those who look beneath the veil will see Muslim women are not that different from their non-Muslim sisters... Muslim women need to talk to their neighbours and neighbours need to let go of stereotypes..."

Following the report, mainstream organizations devote more resources to these issues and undertake independent research. Two surveys by two different organizations confirm that the majority of Muslim women do not wear a headscarf, indicating that the media fixation with the *burka* and *niqab* is misplaced, and that discrimination and unemployment top Muslims' concerns. CCMW' is invited by the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporations) to comment on these results on a national broadcast.




 *A Muslim engineering student becomes the public face of an academic institution. Samina Hashmi's pictures appear in newspapers and on billboards promoting Carleton University. A young woman studying an unconventional subject and excelling academically while campaigning for social issues and doing volunteer work to alleviate poverty is the stuff role models are made of. A year later, she is voted among the hundred most powerful women in the country by the Women's Executive Network, Canada's leading organization dedicated to the recognition and advancement of executive-minded women in the workplace. This is the real face of Islam, which seldom makes the news.*

 *Lila Fahlman passes away. A leader, politician, university chaplain, educationist, community worker, author and publisher, mother balancing family and studies – she was a trailblazer. She infused the community with a sense of possibilities in the new land. She tried. She never gave up, and at every turn, she left something behind to inspire others. As a result, the country is gentler, Muslim community is richer and more doors are open to Muslim women. The nation acknowledged her contribution by giving her its highest honour – the Order of Canada – and CCMW set up a scholarship to honour the memory of its founder.*

2007

A sitcom, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, debuts on CBC television to a record viewing audience. Created by Zarqa Nawaz, a filmmaker who raises Muslims' issues in a light-hearted manner, it takes a humorous look at the lives of Muslims in a small Canadian town and explores the dynamics of Muslim and non-Muslim relationship with a comedic twist. The sitcom draws interest from numerous countries.

 *The world has changed and yet in some ways it is still the same. Eleven-year old Asmahan Mansour is barred from a soccer tournament in Quebec because of the hijab. Her team and four other Ontario teams walk out in protest. The world soccer body, FIFA, meeting in England to tackle the issue, ducks even after 11 and 12 years old girls have shown how to play the game.*

The soccer field is not the only place that is not level for Muslim women. They are also overlooked and undervalued in the workplace. It is ironic that even as we mark the 170th birth anniversary of the matriarch of Muslim Canadians, a woman-friendly mosque is still a subject of special attention and praise.



did you know...

Almost one-quarter of Canadian Muslim women were born in Canada, which is more than those Canadian Muslim women who were born in the entire Middle East, Africa or entire South Asia.



Most Muslim women in Canada speak more than one language and many along with Roman Catholic women, are also the largest users of both Canadian official languages at work.



Twice as many Muslim women hold master's (5%) and doctoral degrees (0.8%) as all women in Canada.



Nearly two-fifths (37%) specialize in a science or engineering discipline compared with 31% of all women.



Twice as many adult Muslim women compared to all adult women were enrolled in educational institutions for improving and upgrading their skills and qualifications.



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