



Muslim Philanthropy in Ontario

In June 2014, the Association of Fundraising Professionals Foundation for Philanthropy – Canada hosted a conference that brought together charity leaders, donors and volunteers to explore Muslim philanthropy in Ontario. Here is a collection of insights from the conference and beyond.

AT A GLANCE

1 053 945 Muslim population in Canada

2 Islam is the second largest religion in the world and the fastest growing religion in Canada

75-90 and 10-20 Percentages of Sunni and Shia Muslims

77 Percentage of Muslims living in the Greater Toronto Area, the highest concentration of Muslims of any North American city

424 925 Muslims of Indian, Pakistani, Iranian and Egyptian descent residing in Toronto

65 880 Muslims of Lebanese, South Asian and Somali descent residing in Ottawa

TERMINOLOGY

Zakat: The practice of charitable giving by Muslims based on accumulated wealth.

Sadaqah: Voluntary giving that encompasses any act of compassion, love, friendship, religious duty or generosity.

CASE STUDY

Carleton University’s Centre for the Study of Islam is an example of what can be achieved through community collaboration. In 2007, Fatma El-Mehelmy, an Egyptian-Canadian living in Ottawa, was struck by the misrepresentation of Muslims by so-called religious experts in the media. Believing that the Muslim community must take responsibility to accurately inform others about Islam and Islamic culture, she set out to establish an academic hub to advance education and address contemporary issues facing Muslims in Canada and around the world. Through her personal gifts to this hub and other like-minded charities, Ms. El-Mehelmy built a strong network of supporters who, in turn, gave to the development of the Centre. Through them, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised to date. “Investing in others encourages others to invest in you.”

WISE WORDS



“Philanthropy is a central tenet of Islam. In fact, most practicing Muslims regularly give away a certain percentage of their savings and share their income with those less privileged. At the conference, several presenters talked about the importance of faith leaders, particularly imams, in rallying community giving based on Islamic teachings. We also heard that while Muslim giving has tended to focus on support for local, Muslim-centered initiatives, our community is beginning to give to a broader range of issues that resonate with our values and faith. In order to help build bridges with the Muslim community, fundraisers must develop true, authentic engagement opportunities and encourage the full participation of this growing faith community.”

— *Fatma El-Mehelmy, Philanthropist and Chair, Muslim Philanthropy Conference*

BACK IN TIME

THE FIRST CENSUS OF 1871 REVEALED 13 EUROPEAN MUSLIMS IN CANADA.

Prior to WWI, Muslim immigrants from Bosnia founded the first mosque in Toronto, renovating an old Catholic school building with the support of local Christians. After 1967, with the adoption of the universal point system for immigration, greater waves of Muslims began to settle in Canada. In the 1970s, large scale non-Europe immigration to Canada began, and the vast diversity of

the Muslim community became much more apparent. As with other groups, Muslim immigrants choose Canada for a variety of reasons: quality of higher education, safety and security, employment opportunities and for family reunification. Others come to obtain religious and political freedom, leaving wars, persecution and other forms of civil and ethnic strife. While the Canadian

Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of religious expression, there have been instances of Islamophobia over the decades. Nevertheless, Muslims in Canada have made many strides and significant contributions to the broader community, particularly through political engagement and charitable giving.

INSIGHTS FROM THE EXPERTS

Conference presenters and participants shared many great examples and tips about giving within the Muslim community. Here is what we heard:

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO KEEP PEOPLE INFORMED ABOUT YOUR CHARITY. THERE ARE MANY MUSLIM-FOCUSED SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES AND ONLINE RESOURCES TO DRAW UPON.

ISLAM IS ONE OF THE YOUNGEST COMMUNITIES IN CANADA, SO ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION IS THE KEY TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS.

ACCORDING TO ISLAMIC TEACHINGS, THE MORE YOU SHARE, THE MORE YOU WILL BE REWARDED WITH HAPPINESS.

ANONYMITY IS IMPORTANT FOR MANY MUSLIM DONORS, ALTHOUGH SOME ARE BEGINNING TO APPRECIATE PUBLIC RECOGNITION. IT INSPIRES OTHERS TO GIVE.

THE GOAL IS TO CREATE REAL, SUSTAINED CHANGE INSTEAD OF LONG-TERM DEPENDENCE.

IT IS WRONG TO PRESUME THAT ALL MUSLIMS HAVE THE SAME POLITICAL ORIENTATION.

KEY FUNDING PRIORITIES IN THE COMMUNITY ARE BUILDING PLACES OF WORSHIP AND ISLAMIC SCHOOLS.

TAP INTO FAITH LEADERS TO BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOP ALLIES FOR YOUR CAUSE.

RAMADAN IS AN IMPORTANT ANNUAL RELIGIOUS TRADITION MARKED BY FASTING, INCREASED PRAYERS, CHARITABLE GIVING AND THE RECITATION OF THE QURAN.

IN GENERAL, MUSLIMS ARE NOT AS LIKELY TO GIVE EN MASSE TO SOCIALLY TABOO OR TOUCHY ISSUES, BUT THE NEXT GENERATION IS CHANGING THIS.

"WE WANT TO USE GIFTS TO BREAK DOWN SOCIAL INJUSTICES."

FOR A FULL LIST OF REFERENCES, VIDEOS AND RESOURCES, PLEASE VISIT:

www.afpinclusivegiving.ca

The Muslim Philanthropy Conference was part of a series for fundraising professionals, donors, and volunteers to develop a greater understanding of the giving traditions and charitable interests of several diverse communities in Ontario. Organized by the AFP Greater Toronto Chapter and the AFP Ottawa Chapter, this initiative was generously funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's Partnership Project and the AFP Foundation for Philanthropy – Canada.