

# Scouts Canada and Canadian Muslim Organizations

by Dawood Zwink and John Plumadore

**M**uslim youth tend to live a pressure-filled, double-minded existence in western society. They have one life and culture at home with family and a separate, very different life with oftentimes opposing values and contradictions as soon as they are outside the home. Popular culture as a rule presents values, activities and relationships that are often alien, hostile and contradictory to Islamic norms. The Islamic alternatives only come as a result of conscious, significant investments by parents, families and Muslim organizations.

There is a huge need to develop additional educational, social, and recreational programs for Muslim youth across Canada. The World Scouting Movement offers an established and internationally recognized program that can meet many of the specific needs that are now missing or underserved in Muslim communities. To date there have been a limited number of Scouting groups established in Muslim communities.

However, those groups have created a positive history of Scouting experience. As a result, there are now senior Muslim leaders that have a rich history of Scouting as a result having grown up with Scouting in other countries, along with those who have personally experienced Scouts Canada's program. These leaders believe in the principles and benefits of Scouting. But the fact remains that there are still thousands of Muslim children that are not benefiting from the experiences and values Scouts Canada has to offer.

## The Value of Scouting's Program

We all know that Scouting is a vital program that not only provides fun, challenging and exciting activities for growing young people, it's also a valuable resource to develop self-discipline, life skills, the values of excellence, and

the qualities of responsible citizenship. In these difficult times, Scouting can and must be an instrument for positive change at the grassroots of society in Muslim communities.



Experiencing  
Scouting opens doors  
to opportunities.

Scouting is a program that prepares young people for mainstream community leadership. It even has the potential to reach faith-based Muslim schools that are not presently being served by any public organization. Experience shows that persons, young and old, who meet in the Scouting program, start with an assumption of shared values. That is extremely valuable in a world of increasing extremism, cynicism, and violence.

The friendships and relationships developed through Scouting experiences help to cultivate positive intra and interfaith understanding and relationships. These personal relationships can last a lifetime and become vital networks for a more harmonized community environment. Scouting is also that rare program that nurtures deep relationships of trust and respect across generations. It gives opportunities in its programming for the wise adult to listen and learn about the critical things young people must deal with. Listening and respect form a bridge that is essential in order to pass on wisdom and hard won experience from elders to the young. This connection is arguably the cement of community building; it is a key component in developing trust.

## Outreach Initiatives

In British Columbia's Pacific Coast Council, volunteer Ali Haider is spearheading an initiative with council field executive Viki Fanous. In Quebec Council, council field executive Sterling Lambert is undertaking outreach approaches to the Muslim community in the Greater Montreal Area. A Muslim Scout group, sponsored by the Muslim Association in Canada (MAC), is in its second year of operation. Chinook Council in Alberta has made some outreach steps to the Association of Islamic Communities in Calgary. Chinook Council field executive Rambo Homistace is working to further outreach opportunities within the Muslim community. Pacific Coast, Chinook and Greater Toronto Council also have a long established Scouting history with the Ismaili Muslim community.

In the Greater Toronto Council, volunteer Adrian Barker and staff member John Plumadore are building a Scouting organization that truly reflects the incredible ethnic diversity of the Greater Toronto Area. In addition, Greater Toronto Council has created a staff position to facilitate the development of local Scout groups for Muslim organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. Dawood Zwink, co-author of this article, is working with the Muslim community groups such as Masajid, Islamic centres, Islamic schools, and any other organization that serves significant numbers of Muslim children.

## Strategic Direction #6

Scouts Canada is committed to facilitate community building and embracing diversity. Together, partnerships between Scouts Canada and sponsoring Muslim organizations will make Scouts Canada's programs available so that the Muslim organization can achieve its youth mission and objectives. X

— John Plumadore is the National Community Development Director – Diversity. Dawood Zwink is an experienced Islamic worker who is also a trained Scouter (BSA) with extensive organizational experience. He's recently joined the GTC team to work closely with the Muslim organization in the Greater Toronto Council.

Photo 5413 Scout Group