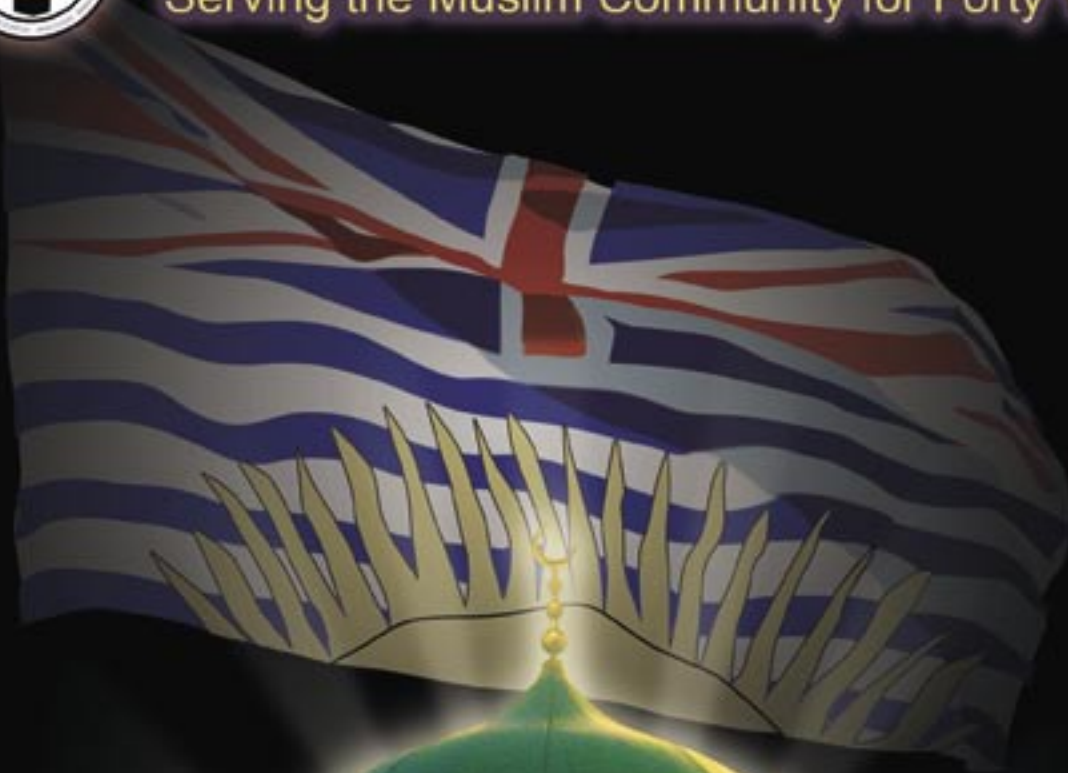




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# BC MUSLIM ASSOCIATION



## *40th Anniversary Committee Members*

### **Chairman**

Feroz Dean

### **Secretary**

Feroz Khan

### **Treasurer**

Firaz Yasin

### **Editor-Magazine**

Imaad Ali

### **Members**

Akbar Ali

Daud Ali

David Ali

Saiyad Ali

Farida Ali

Rashida Ali

Imroz Asin

Intiaz Asin

Sadrul Buksh

Jameel Desai

Hamida Hassan

Mohammed Hassan

Hazra Ismail

Feyoun Khan

Jumma Khan

Shiraz Khan

Hasan Mallam

Mohammed Yasin

### **Consultants**

Tazul Ali

Mahmood Awan

Farouk Elesseily

Syed V. Madani

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِیْعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا  
وَإِذْ كُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَیْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ  
أَعْدَاءً فَآلَفَ بَیْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ  
بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا



## *A Message from the Chairman of the BCMA 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Organizing Committee*

I thank Allah Subhan wa ta'ala for giving me an opportunity to reflect on this historic occasion. A milestone accomplishment, the BC Muslim Association is 40 years strong.

As we bring the 40th year to a close and open doors to the next decade, I sit back and reflect on the success, disappointment, and progress the community has experienced over the past 40 years. The vision of the founding members of the organization was profound. It was not found on a particular cultural, ethnic, nor linguistic line. Encompassing people from different nations and backgrounds under one organization, united by their one faith has been a great accomplishment.

The early pioneers did not have the luxury of modern technology to grow at today's pace. Each step taken by the officials had to be treaded carefully. Each and every member contributed to its growth. Many leaders came and left, leaving their legacies behind.

Today, we can hold our heads high and say that we have come a long way. The Canada we call home has been the fairest, most peaceful and accommodating place, regardless of where each one of us has come from. It is our duty to help build a strong, powerful and progressive nation which offers equal opportunity to all people.

In 38 years I have seen our organization grow to astounding heights. The majority of our early settlers came from underdeveloped countries, looking to make a new future in a new country. Many new faces appeared from many directions and contributed to the growth of a strong, dedicated and progressive organization in North America.

Our focus should now turn towards our future generations. This means educating, assimilating and integrating into the Canadian mainstream without sacrificing our cultural or religious values. The Muslim communities are on a march towards progress and prosperity, establishing religious, educational and social institutions for today and for the future. Our participation in all the affairs of this country is not credibly documented. The time has come for all leaders of this nation to recognize the strength of our community, which is a force to be reckoned with.

~~This event will be a landmark accomplishment for all members. Let us join hands to celebrate this occasion with pomp and splendor. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon all of us.~~

Feroz Dean







*Message from Daud Ismail*  
*President of The B.C. Muslim Association*

It is indeed a great honour and privilege to be part of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the B.C. Muslim Association. I feel blessed and am thankful to Allah Subhanuatallah for giving me this benefit.

So, we are 40 years old. That means richer and more rewarding years are beginning for us. Certainly, it has been a long and hard struggle to get to where we are today. We would not have achieved our goals and objectives without commitment, dedication, loyalty, hard work and above all strong moral and financial support from the Muslim community. YOU, the members, are the B.C. Muslim Association and its success is your success. You should be proud of it and celebrate it. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your unwavering support. We appreciate and recognize your contribution.

It is my duty to thank and recognize the sacrifice and contribution that all the past officials and members of the Association have given to our community. I must pay special tribute to our pioneers for their foresight and ingenuity. Their progress and achievements are remarkable. They were few in numbers but very close due to their common bond with the Kalimah Laa Ilaaha Illallah (there is no god but ONE God). They were vigorous and eager to do something not only to preserve their Islamic faith and identity in this new land but also to establish Islam as a way of life and to share our values with ordinary Canadians. This motivation led to the establishment of the B.C. Muslim Association in 1966 as a society under the Society Act of B.C. Globally, this was a unique situation; no other location in the world brings together such a diverse group of Muslims under one banner.

Alhamdulillah, the B.C. Muslim Association has since served its members and the Muslim community very well. Currently, we are the largest Muslim organization in the province with 11 locations for Islamic activities throughout the lower mainland including Kelowna, Nanaimo, Victoria, Abbotsford and Prince George. We own and operate seven mosques and Islamic centres, Elementary and High Schools from KG to Grade 10 and future plans for pre-school and grades 11-12. We employ nearly 60 people and our curriculum includes three languages – English, French and Arabic. Presently, we have six burial locations- 3 in lower mainland and one each in Victoria, Nanaimo and Kelowna. Other community services include Hajj, dawah work, dealing with media and issues affecting Muslims, marriage and counselling services, youth services and halal certification program. It is evident that the B.C. Muslim Association attempts to take care of our community from birth to death.

It is heartening to note that our sisters have been very active and equally contributed their share in the activities of the BCMA and on issues affecting women. They are on equal footing and an integral part of our success in every aspect of our operation. We are blessed with so many capable, dedicated, and loyal sisters who work diligently to cater to the needs of the sisters of all ages. They were equal partners in our construction projects working side by side with brothers; raising funds, participating in decision making and assisting in every way they could. They have been an inspiration to our youth and the elders.

I am persuading our young and talented youths and professionals to come forward and participate in the operation of the BCMA. You are the future leaders and officials of the BCMA. The community needs you. Please get involved, share



November 18, 2006

Greetings from the Prime Minister

It is with great pleasure that I extend my personal greetings to the British Columbia Muslim Association on the occasion of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Over the past 40 years, your organization has been active in promoting community leadership, education, welfare, and cross-cultural and interfaith activities. You can take great pride in your commitment to the growing Canadian Muslim community, especially in the province of British Columbia.

I would like to congratulate the members of the organizing team for their hard work and dedication to ensuring the success of this event you may take great pride in your efforts to encourage community involvement and engaged citizenry.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Government of Canada, please accept my warmest congratulations as you celebrate this significant milestone.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada





November 18, 2006

*A Message from the Premier*

As Premier of the Province of British Columbia, it is my pleasure to join with the BC Muslim Association in welcoming everyone to their 40th anniversary celebration at the Crystal York Center in Surrey.

The BC Muslim Association represents over 100,000 Muslims living in British Columbia. This evening is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate your faith, diversity and the spirit of brotherhood. British Columbia is proud to host such a spiritually powerful celebration. The highlight of this evening's event will be the recognition of Muslims who made significant contributions in the leadership, education, and welfare in their communities.

British Columbia is a truly multicultural place. The wonderful diversity within our province is shared through events such as this 40th anniversary celebration, enriching the lives of everyone attending. I would like to commend the BC Muslim Association for their time and effort to make this evening's event possible.

On behalf of the people of British Columbia, please accept my best Wishes for a great evening and a memorable event.

Gordon Campbell  
Premier

# BCMA 40th Anniversary Conceptual Plan

The B. C. Muslim Association was incorporated on November 17, 2006 (5 Sha'ban 1386).

This year with the Association reaching a milestone, the Executives, the Executive Council and the Trustees decided to respond to the importance of this occasion. Br Feroz Dean was assigned the task of organizing the event to mark the 40th anniversary. After some deliberation and consultation with key community members, namely Brs Syed Madani, Farouk Ellesseily, Mahmood Awan and Tazul Ali, a format was established by the chairman and Feroz Khan the secretary of the committee. Two representatives from each branch were appointed to the committee, plus members from the women's board and chapters and the youth. Some of the key elements of the concept were:

Create 2 sets of working groups

Administrative

Consists of 5-6 overseers (conceptualization of Ideas)

Put conceptual ideas on paper

Pick people to be in operational team

Operational

Consists of up to 10 people (Practical Implementation of Concepts/Ideas)

Members should consist of Women, Youth and Branch representatives

Prepare a budget

This whole event is to cost BCMA nothing

If anything we should make a profit and give it to BCMA

Identify Revenue and Expense streams

Sponsorships, advertising, ticket sales etc

Print a poster to advertise the event and display at all BCMA locations and various businesses

Print banners and place on various BCMA locations to advertise and celebrate occasion

Print a souvenir magazine publication

Magazine should convey history of BCMA via written

and pictorial means

Gala Dinner at Hotel

Invite various dignitaries, politicians, BCMA and non BCMA leaders/members

Make Certificates/Plaques to be given to deserving Senior BCMA people

With the above concept brs Feroz Dean and Feroz Khan began the enormous task of trying to materialize the idea. This involved Feroz Dean phoning Feroz Khan on a daily basis and discussing and putting the various ideas on paper and then following them through. The phone calls were frequent and often very late at nights usually around 11pm and usually lasting an hour. The discussion would be put on paper and implemented via the operational team. Various people with unique expertise were asked to join the administrative team and from there they began to pick the operational team. The securing of a facility to address our gala dinner requirements was one of the very first objective to be tackled. This proved to be a challenging assignment. Many hotels in downtown Vancouver were canvassed but non were found suitable due to either the date conflicting with our desired date or the price being beyond what was reasonable. In fact inquiries were made at a total of 10 different hotels in various municipalities throughout the lower mainland but to no avail. Eventually the committee chose a venue in Surrey, Crystal at York.

Once the operational team met it was decided that the whole concept should be broken down into many smaller projects such as posters, banners, magazine, video, sponsors to name a few. Even the operational team was further broken down into sub groups such, as the magazine committee-members who had specific expertise in this area and were instrumental in accomplishing this task. Many times we enlisted the services of non-committee members and here we acknowledge and recognize their contributions.

Throughout the various months that followed, the operational team met on a weekly basis to implement the objectives. At the end of October, 2006 the meetings were more frequent, usually twice a week. This required a huge commitment from all members and their families for meetings were held in the evenings, on weekends and even during Ramadhaan. While originally there were no plans on working or holding meetings during Ramadhaan,

unfortunately with the scope of the work involved, this was just not possible. On many occasions iftaar was broken at the Burnaby Masjid and meetings commenced right after Maghrib salah and a light meal. In fact, the magazine committee met frequently and on several occasions the meeting lasted until 1:30 in the morning. We are grateful to the Burnaby Branch and all its officials and members for accommodating our meetings even when they lasted up to the very wee hours of the night.

Some of the highlights of the planning and practices formulation resulted in a poster being created that was eventually displayed at all BCMA and at various other locations such as businesses, city halls, shops etc. The committee also created a banner to advertise our achievements and celebratory goals to both the Islamic and non-Islamic community. These banners were displayed on 4 specific Masajids, namely Masjid-ul-Jaami in Richmond, Masjid-ul-Haq in Vancouver, Masjid Taqwa in Surrey/Delta and the Burnaby Masjid complex. All BCMA branches and chapters including the Women's and Youth were advised to submit names of individuals they wanted to be recognized for their contributions towards the achievements of BCMA. The BCMA Council eventually approved the list. These individuals were recognized with either certificates or plaques as the branches/chapters deemed appropriate.

Another major function was the committee deciding to hold 'two nights to remember'. Namely, Friday 17/Nov/06 was to be an invitation from the Executives, the Executive Council and the Trustees of the association for all members to come and enjoy the festivities at 4 locations throughout the lower mainland, namely Masjid-ul Haqq in Vancouver, the Richmond Jamea Masjid, Masjid Taqwa in Surrey/Delta and the Burnaby Masjid. The program would incorporate religious lectures, speeches, locally recognizing various individuals and culminate with a delicious meal for all to enjoy. This was a free invitation to all members. On Saturday 18/Nov/06 the culmination of the whole event is to have a gala dinner at 'Crystal at York' hall in Surrey where dignitaries from all across Canada were invited to attend – from ambassadors, politicians, Muslim and non Muslim leaders to various business people.

It must be said that at first, and many times since then, this whole task seemed daunting, the projects so many, limited time left, yet with the help of Allah SWT as the 40th Anniversary team persevered and upon completion of various smaller projects and with the determination of making this event a success, we began to see light at the end of the tunnel. Our legacy is to make it easier, a guiding light, for the 50th Anniversary committee. All along the way the Executives and the Council were constantly informed and their approval sought. The chair of the committee recognizes and commends each individual committee member for his or her tireless sacrifices towards this project. May Allah SWT accept all our efforts and bless each one of us, our family members and the community at large for our sacrifices.

Allah SWT for His guidance, strength and





# Part 1

## SEED PLANTED

The year was 1966. It was an era of change and revolution around the world. The CBC became Canada's first television network to broadcast in color. The Luna 10 spacecraft orbited the moon. And boxer Muhammad Ali refused to serve in the U.S. army during the Vietnam War as a conscientious objector.

In British Columbia, there was an economic boom under Premier W.A.C. Bennett. Time magazine, in a September 1966 issue said the region was "surging with unprecedented prosperity." This economic growth resulted in an insatiable need for human resources in many industries in British Columbia, and the expanding province was also an attractive place to live. This success, combined with the liberalization of immigration policies in the 1960s resulted in many immigrants coming to make this province their home. Some of these early settlers were also fleeing persecution and political strife in their homelands.

Muslims however, had been in British Columbia since the roaring twenties, though only in sparse numbers. One of these early settlers was Salamat Khan, a South Asian from Hong Kong who had served in the British Army in the First World War. In 1923, upon his retirement from the military, he moved to New Westminster, where he worked in the lumber mills on the banks of the Fraser River. According to an article by Dr. Furkan Alam, a former professor at UBC, many Muslim families living on the coast of British Columbia, and in Washington, Oregon and California today are descendants of Muslim settlers who initially came to BC during the early part of the 20th century but were forced to move further south during the Great Depression of the 1930's.

After World War II, much of Canada's populations of new immigrants were people from the countries that had been ravaged by the two wars in Europe such as Italy and Britain. But Muslims were part of this post-war boom as well, albeit in smaller numbers. In 1949, Enver Imamovich, who would ultimately serve a prominent role in the BC Muslim community, immigrated to Canada. By 1954, he made his way west to British Columbia. Imamovich, who was of Yugoslavian origin had served in the British Army in Palestine. Upon his move to BC, he met a small, yet diverse group of other Muslims. Among them

was Abdur Rahman, who after being persecuted for his religion in Communist Russia fled to China for 20 years, before arriving in Canada. This small group which included Pakistanis, Egyptians, Turks, Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Indians and Russians would meet for prayers, Islamic festivals and even religious classes for their children. According to Furkan Alam, these Muslims found that Canadians were not very familiar with Islam or its followers, although European and British immigrants had some degree of knowledge.

In the 1950s this wave of post-war immigration included large groups of would-be Canadians from countries which were behind the iron curtain such as Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. The 1960's, however, gave rise to a larger increase in the number of non-European migrants and by 1970; the majority of immigrants were "people of color."

This group included a substantial number of Muslims who were ready to be active in establishing their





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Masjid Basmaly, Burnaby (B.C.M.A.)



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***“We Muslims, irrespective of where we originally come from, now that we find ourselves in strange surroundings and among strange faces, anxiously and eagerly look out for another Muslim.”***

***-: Report from a meeting to appoint the Islamic Adhoc committee (predecessor to the BCMA), July 2nd, 1966***

faith here in B.C. Immediately, Muslims began to get involved in the greater community. According to Dawood Hasan Hamdani, an Ottawa economist who has analyzed Muslim immigration to Canada, a church located on East 1st Avenue in Vancouver was built with the financial help of local Muslims. During the 1960's the Muslim population in the province underwent exponential growth. In 1964 there were just 300 Muslims in BC. By 1968, that number had more than doubled with 700 Muslims identified. In 1972, that number expanded to 2,000 (all figures are approximate).

Muslims in BC during this period were a diverse community. In 1971 John Norris wrote, in *Strangers Entertained*, a book published by the BC Centennial Committee as a study of 46 ethnic groups that contributed to life in British Columbia, “The Moslems in British Columbia are not an ethnic group in the proper sense of the word, but rather are members of a variety of groups, including Croats, Serbs, Albanians, Turks, Arabs, Iranians, Pakistanis, Indians, Chinese and Fijians. Only the Pakistanis--numbering about a hundred--have more than a few representatives. Most live in the Greater Vancouver area.”

Muslims began to form their own community groups as well. In 1963, a group of new Canadians from Pakistan formed the Pakistan Canada Association. The organization was housed in an old two-story building in Vancouver. On the first floor was a hall that served as a mosque and as a temporary lodging facility for newly arrived immigrants. The second floor was used for social gatherings such as dinners, weddings and religious festivals. By 1965, with the help of the entire Muslim community, they established the first Islamic Centre in western Canada, located on West 8th Avenue in Vancouver. The centre was used for religious classes, regular prayers and community meetings. Abdul Hafiz would serve as its Imam. Although the Pakistan Canada Association by-design is a group representing Canadians who are of Pakistani origin, the directors of the organization were welcoming to Muslims from all ethnic backgrounds and worked with them, in unison to meet the objectives of the new place of worship. This included the Yugoslav Enver Imamovich and Usman Ali and Mohammad Usman, who were both of Fijian origin. One year later, at a meeting in this building, the seeds would be planted for a multi-ethnic Muslim organization which would blossom into one of the most successful religious organizations in North America.

## Part II / 1966 -

# The Birth of the BC Muslim Association

As Muslims became part of the social fabric of British Columbia, it became abundantly clear that there were some collective needs for the community that were not being met. These were identified as infrastructure to provide Islamic education to children who were now being raised in a secular nation and a Mosque, or a “fixed place” of worship other than the Islamic centre being run by the Pakistan Canada Association. Although the Islamic Center did an excellent job of serving the needs of the Muslim community (which it continues to do today) a more central organization was required, with its own infrastructure as the Muslim community, as Dr. Furkan Alam described it, was becoming increasingly “cosmopolitan” as well as more diverse.

As well, building a Mosque was the first necessary step in establishing a Muslim community. When the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) migrated to Medina, the first action he took was to build a Mosque there, which is now known as the Prophet’s Mosque or Masjid-e-Nabwi. This Mosque became the centre of all Muslim activities. Deputations coming from other countries were received there and were generally put up there for accommodation (such as a group of Christians from Najran, etc). This Mosque also served as the centre for education, learning, and training. Mosques are therefore, not only for the purpose of worship alone but, also serve as the hub of all social, cultural, political and spiritual practices. As a result, building one became a priority.

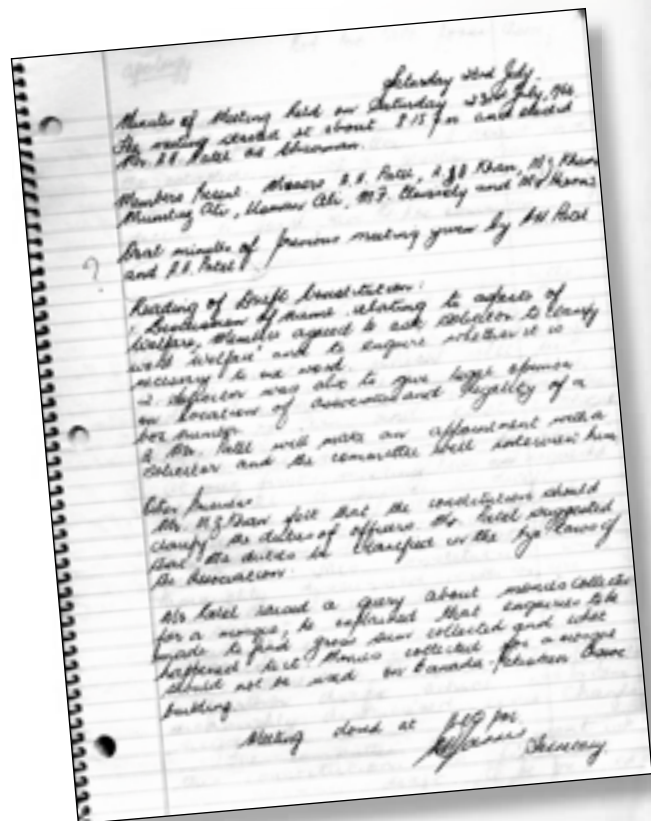
As a result, on July 2, 1966 a nine-member ad-hoc committee was appointed. Their goal was to form an organization under a constitution with input from the entire community (the original meeting notices invited both “Gentlemen and Ladies”). The plan was to establish these basic structures so work could begin “towards achieving our objectives and our ultimate goal—a Mosque in British Columbia.”

The committee’s first meeting took place on July 9, 1966 at 655 West 8th Avenue in Vancouver. The Islamic Centre at this address would be the central place of social and business gatherings for the association for years to come. It was also the birthplace of the BCMA.

In the yellow notebook in which the committee kept the minutes of the first meetings, the name of the

group which would evolve into the BCMA is scribbled across the front: “Ad-Hoc Islamic Committee.” At this inaugural session, these founding members delegated basic tasks to set up the organization. Abdullah H.Y. Patel was asked to draft a constitution, while Mohamed Ghamim Harris and Usman Ali were assigned to serve as secretary and treasurer, respectively. Mr. Ali was then given his first task as treasurer: to buy a lock for the committee’s finances, which were housed simply in a donation box, which was now in his care.

The struggle to establish the association financially is apparent in a speech made by a committee member at a public meeting that summer. At this meeting, Br. Patel’s initial draft of the constitution was introduced. The member (who is not identified in the archived book in which his speech was written) apologized for not sending a copy of the constitution to every Muslim in the province. He said “This has not been possible because we cannot afford to do it. We just did not have enough money.” The attendees were also asked



to help pay a one hundred dollar legal bill. The first set of official donations to the BCMA had been \$25.00 contributions given by the nine ad-hoc committee members to cover the costs of registering the organization, filing the constitution and the work of a consultant. Prior to that, the committee had pooled its money together to buy coffee, tea and biscuits for a meeting with the greater Muslim community.

Despite the financial challenges, these pioneers were aware of the opportunity that lied before the community. Their goal of forming an association was coming to fruition. The unidentified speaker declared "Today's meeting is quite unique in the history of the Muslims of B.C. For the first time, we have an opportunity to form an association, by approving the constitution which will be completely independent and which will be responsible to unite all the Muslims of B.C. and erect a Mosque in Vancouver."

The ad-hoc committee which had worked so hard to establish the association was disbanded on August 28th 1966. The plan was for seven members of the ad-hoc committee to be appointed as directors of the association. Mohamed Ghamim Harris, who was an immigrant from South Africa, declined the appointment, as he was moving to the town of Chase in the province's interior. He later helped establish the BCMA's presence in Kamloops. His place was taken by Khawja Mohammed Shahid, an immigrant from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) who was residing in B.C. but eventually left the province. Shahid would eventually become the first BCMA President. The six other directors were Mohammed Zainul (commonly known as M.Z.) Khan, a Pakistani who had immigrated to Canada in 1958 via the United States; Usman Ali, Mumtaz Ali, and Abdul Aziz Khan, all of Fijian origin; and Farouk Ellesseily, a young engineer from Egypt who had recently made Vancouver his home.

Through the fall of 1966, the directors met regularly. According to the original minutes, the meetings lasted three to four hours, and often concluded late at night. The founders were shaping the constitution, establishing official documents and forms, appointing the association's first directors and even opening an account with the Royal Bank. These individuals were already taking major responsibility for the organization. Their first official act after incorporation was to inform all local Muslims by telephone of the occurrence of Lailat-ul-Bara'h {Shab-e-Barat} which was celebrated at the Islamic Centre on West 8th Avenue on Sunday November 27, 1966.

Just ten days before Lailat-ul-Bara'h however, was the day that history was made. On the seventeenth of November, 1966, the B.C. Muslim Association was incorporated as a Society under certificate number 7532 of the Societies Act. This gave the organization official status as a non-profit religious entity with an unlimited life expectancy. This also came with responsibilities. The organization would have to hold Annual General Meetings, submit financial reports and elect a board. With that in mind, just three weeks after incorporation, the B.C. Muslim Association elected its first executive.

Six board members gathered on a cold Sunday afternoon in December to select the inaugural office bearers. The group had operated without a President until this day, as the chairpersons of the various meetings would rotate. After some discussion, these were the men assigned to the task of leading the BCMA's first executive:

- Khawja M. Shahid- President
- Abdullah H.Y. Patel- Vice-President
- Usman Ali- Secretary
- Mumtaz Ali- Treasurer

The first task for the organization was to sign up members. Mumtaz Ali along with M.Z. Khan and Abdullah H.Y. Patel were assigned to be the first membership committee. As 1966 came to an end, in just six short months, the Muslim community in British Columbia had achieved its dream. The B.C. Muslim Association was established. The ad-hoc committee was successful in building a structure under which the association could develop. The work of these founding members, the forefathers of the BCMA, laid the foundation for decades to come.



1/5322(s-)

NOTICE OF FIRST DIRECTORS

| <u>Name</u>              | <u>Address</u>                          | <u>Occupation</u>      |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Mohammed Zainul Khan     | 481 East 11th Ave.,<br>Vanc. 10, B.C.   | Civil<br>Engineer      |
| Abdul Aziz Khan          | 1144 Pacific St.,<br>Vanc. 5, B.C.      | Diesel<br>Mechanic     |
| Khwaja Shahed (Mohammed) | # 3/1240 Haro St.,<br>Vanc. 5, B.C.     | Senior<br>Technician   |
| Farouk Elesseily         | 1871 East 7th Ave.,<br>Vanc., B.C.      | Telecom.<br>Technician |
| Mumtaz Mohammed Ali      | 2245 West 5th Ave.,<br>Vanc. 9, B.C.    | Clerical<br>Accountant |
| Abdul Hai Patel          | # 52/1831 Robson St.,<br>Vanc. 5, B.C.  | Accountant             |
| Usman Ali                | # 3/3024 Alberta St.,<br>Vanc. 10, B.C. | H.D. Mechanic          |

Dated 27<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) day of OCTOBER 1966

A. H. Patel  
A. H. Patel

3116080  
FILED and REGISTERED  
NOV 17 1966  
A. H. HALL,  
REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES

“ SOCIETIES ACT ”

CANADA: }  
Province of British Columbia. }



No. 7532

# Certificate of Incorporation

I hereby certify that

" THE B. C. MUSLIM ASSOCIATION "

has this day been incorporated as a Society under the " Societies Act."

The locality in which the operations of the Society will be chiefly carried on is

City of Vancouver, Province of British Columbia.

GIVEN under my hand and Seal of Office at Victoria, Province of

British Columbia, this -seventeenth- day

of November, one thousand nine hundred

and sixty-six

A. H. HALL

Registrar of Companies.



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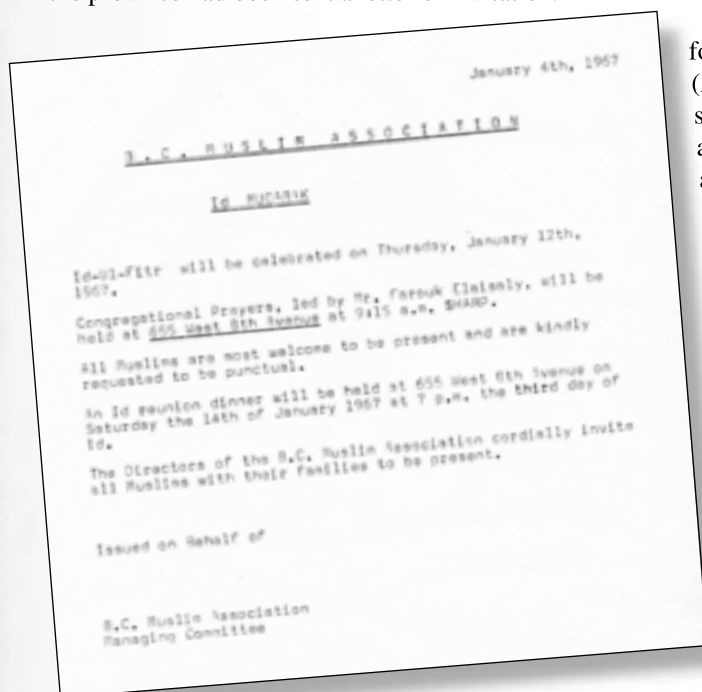
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## Part III / 1967-1979

# Growth & Progress

Less than two months after the incorporation of the BCMA as a society, the organization held its first official Eid prayer on January 12, 1967 at the Vancouver Islamic centre, led by Farouk Eleisely. The day of the Eid prayer had been decided on by the BCMA at a board meeting on New Year's Eve 1966. To celebrate the occasion, an Eid reunion dinner was also held on behalf of the BCMA by the board members with Abdul Aziz Khan leading the crew of volunteers which prepared the food. All Muslims in the province had been sent a letter of invitation.



Although the prayers and festivities were a success, there were some problems as well. At a meeting ten days after Eid, the board had declared that there had been some confusion in regards to the dinner. It turned out that at the Eid dinner, some board members wanted it to be a religious event and an opportunity to sign up members, while President Shahid suggested that the dinner was a purely social gathering. The board unanimously agreed that there was a misunderstanding.

There was also some debate regarding member-

ship dues. It had been suggested by some board members that the monthly membership fee of two dollars was too burdensome for some Muslims who had to meet other obligations. Initially, two dollars a month may not seem like a lot of money. But two dollars in 1966, according to the Bank of Canada, would be equivalent to twelve dollars and fifty-one cents today. That would be an annual membership fee of \$150.12 in 2006. More than six times the current BCMA annual membership fee. The amount was eventually changed to an annual five dollar payment.

In April that year, the organization took a huge step forward by holding its first Annual General Meeting (AGM). At the AGM, the group decided to redefine its structure by assigning various sub-committees to look after the various goals of the association. In order to attract more members, the Secretary was asked to make a list of all Muslims in B.C. He would then draft an address book of all these brothers and sisters. At the time, the only sources of information available were the administration office of UBC (which was the only University in the province at the time), the Pakistan Canada Association and friends of the committee members. As well, Aziz Khan was compiling a list of all Muslims from Fiji who were in the province, while Abdullah Patel did the same for Turkish Muslims. With Khwaja M. Shahid leaving his post, Br. Patel had taken on the role of President.

The group also started an education program for youngsters. Children were taught Sunday school classes every Sunday for two hours before Dhur (noon) prayers.

The secretary at the time was Murtuza Ali, a name familiar with Muslims across the province as he is still active within the BCMA forty years later. Ali, who is from Fiji, had been with the organization from the beginning, and was one of the youngest people involved. His responsibilities included serving on what was known as the reception committee. The existence of this committee was a sign of the times. With Muslims arriving in the province in droves during this period, not just as immigrants but as students as well, it was necessary to



facilitate a way for the BCMA to connect with these Muslim men and women and connect them with their faith here in B.C. An early association document states that the BCMA was made up of "Muslims from Canada and the USA, and from the sub-continent of India and Pakistan, from the islands of Fiji, in the South Pacific; of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Yemen, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrein (SIC), and Sudan; from the historic lands of Turkey, Yugoslavia, Albania; from Mauritius, Malaysia and Indonesia; from the friendly islands of the Carribeans (SIC), and a few from the South American continent." The organization was certainly an immigrant group that was diverse beyond its years, and this was only in 1967. As a result, Murtuza Ali, Gani Mohammed and Mumtaz Ali, who served on the committee, were able to receive notification from the Federal Government when new immigrants would come to the province and identify their religious denomination as "Muslim" or "Islam." The BCMA was notified by the Canadian department of Manpower and Immigration when new Muslims arrived with notification cards.

New Muslim arrivals identified by the BCMA would be given a welcome message from the association. It read "...it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Vancouver. If you have the interest of your religion at heart contact one of the directors- he will be only too glad to let you know how best he can help." The new arrival was also given a list of the names, phone numbers and addresses of the directors and a list of the organization's activities. Unfortunately, shortly after the BCMA began doing this, a letter arrived from the Community Information Service stating that due to a policy change in the Department of Immigration, it would no longer be possible to provide information regarding the religion of new immigrants. The reason was that in order to avoid the appearance or implication of discrimination, the government eliminated questions relating to race or religion from admission documents.

Murtuza Ali would also write letters, on behalf of the sub committee to local hotels. In a letter sent to the Airport Inn, the Hotel Vancouver, the Bayshore Inn and the Hotel Georgia on July 27, 1967, he writes "Dear Sir...we are the newly formed B.C. Muslim Association in Vancouver...when ever you have a booking for any 'Muslim traveler' from any part of the globe, or even if someone drops in without having a reservation...all we want is to meet them and talk about religion and so forth." This was a successful endeavor. A week later, the manager of the Hotel Vancouver wrote to the BCMA, saying "we would be happy to inform guests...of your newly formed association...and extend this added courtesy our Muslim guests."

Other committees formed at the inaugural AGM included burial, Publication, and children's teaching committees. As well, a Mosque and membership committee was set-up to visit homes of individual Muslims, make them members and take their ideas and suggestions about the organization and its goals for a Masjid in Vancouver. The BCMA also established that Quran Daras had to become a key part of their activities. As a result, they formed a committee including non-board members Gani Mohammed, Ahmed Salaam and Abu-Bakr Sidique to work with Aziz Khan to establish a regular, bi-monthly Quran Daras with different speakers that would be open to any Muslim who wished to attend.

In 1967, the BCMA also took the giant leap of becoming registered as a charitable organization with the Federal Government in Ottawa. At the time, it was one of the first few registered Muslim charities. Today, there are over 200 registered across the country. This move led to an establishment of a trust fund, under the guise of five trustees for the funds for a Mosque. The board had a mandate to:



1. Raise funds and subsequently purchase land to build a Mosque in the city of Vancouver.
2. Deposit these funds under a Mosque Fund bank account. The money would remain under the trust of the officers and could only be spent on building a Mosque.
3. Announce the names of the donors regularly. This way, if it became impossible to build a Mosque, the funds would be returned to the donors irrespective of any time limitations.

| BALANCE-SHEET                         |          | Society                    |         |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|---------|
| For the Period Ending April 30, 1967. |          |                            |         |
| PARTICULARS OF INCOME                 |          | PARTICULARS OF EXPENDITURE |         |
| Balance B/F                           | \$11.35  | Postage and Stationery -   | \$17.00 |
| Ent. and membership Fees              | \$336.00 | Bank S/Charges             | .45     |
| Donations                             | 227.26   |                            |         |

Before purchasing any land, however, the organization was focused on enhancing the resources available for Islamic education both for Muslims and non-Muslims. The board members wrote to contacts abroad to obtain Muslim literature, and it arrived from as far away as the Middle East and Lahore, Pakistan. The board members were also active in playing a leadership role when it came to teaching Islam to others. For example, the department of Education of Simon Fraser University (which was a new University, and also opened its doors in 1966) was seeking information on Islam for a new course it was developing on comparative religion. As a result, SFU contacted BCMA, and these two new organizations which would become staples in the province worked together as the board of directors sent the University a three page document titled "The Religion of Islam: Its Creed and Teachings." The paper discussed the Quran, the Prophet Mohammed (SAW) and the five pillars of Islam. The last part introduced the BCMA and its functions.

That package sent to SFU was the last act conducted

during the first Presidential term of Abdullah H.Y. Patel, as shortly after, he tendered his resignation. Br. Patel resigned by sending an elaborate, thorough twelve page letter to the board of directors in which he discussed his reasons for leaving, the events that lead up to his resignation, his frustration with what he perceived as a lack of adherence to the constitution, and his hope for the future of the BCMA.

Br. Patel's letter is significant because he wrote it for the purpose of there being a written record so Muslims of the future could learn from what had occurred. He said it was "...an attempt to keep record, build the history on the development of the association so that future directors and Muslims can use it for future reference." At the end of his letter, Br. Patel left a passage to be passed on which captures the spirit of brotherhood and volunteerism that was found in the BCMA then and now:

*"To all those who love this Association,  
To all those who want to see this Association thrive,  
To all those who love and reverence the Book,  
And earnestly strive to find in it,  
Not a reflection of their own fancies,  
But a clue to unity, discipline  
And the call to Higher Matter of the Spirit,  
I dedicate this humble effort at interpretation,  
The fruit of my life, thought and study.  
Servant of Allah and of Islam*

A.H.Y. Patel"

With Br. Patel's resignation, M.Z. Khan became interim President. Later, the post was given to Dr. Semih Tezcan, a UBC Professor who had served as the Founding President of the Turkish Canadian Society from 1963 to 1968. Dr. Tezcan also served as chairman of the BCMA's board of trustees.

By 1969, it appeared that there was a problem arising. Many people in the community were expressing that they felt there was a rift emerging between the hierarchy of the BCMA and its membership. As a result, the Board of Directors called on their new secretary Hasan Mohammed to draft a Questionnaire to gauge the members' feelings on various issues. The twelve questions given asked of the membership on June 30th, 1969 were:

1. Would you like to be an active and financially paid member?
2. Given the opportunity, would you like to serve as a director or trustee?
3. Do you think the annual membership fee of five dollars is reasonable? If not, should the amount be increased or decreased?
4. Do you approve of the present directors and trustees?
5. Would you like to see a change in the present office bearers?
6. Do you think religious classes for children should continue?
7. Would you be interested in an adult Arabic class?
8. If we made a sincere effort to organize Jummah prayers on Fridays during lunch hour would you be able to participate?
9. Is our newsletter of any value to you?
10. Should Eid prayer take place in the Islamic Centre or in a rented hall?
11. Can you afford to pay a dollar a month for charity or zakat?
12. Social activities are few and far between. Any suggestions?

The eighth question, regarding Jummah prayers was surprisingly answered in the negative by most brothers. Although they realized the importance of Jummah, it was

This situation is very different today, as many Muslims now own businesses and run companies. In the late 1960's Canadian employers weren't quite ready to let Muslim workers have some extra time off on Friday afternoons to attend congregational prayers. As a result, the Dhur prayer was conducted on Friday and the community prayed in congregation on Sunday. The survey results showed that the members were happy with the association, but felt that it could do more to include activities for the whole family to partake in.

In March of 1969, Farouk Elesseily became the first BCMA director to make a Pilgrimage to Mecca. Mumtaz Ali and Usman Ali wished him well on his trip at the airport as he was about to undertake the journey of a lifetime. Twenty four years after Br. Elesseily made this trip, the BCMA offered its first ever Hajj package for members.

Br. Elesseily was not only a pioneer in performing Hajj; he was at the centre of many "firsts" in BCMA history. The most significant of these is his appointment as the first Muslim marriage officer in the history of British Columbia on June 11, 1970. At the time, Muslims would have to marry before the Courts in order for the marriage to be "official." Later, they would perform traditional Islamic ceremonies which were meaningless before the law. Now, with Br. Elesseily's appointment, it was possible for Islamic ceremonies to serve as the couple's

Form 2

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES AND HOSPITAL INSURANCE  
DIVISION OF VITAL STATISTICS

(Central Office Use Only)  
100401 A

**REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGE**

1. PLACE OF MARRIAGE:  
Name of city, village, town, district municipality or place "ISLAMIC CENTER" VAN. 8. B.C.  
(If outside city or municipal limits add "Rural")  
Street or Road 655 W. 8th. AVE. House No. \_\_\_\_\_  
(IF MARRIAGE OCCURRED IN A CHURCH, GIVE NAME, IF IN A PRIVATE RESIDENCE GIVE STREET AND NUMBER)

2. PRINT name in full ABU-SHARIFE (Surname)  
ARAB (Given or Christian names)

3. Trade, profession or kind of work as lumber piler, logger, fisherman, office clerk, etc. MENTAL TECH, APPRENTICESHIP

4. Kind of industry or business as lumber mill, logging, fishing, bank, etc. \_\_\_\_\_  
(If "labourer" specify kind of work above)

5. Bachelor \_\_\_\_\_

impossible for most of them to attend. This was due to the fact that there was only one location for the prayers, so it was not a short trek from everyone's workplace. As well, at this point in Canadian history, Muslims represented a small portion of the workforce, and many of them worked for others as opposed to owning or running their own firms.

official marriage. For years, the BCMA had wanted one of its leaders to pursue becoming a marriage officer. At the time, however, it was difficult to be granted this post. Under new President Mohammed Iqbal, the board looked for a member who was qualified for this post based on Islamic knowledge, educational background and character. Eventually, Br. Elesseily was nominated and earned the right by applying to the provincial government. He is still



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\*Millions Recovered represents gross recoveries in numerous cases and is not to be interpreted as the value in any one case. The value of each claim is dependent on the merit of the claim and injuries suffered

"MARRIAGE ACT"

# Certificate of Registration

Mr. Hasan Mohammed  
 Secretary  
 3329 East Sixth Avenue  
 VANCOUVER 12, B. C.

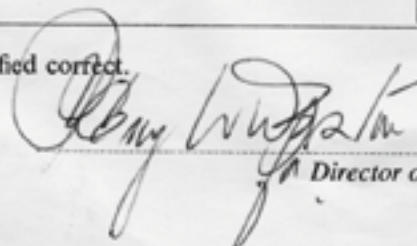
June 11, 1970

SIR:

The following ministers or clergymen under your authority have been registered with this Division on the 11th day of June, 1970, as duly authorized to solemnize marriage within the Province of British Columbia:—

| NAME                    | ADDRESS                         | CERTIFICATE No. |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mr. Farouk A. Elesseily | 310-1225 Cardero St., Vancouver | #10915          |

Certified correct.



Director of Vital Statistics.

njr

conducting Muslim marriages in the province today, and has performed over 300 ceremonies.

On September 5th, 1970, at the Islamic centre on West 8th Avenue, just three months after he became a registered marriage officer Ellesseily performed the first official Muslim marriage in the province. This was the marriage of Arab Abu-Sharife, who would become an incredibly active member of the BC Muslim association, serving on various committees and boards. In later years, Br. Abu-Sharife also became a marriage officer.

In 2000, thirty years after becoming a marriage officer, Br. Ellesseily, while serving as the chair of the BCMA Real Property Trustees attended a three month course in Cairo on Islamic Finance. He passed all the tests and requirements for earning the title of Sheikh for Imam and Da'i.

The BCMA spent part of the late 1960's looking for a Muslim burial ground. Early on, there were some problems as it was not a common custom to sell areas of burial plots in large numbers to any particular community or group. There were, for example, Chinese sections and other ethnic sections of graveyards, but it was simply a custom and not a rule regulated by a pre-paid system that people of a certain group were buried there. As a result, an early request for a plot of land to be used as a Muslim burial ground from the City of Vancouver (which operated some cemeteries) fell through.

One evening, Br. Ellesseily received a call from the RCMP. They informed him that an unidentified man of Russian origin had died. This individual was a Muslim and the RCMP suggested that Br. Ellesseily, as a Muslim should conduct the burial for the deceased person. He agreed to perform the funeral, even though he had never done it before. In order to make sure he complied with all Islamic burial practices, Br. Ellesseily stayed up all night, revising Islamic texts regarding proper procedures. The next day, he and Arab Abu-Sharife went to the funeral parlor to perform the ghusl or washing of the body. They brought other brothers to perform Janaza and buried the body in Fraser cemetery. At this time there were no procedures for funerals.

It wasn't until 1976, under burial committee chairman Arab Abu-Sharife when the BCMA would negotiate and purchase 304 burial plots at Ocean View Cemetery in Burnaby. Feroz Dean and Hasan Mohammed negotiated and hammered out this deal for the community.

During its first ten years, the BCMA became heavily involved in many community projects. In 1976, Vancouver hosted the United Nations Habitat Conference from May 31st to June 11th. The twin priorities of Habitat were sustainable cities and adequate shelter for all. On June 6th, which fell on a Sunday, the BCMA held an open house for all Muslim delegates and their friends. This was seen as a great opportunity for the association to build an international image. The next UN Habitat Conference wasn't held until twenty years later in Istanbul, Turkey.

Later that year, BCMA President Abdul H.Y. Patel represented the association in Montreal at the annual advisory council meeting of the Council of Muslim Communities of Canada (CMCC). Attendees included Dr. Muhammad Abdul-Rauf from the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. and representatives from the Muslim World League. The BCMA received warm words from the CMCC for its participation: "...your advice, realism, and commitment inspired and stimulated delegates and the distinguished guests."

As the organization's presence grew, the BCMA was no longer having to reach out to community organizations. Rather, these groups began asking the association with help on certain matters. This included Douglas College, requesting a speaker on Islam, and Riverview Hospital. The hospital's librarian wrote a letter to the BCMA requesting literature, magazines and newspapers to accommodate some of their patients.

By 1970, the Muslim population in the province had more than doubled from about 200 to over 500 Muslims. The membership of the BCMA grew at a much slower rate, however. A membership list from 1972 shows 129 registered names. With a small Muslim population, and an even smaller number of members, it was difficult to raise funds for the goal of building a Masjid in Vancouver. The organization decided it needed outside help. Letters were sent to the embassies of major Muslim and Middle Eastern countries, as well as to Muslim organizations which had already been established in North America. In June of 1970, some success finally came to the BCMA's fundraising goals as the embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington D.C. donated \$5,000 USD towards the Mosque fund (This was a significant amount. The median household income at the time was around \$8,000). The government of Kuwait added \$4,000 USD in December of 1978, while Iraq gave \$2,000 CDN in October of 1981.



In 1973, the association decided to send two members, Sikander Tayob and Ahmed Murad as delegates on behalf of the BCMA to collect money for the Mosque project in the Middle East. Unfortunately, this trip did not yield the expected results. Br. Tayob and Br. Murad traveled, via London to Syria. In Damascus, they met with Grand Mufti Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro. The Sheikh could not offer any financial assistance but offered to send literature. Other Syrian officials told Brothers Tayob and Murad, according to their report, that financial assistance could not be obtained unless there was a formal application with the details of their project.

Upon arriving in Lebanon, the pair could not track down the Grand Mufti and were advised that no one else could help them. In Baghdad, they met with Khalis Azmi, the Director General of Public Religion in the Ministry of External Affairs. Again the buck was passed as Brothers Tayob and Murad were told to write to the Iraqi ambassador in Ottawa with details of the project. They were also given some Islamic literature, and their visit was featured in the Baghdad Observer newspaper.

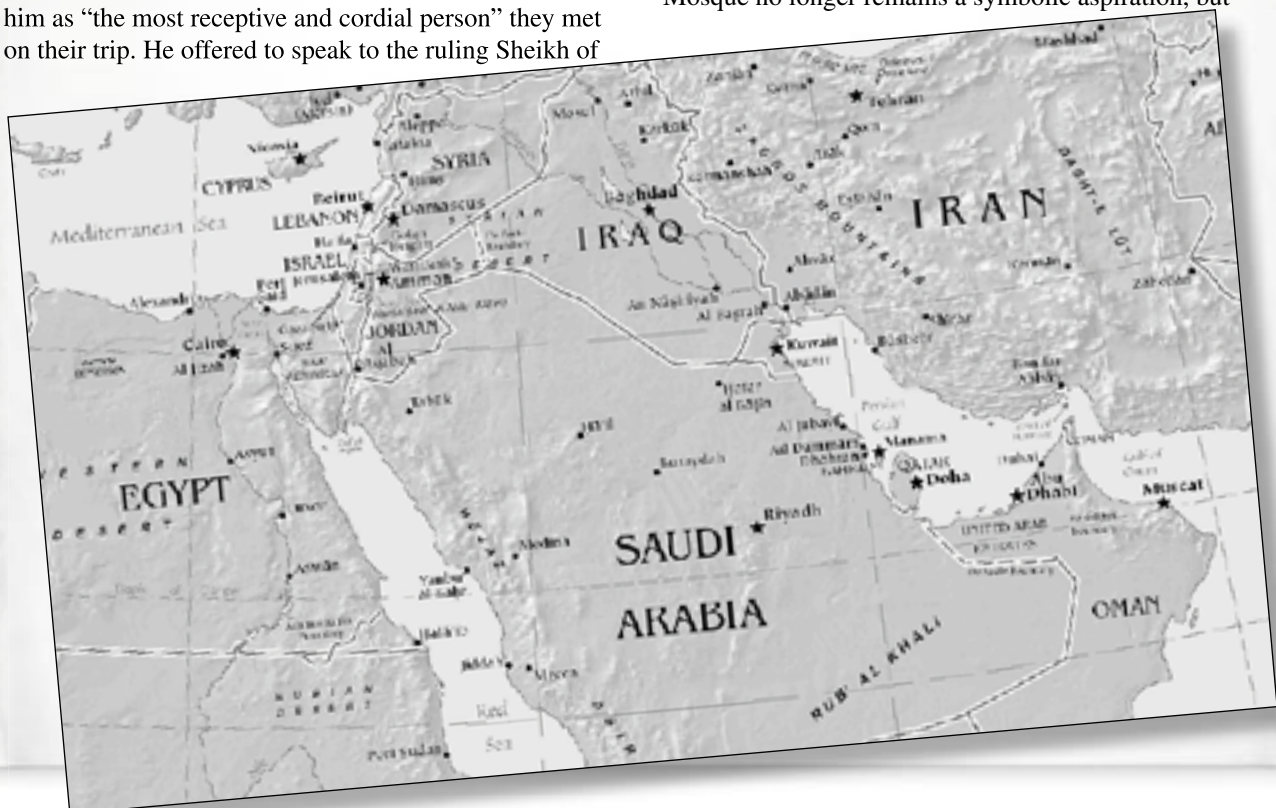
In Kuwait, the brothers tracked down Rashid Al-Farhan, the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. Again, they were told to send a formal request to an embassy. They were given the same answer in Bahrain and Oman.

In Qatar, Brothers Tayob and Murad met Sheikh Issa Kawari, the Director of the Ruler's Palace. They described him as "the most receptive and cordial person" they met on their trip. He offered to speak to the ruling Sheikh of

Qatar, but again, requested a more formal application. In the United Arab Emirates, they met Ali Riyad, the Deputy Director of Muslim Affairs who agreed to take the matter to cabinet. Visa constraints kept the members from visiting Saudi Arabia and Libya. They wrote in their report to the association in June that they were "optimistic" about their results, but unfortunately, the trip yielded no cash rewards.

The association then began looking for options within Canada. Faiz Mohammed, who was serving as the BCMA treasurer wrote letters to John Reynolds, who was serving as the Member of Parliament for the riding of Burnaby-Richmond-Delta, requesting a loan for the construction of the Mosque. Mr. Reynolds went ahead and forwarded the request to Barney Danson, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs and Multiculturalism Minister John Munro. Minister Danson replied that although he was sympathetic to the needs of the BCMA, there was no avenue to secure funding for a Mosque. Minister Munro said that his department's criteria did not allow the funding of major capital projects.

A mosque was quickly becoming necessary for practical reasons, as well as symbolic and theological ones. In an early BCMA letter, Mumtaz Ali writes "...The Association has organized itself to ensure the preservation of the Islamic culture among the Muslims and to uphold the banner of Islam in this part of the world. A Mosque no longer remains a symbolic aspiration, but



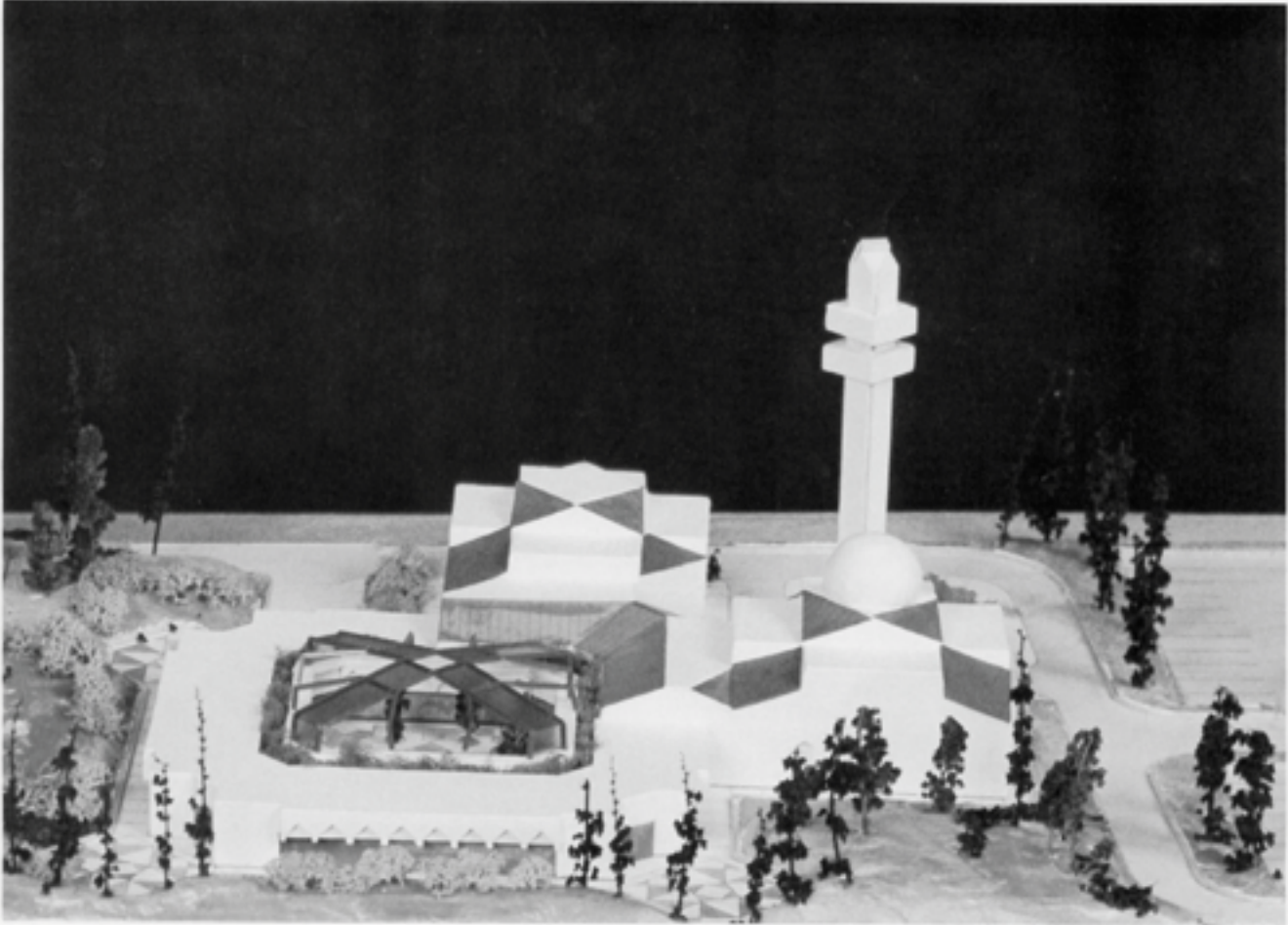


*Images of original brochure distributed in 1981 to raise funds for Richmond Mosque*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْمَسْجِدُ الْجَامِعُ

**AL MASJID-UL-JAAMI**



**PROPOSED MASJID AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (RICHMOND)  
VANCOUVER, B.C., CANADA**

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

*'And hold together firmly to Allah's rope and do not separate'  
The Quran 3:103*

جَمِيعَةٌ مُسْلِمِي بَرِيْتَشِ كَلْمَبِيَا

**THE B.C. MUSLIM ASSOCIATION**

POSTAL STATION "D", P.O. BOX 34395, VANCOUVER, B.C. V6J4P3 CANADA

## GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The proposed Mosque will be located in Richmond which is approx. 8 km from the Vancouver International Airport. Vancouver, British Columbia is situated on the west coast of Canada. It is a shipping port and a principal air centre linking North America to Asia & Europe. This beautiful city carries a population of 1.5 million.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSLIM ASSOCIATION (BCMA)

BCMA was incorporated on November 17, 1966 under the Societies Act of British Columbia and is also registered with the Department of National Revenue, Canada as a charitable organization. The Association represents over 8000 Sunni Muslims in the Province of British Columbia. The first Muslim settlers arrived at the turn of the century. Since then, Muslims have come from all over the world. Our numbers increased significantly during the early 60's. The need to organize ourselves into a community led to the formation and registration of B.C. Muslim Association.

Serious efforts were made to acquire premises and provide facilities to meet both the Islamic and cultural demands of the community. In 1974, the Association purchased two hectares (4.75 acres) of land in the municipality of Richmond for \$120,000 which was raised entirely by the Muslims of British Columbia except for \$5000 and \$4200 which were the courteous donations of the Saudi Arabian and Kuwait Governments. A further parcel of land (0.1 hectares or ¼ acre) adjacent to the property was purchased for \$54,000, again totally with funds of the Muslim community of British Columbia. After considerable effort and negotiations, the Association managed to acquire special use permit on October 15, 1980, for use of this land as a Community Project. Immediately on obtaining this, the Association surveyed the site, completed site preparation for the foundations and commenced with working drawings for the Project. These have now been finalized and the necessary application for a Building Permit has been made on October 15, 1981.

Since its inception, the association established regular congregational prayers, conducted Islamic activities to include religious classes for children and adults and performed religious ceremonies. The Association currently holds 800 burial plots in the Greater Vancouver area.

**Our present facilities are overcrowded and inadequate to meet the growing needs of the Community. The proposed Mosque and Islamic Centre will provide a centralized location to co-ordinate all our activities and the expanded facilities will meet our current and future needs.**

Up to the present time, approximately \$600,000 has been raised from the Muslims within this Province. Over \$300,000 from this amount has been utilized towards the purchase of the land and the development of the site, and a further \$200,000 was raised to purchase burial plots and a modest church within the municipality of Surrey. The Church has now been renovated and converted into a Mosque.

**The Association appeals to Muslims all over the world to assist in the further development and completion of this noble project.**

## MOSQUE PROJECT

The project is a design which will emphasize the Islamic character and will functionally respond to the main objective namely, the religious activities prescribed by the Shariah.

The structure will provide a mixed use occupancy area with the central feature being the prayer hall.

## THE PROJECT CONSISTS OF THREE PHASES:

**Phase I** — to include prayer hall, multi-purpose hall, kitchen & administration facilities.

**Phase II** — to include classrooms, child care facilities and a glazed court in an outdoor recreational area.

**Phase III** — to incorporate Minaret in an open plaza.

***Our immediate target is the Construction and Completion of Phase I***

## SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PROJECT:

### PHASE I: Main floor to consist of:

- Prayer hall
- Multi-purpose hall & classrooms
- Kitchen facilities
- Ablution & washroom facilities
- Storage
- Ancilliary facilities

**TOTAL AREA ..... 8,107 Sq. Ft.**

### Upper floor to consist of:

- Ladies' Prayer hall
- Administration offices
- Child care facilities
- Ablution & washroom facilities for ladies

**TOTAL AREA ..... 2,596 Sq. Ft.**

**GROSS AREA ..... ~~10,703~~ 10,703 Sq. Ft.**

### PHASE II: to include:

- Classrooms & child care facilities ..... 5,000 Sq. Ft.
- Glazed court ..... 2,500 Sq. Ft.

**TOTAL AREA ..... 7,500 Sq. Ft.**

## COST BREAKDOWN OF PROJECT

- Land costs ..... \$174,000
- Municipal development & permits ..... \$ 35,000
- Consultants' fees ..... \$ 75,000
- Site preparation for foundation .. \$ 64,000
- Sub-structure..... \$209,000
- Super structure ..... \$444,000
- Finishing costs ..... \$343,000
- External services..... \$182,000
- Contingencies & supplementary costs..... \$ 74,000

Estimated cost of Phase I ..... \$1,600,000

Projected construction cost of Phase II ..... \$ 800,000

Projected construction cost of Phase III ..... \$ 200,000

**TOTAL ESTIMATE OF PROJECT .... \$2,600,000**

**Your contributions for this worthy cause will be highly appreciated.**

**MAY ALLAH BLESS YOU**

***Please Mail Your Cheque or Money Order to:***

**THE B.C. MUSLIM ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 34395, Postal Station 'D'  
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6J 4P3**

it has become a very vital necessity for the ever-increasing faithful who are migrating to the Province of British Columbia.”

**W**ith extremely limited resources, the BCMA initially made an effort to purchase a 0.91 acre lot in the 2500 block of SW Marine Drive in Vancouver (near Marine and West 54th). Unfortunately, Vancouver City Hall determined the land was to be used for industrial use only, and could not be zoned for community purposes. At this point in BCMA history, with very low funds and a small pool of Muslims to draw donations from, the organization was not interested in the type land development that would occur decades later in Richmond and Burnaby. The next attempt at buying property involved a lot situated at Imperial and Macpherson Street in Burnaby (right off of Kingsway, near Deer Lake). There was a community hall on this property, which was in poor condition. The BCMA showed keen interest and ended up making an offer, but unfortunately, the deal fell through. It would be over 30 years before the BCMA returned to Burnaby, at a property just two miles away.

In 1970, a Church located on Newport Avenue and Nanaimo Street near the Fraserview golf course went up for sale. The church had a hall that functioned as an institution for mentally challenged children. The location was ideal, in the heart of the city of Vancouver; and the hall was in good condition. As well, it had institutional zoning. The BCMA began to negotiate with the realtors and finally made an offer of \$70,000 (about \$375,000 in 2006 dollars). After a two month wait, the owners finally decided not to sell.

Towards the end of 1970, the membership grew frustrated at the inability to secure a mosque site. At the time, much of the area of Champlain Heights was under development. M.G. Edwards, the BCMA President at the time took two other members of the board of directors with him and met with the City of Vancouver's planning supervisor, who then assured them that during the second phase of development in Champlain Heights, there would be a provision for the site of building a Mosque. This second phase was to be in the area of Boundary Road and 49th Avenue. The BCMA was told that the land would go on sale "on bid" conditions. The association then made a formal application to the City. Two years later, the Vancouver City Council and Mayor Thomas Campbell invited the association to petition its case. The city turned out to be quite unsympathetic to the cause of the BCMA, and after much political wrangling; the council-

ors decided that there could be a Mosque building site in Champlain Heights. The only catch was that the site could not be sold outright to the BC Muslim Association, only leased. City Council had no precedent for such a policy and the Muslim community was shocked and disappointed.

Leasing a site for a Mosque was unacceptable. The association's goal was to erect a structure for generations to come. The objective was to ensure that although their children would not be raised in a Muslim country, they would have the tools to practice their faith. Furthermore, in Islam it is unlawful for Muslims to offer a Mosque in trade for sale or barter, as it must remain a place of worship.

The BCMA also looked at a church on Earles Street near Kingsway. Unfortunately, the church refused to sell the property to any other religious group and sold the land to a private developer.

The organization needed a clear plan to move forward with the Mosque project. The options they had were to either purchase an existing church or building and convert it to a Mosque; or to purchase new land and build the Mosque there. In order to determine what the community wanted, the BCMA held a referendum, with a question sheet circulated on October 17, 1971. At the time of the referendum, the BCMA had just fewer than 23 thousand dollars in the Mosque trust fund, including the five thousand from the Saudis. An assessment informed them that purchasing land and building a Mosque with all necessary facilities would cost 50 thousand dollars. The clear winner in the referendum was the option of purchasing land for the construction of a new Mosque.

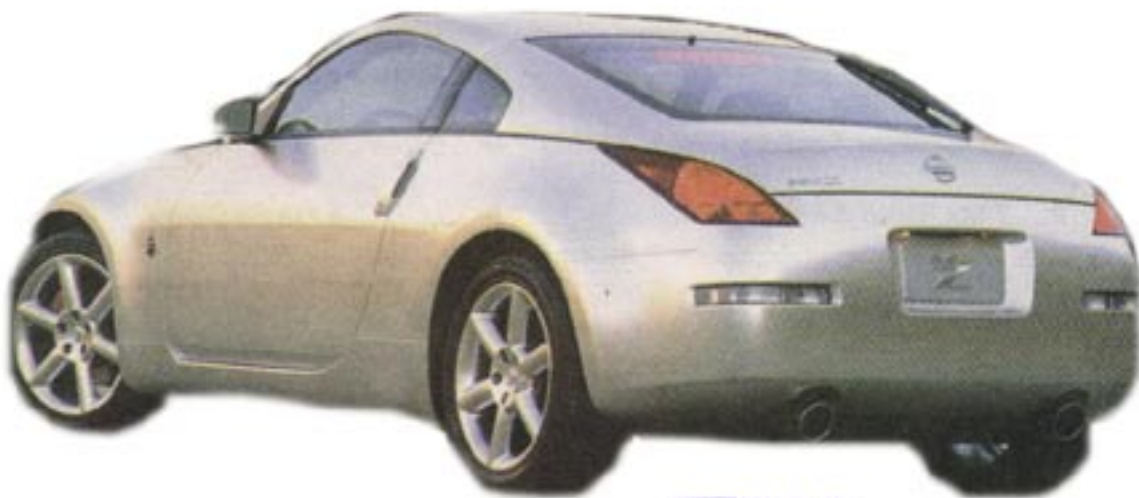
In 1973, the BCMA made an offer for the purchase of two adjacent lots totaling three-quarters of an acre in Burnaby. The \$200,000 offer was made on a property located at 4906 Canada Way, just blocks away from the current Burnaby Mosque and Education Centre. Upon making the offer, the association experienced problems in dealing with the Burnaby Planning Department. The sale of the land was dependent on the association's ability to obtain proper zoning. The Planners ruled that any approval of institutional zoning would require at least 17 feet across the rear of the property to be used as a back lane, which was difficult. The Planners refused to be flexible on this. The association's Real Estate Agent failed to procure the zoning and the offer eventually lapsed.



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Richmond Mosque  
from start to finish







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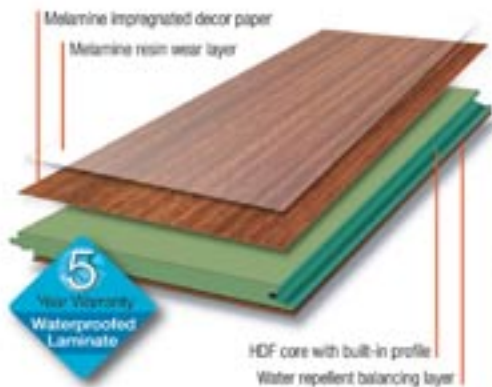
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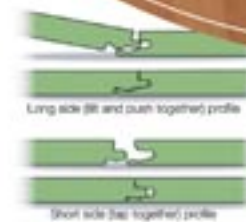


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In the meantime, the BCMA had been eyeing another location. This other land was in the municipality of Richmond. At the time, Richmond was far more rural than it is today. Some of the land, including the four and three quarter acre lot the BCMA was exploring had been included in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The ALR was established in 1973 by Premier Dave Barrett to protect what was seen as a dwindling amount of agricultural land in the province. ALR boundaries were based on the capability and suitability of the land, its present use, local zoning and input from public hearings. The association found the property attractive for three particular reasons: 1) the convenience of the location (including highway access), 2) the fact that it was on acreage size land, and 3) the neighborhood was spread out and sparsely settled.

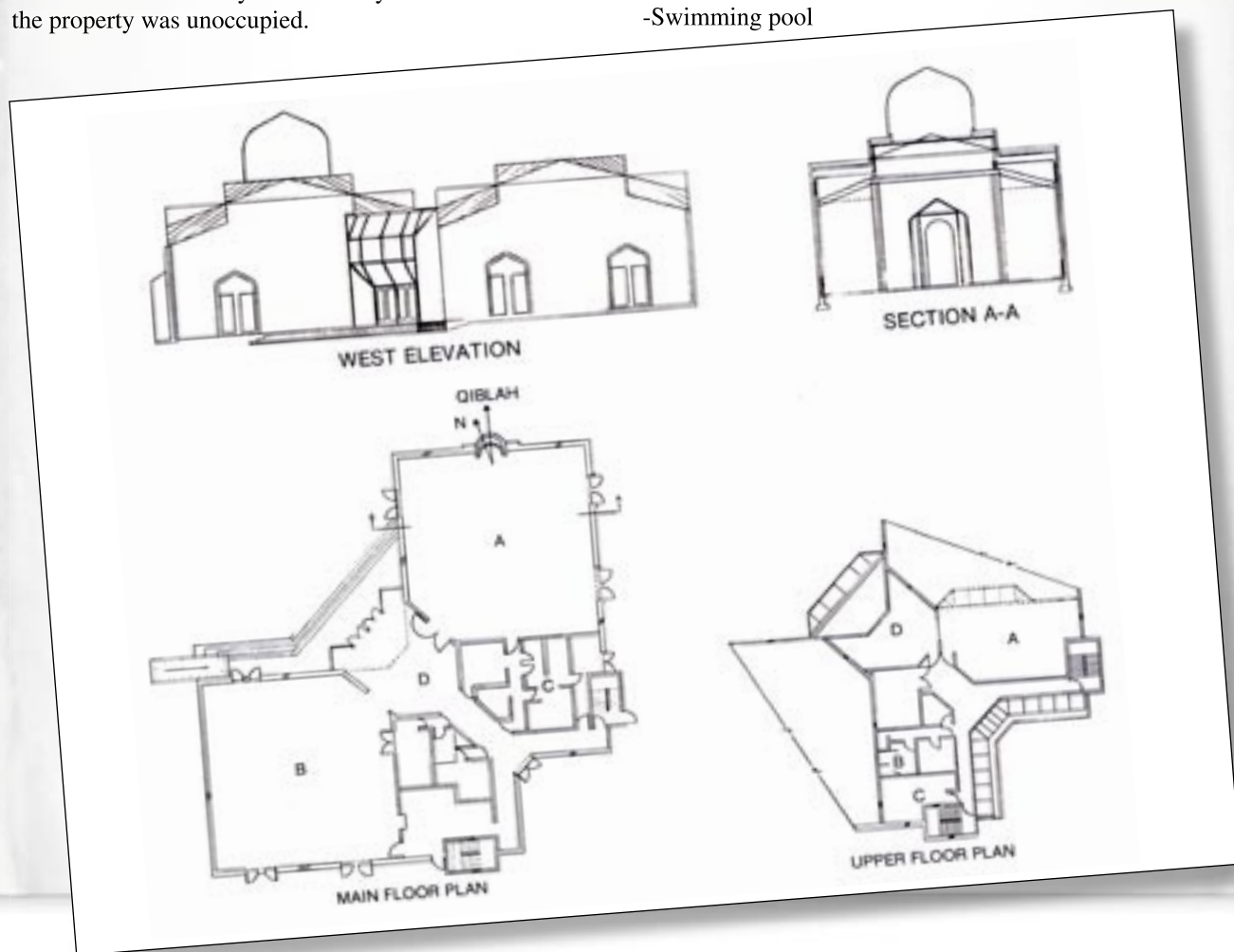
The property encompassed two separate parcels of land. Prior to being sold to the BCMA, it was used as a working farm. On the first parcel was a house, a garage and stables for horses. The property was unofficially subdivided into pieces by white picket fences. Cattle had also been raised on the land at one time. The house was being rented out to a church group known as the Fraserview Assembly of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. They used it as a Community Care Facility. The other house on the property was unoccupied.

At the time, the area where the Richmond Mosque is now located was surrounded mainly by hobby farms where berries were grown. The lots were large and spaced out, containing single occupancy homes. No municipal sewer or water services existed in the area, and the roads were only designed to carry local traffic.

The land was purchased in 1973 for \$122,000 and was paid in full the next year. After seven years of struggling to secure land, the BCMA had its first property with a verbal commitment from the municipality of Richmond.

The original master plan for the Richmond Mosque reflected a goal to build an entire community centre. The plan included:

- 1) A prayer hall for 150 to 200 people
- 2) A library with up to 50 seats
- 3) Classrooms for up to 200 students
- 4) Administration offices
- 5) A Kitchen
- 6) A Recreational facility including:
  - Swimming pool





- Soccer Field
- Tennis courts
- Picnic grounds
- Eating areas

7) Parking and other services

Also, a letter written to His Majesty King Khalid of Saudi Arabia dated September 21, 1976 from President Abdul H.Y. Patel mentions that there would be a “medical centre” as part of the design.

A special committee was appointed to work on the approval of constructing a Mosque on the new property. Their task was to prepare an appropriate application to submit to Richmond City Council. In 1976, the association went ahead and purchased a .25 acre land with a house which was adjacent to the eventual home of the Richmond Mosque for \$53,000 in order to “avoid any future problems.” Despite the plans for an all encompassing facility, the association faced difficulty in removing the land from the Agricultural Land Reserve and getting approval from the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

In December of 1975, the association made a formal application to the Municipality of the Township of Richmond for the Institutional (church) zoning of its present property. Unfortunately, the Council initially rejected the application because the property was “... Not in a municipal sewer (SIC) area”. Council was acting on a recommendation from Richmond’s planning committee not to approve the application. The planners felt in principle that such a facility would need to exist on land where there was municipal sewage and access to water.

In the early stages of development, the architect being used by the BCMA was none other than Arthur Erickson, the well-known local designer of such structures as Simon Fraser University, the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, and the Embassy of Canada in Washington, D.C.

Since 1975, Mr. Erickson had undertaken some forty projects in eight of the countries in the Middle East, most of them large-scale public projects. He designed masterplans, universities, museums, office buildings and residential complexes. When Prince Majid bin Abdulaziz was visiting Vancouver as part of the Habitat Conference, Mr. Erickson threw a party in his honor. At this party, Dr. Ahmad H. Sakr, a Lebanese

born-American educated professor who was then serving as the first director and representative of the Muslim World League (Rabitatul Alamil Islami) to the United Nations introduced Erickson to some members of the BC Muslim Association. Prince Majid asked Mr. Erickson to lend a hand in the planning of the Mosque and facilities, and Mr. Erickson agreed.

In a letter to the BCMA dated July 26, 1976, Peter Petral, from Mr. Erickson’s office recommended that the BCMA attempt to obtain a Special Use Permit for the land.

When the BCMA forwarded its eventual application to the BC Lands Commission, as well as the special permit application to the Richmond Township in January of 1977, Arthur Erickson acted as the official agent. One year later, on January 17, 1978, the BCMA received a special land use permit from the BCLC. Although Arthur Erickson was not the architect of the Richmond Masjid, he did play a role in the steps taken towards its construction.

After an independent land assessment showed that a development of the kind proposed by the BCMA would not be detrimental to the area, Richmond City Council under Mayor Gil Blair approved the removal of the land from the ALR’s protection. The BCMA had offered a public recreation centre on the land, to be situated beside the Mosque. After reading the land assessment, Mayor Blair declared that the land was “terrible for farming” and it was ideal to develop. The BCMA faced another setback however, when the GVRD overruled the Richmond City Council. In the fall of 1977, the GVRD board of directors voted 36 to 21 to reject the BCMA’s proposal, despite the support of Richmond’s Council in January of that same year. As well, Delta



Arthur Erickson, Architect

Mayor Tom Goode was in favor, saying “You could grow potatoes in the heart of Vancouver easier than you could on this land.” After an appeal, the Special Land Use Permit for Richmond Masjid was granted from the land commission.

On February 26, 1978, a month after obtaining the special land use permit, the BCMA established a Mosque Project Committee. Their first order of business was to successfully obtain a release from Arthur Erickson. Once this was obtained, they were able to carry on. At their first meeting, they formed three sub committees: (1) planning, (2) screening and (3) fundraising.

**T**he first job of the planning sub-committee was to determine what the priorities and needs were of the facility, based on the original proposal. They concluded that the Mosque should be equipped with a prayer hall with a domed roof, classrooms, a dining hall, a kitchen, a library, offices and a Mezzanine to accommodate ladies.

M.Z. Khan, a founding member of the BCMA was named structural engineer of the Mosque project. Immediately, he raised concerns about adequate soil testing on the property before construction could begin. Holes in the range of 30 feet were drilled in the process.

The Mosque project committee continued searching for an architect through the early part of 1978. At first, a letter was circulated to various architects to come forward with

proposals. Some members of the committee suggested that an architect with a Muslim background would be most suitable, due to their knowledge and understanding of the function of a Mosque and the role it plays in the lives of Muslims. As a result, another circular went to various Muslim organizations in Canada.

There was one architect, identified only as “Brother Razik” who was registered in BC and locally based. However, he was unable to undertake the project but offered his assistance. Another Muslim architect, Liaqat Ali of Edmonton expressed interest as well. Attaullah H. Hai also gave a quotation on his services to the committee.

After looking at all the proposals and quotations, as well as conducting personal interviews, the Mosque project committee decided that Alexander Resanovic would be the architect of the first Mosque in British Columbia: the Richmond Jami’a Masjid.

The late 1970s were not just a time for growth for Muslims in one part of the lower mainland, however. As Vancouver began to grow, so did the suburbs which it bordered.

**I**n 1979, there were 32 Muslim families that lived in the Delta and Surrey area combined. Due to its distance from the Islamic Centre in Vancouver, the small Muslim community in the area decided to hold Salatul Jummah, or Friday prayers in Surrey to accommodate their needs. Jummah prayer was conducted at a



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private home located at 7960 132nd Street. In the month of Ramadan, Taraweeh prayers were also conducted there. Eventually, the house grew too crowded on these occasions as the Muslim population in the area began to increase. A formal complaint was made to the city. In order to avoid legal action on the generous homeowner, the community came together and decided they needed a permanent place to pray and practice their faith. The community members in Surrey would meet and discuss potential places they could move. Jamurat Begg had spotted one location by his home, near Scott Road, at 12407-72nd Avenue.

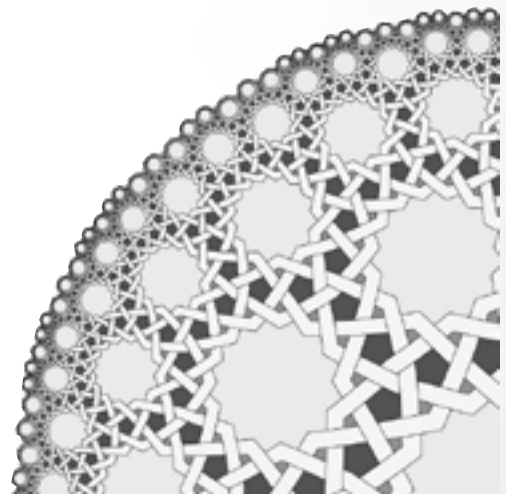
The building was an aging Salvation Army church. The location was ideal; but the building needed a major renovation to bring it up to the standards of the community. BCMA officials were informed of Surrey's plans, and the situation the community faced, but due, in part to the fact that they were already dedicating many resources to building a Mosque, albeit in another part of the lower mainland, they dismissed the idea. Despite this dismissal, the community in the Surrey-Delta area was prepared to undertake the purchase and development of the property themselves. They were determined, much like the founders of the BCMA thirteen years earlier, to establish a permanent place for them, their children and their Muslim brothers and Sisters.

The community issued a final notice to the officials of the BCMA in which they told them their plans and urged them to reconsider approving the purchase and, thus, accepting Surrey as the first "unofficial" chapter in the associations history. The BCMA acknowledged the need for a bigger space to pray in Surrey and granted the request of the community. The Salvation Army church, with a house on the property was purchased for \$64,000. The municipal taxes were paid out of the Richmond Mosque account, according to the official BCMA Eid-Ul Fitr newsletter released in September 1978. The community then proceeded to convert and renovate the building. The BCMA then received an interest-free loan from the Council of Muslim Communities of Canada (CMCC) for the repayment of loans towards the new Surrey Masjid. Some of the Richmond collection was delayed to help finalize the Surrey project within a year. The house on the property was immediately rented.

By then end of the 1970's, it became apparent that the organization was on a steep uphill climb. At this point in its history, the BCMA had five marriage officers con-

ducting Muslim marriages across the province: Farouk Ellesseily who had been serving in the role since 1970, Arab Abu-Sharife who, as mentioned above was the first person married by Br. Ellesseily, Ebrahim Nariman, Shamim Ahmed and Suleman Maiter. The association had two pieces of land in two different parts of the lower mainland paid off, and construction ready to take place on a huge project in Richmond. Already, the community, which at one point conducted all of its affairs in Vancouver, had branched out as far as Surrey and Delta.

The association was experiencing exponential growth, and by the grace of Allah, continued to serve its purpose to provide the means for Muslims in British Columbia to practice their faith, and pass it on to their children. At the time, there were many strong Muslims who had come to North America from all over the world and made their communities strong. In a report written in the 1970s, Abdullah H.Y. Patel wrote that unfortunately, there was also a group that associated Islam with all that was old and primitive. But as he identified then, the group that was taking charge within the BC Muslim Association was a "third group" that was arising. These were "those who have been thoroughly exposed to Western culture and Western education, but still maintain their faith and love for Islam, as demonstrated in their daily life-their zeal and enthusiasm, their readiness for self reliance to implement their faith in our community abound." This group of knowledgeable, committed Muslims was ready to lead the BC Muslim Association into the next era.



1966- Ad-hoc committee appointed in the Summer to form a Muslim organization

1966- Incorporated as a Society under the Societies Act in November

1967- First Annual General Meeting held in April

1967- Registered as a charitable organization

1967- Mosque trust fund established

1970- First Muslim Marriage officer appointed: Farouk Elesseily.

1970- A donation of \$5,000 to the Mosque fund arrives from the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, DC

1973- First BCMA Salah timetable printed

1974- Richmond Masjid land is purchased

1975- Board of Trustees incorporated in the BCMA constitution

1976- 304 burial plots purchased at Ocean View cemetery

1978- Received special land use permit from the BC Land Commission in January for Richmond project

1979- Surrey Mosque land purchased, converted and renovated

1980-Qari Abdul Wahab appointed imam of Surrey Mosque

1980- Sheikh Shaeqawy accepted as imam of Vancouver by Rabita

1981-Purchased 200 burial plots at Ocean View Cemetery

1981-Sod turning ceremony at Richmond Mosque site

1982- Foundation laying ceremony for Richmond Mosque in July

1983- Sheikh Yusuf Khan Shakirov becomes first foreign dignitary to visit Richmond Mosque site

1984- Richmond Muslim School starts in multi-purpose room

1986- Acquisition of portables from Douglas College for Muslim school

1989- 112 additional burial plots purchased

1990- Imam Saber Zakeieh joins the BCMA

1991- Acquisition of property adjacent to Surrey Mosque

1992- 1000 burial plots purchased at Victory Memorial Park in White Rock

1993- First ever BCMA Hajj package offered to members

1993- \$13,000 raised for Somalian relief fund

1994- Local Management Committees formed in regional areas.

1994- The womens' chapter purchases a hearse

1995- For the first time in history, the BCMA President is elected from the floor

1995- Surrey Masjid is renamed Majid at-Taqwa

1996- First Muslim high school in Western Canada opens at Richmond complex



1996- Victoria Mosque purchased

1996- Masjid-ur Rahmah purchased

1996- Zijad Delic appointed as imam of Richmond Mosque

1997- Hafiz Ghulam Bhaji appointed as imam of Masjid-ur Rahmah

1998- Masjid-ul Haqq is purchased

1998- Sheikh Saeed Zakaria joins Victoria Masjid as imam

1998- Burnaby Mosque Land is purchased

1998- Masjid ul-Haqq is purchased

1999- Nanaimo Islamic Centre is purchased

1999- Abbotsford, Coquitlam and Kelowna chapters are formed

2000- Kelowna Islamic Centre is purchased

2001- BCMA.com is launched

2001- Work begins on Burnaby and Surrey Mosque Construction

2002-Board of Religious Affairs re-opens Halal Certification Program

2003-North Vancouver Chapter Established

2004- "Green Book" Operations Manual printed

2004 First "Youth in Motion" conference held

2005- BC Muslim School is a finalist for the Garfield Weston Award for excellence in education from the Fraser Institute

2005-The City of Prince George grants permission to construct "The Prince George Islamic Community, Cultural and Education Centre

2005-500 Additional burial plots purchased at Victory Memorial Park in White Rock

2005- Mufti Shujaat Ali becomes Imam of Masjid-ul Haqq

2006-Imam Zijad Delic departs from the BCMA

## Part IV / 1980's

# Mosques, Education & Charity

**M**uch like the 1960s, the decade of the 1980s was one was an era of frantic change globally on political, economic and social levels. The world was moving into the information age, with the ability to move goods and services at a faster pace. For the BCMA, this was an exciting time. At the beginning of the decade, the organization had two parcels of land in separate parts of the lower mainland paid for and ready to be put to use. As well, its membership was thriving across different regions, whereas in the past, most members had simply been concentrated in the city of Vancouver. As the region expanded with explosive growth, so did the Muslim population. In 1980, for the first time, the majority of BCMA directors (four out of five) were based outside of the city of Vancouver. This included Maulana Shahadat Hussein who was from Surrey and would become a fixture in the community.

With the community about to open two masjids to serve its growing membership, it was necessary to hire Imams who would not only lead regular prayers, but who could administer various activities at these Mosques, teach classes on Islam and the recitation of the Quran, and could provide an answer to pressing questions regarding different facets of life from the perspective of the Quran and Sunnah. Imam Sheikh Ahmed Sharqawy had been in the community since 1978. He was an alumnus of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. In 1980, he was finally accepted by Rabitat (the Muslim World League) as the Imam of Vancouver. The Muslim World League picked up the salary for the Sheikh, who stayed with the association until 1984.

The association also acquired a person who would turn out to be an incredible asset for decades to come. In 1980, Qari Abdul Wahab was appointed to be the first Imam of the Surrey Masjid, which was being remodelled into a Mosque from a Church that year. Qari Wahab was educated at India's Madressa Tajwidul Quran and was a graduate of Jamia Islamia Arabia in the Indian city of Dabhal. During the early part of the 1980s, before the establishment of the BC Muslim School, Qari Wahab conducted one of the largest after school programs in the province. He along with Sheikh Sharqawy and Qari

Abdu Samad Musa, a graduate of Darul-Uloom in India would conduct classes for about 350 children from Monday to Thursday evenings from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm. As well, weekend classes were held on Sundays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

In 1976, the BCMA had started a tradition of playing host to international visitors and prominent figures from the Muslim world when it welcomed Sheikh Mohammed Ali Harkaan, the Secretary General of the Muslim World League to the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver. Five years later, they continued this tradition by hosting one of the most revered individuals in modern Middle Eastern politics. In 1981, the BCMA met with Sheikh Hasan Khalid, the Grand Mufti of Lebanon who was nicknamed the "father of moderation," as he worked throughout his career to bring unity to the warring factions of the Lebanese Civil War. Sadly, the Sheikh was assassinated eight years after his visit to Vancouver. But his positive influence remained long after, as did the inspiration he provided to the BCMA members he met while in BC.

Due to the geographic location of the Province, the Muslims of British Columbia, and by extension the BCMA have always had a natural separation from many other Muslim organizations across the country. Most other associations are based out of central Canada. Due to the sheer size of the country, it is logistically impossible to maintain close ties to them. Although the prairies also have a strong Muslim population, being based out of southwestern B.C. naturally isolates the association from them as well. However, communication and co-operation between Islamic organizations has become much easier due to advances in telecommunications and the advent of e-mail and the ease of travel. For the BC Muslim Association, there has always been a connection to other Islamic organizations, despite the challenges mentioned above. And in 1981, the BCMA invited some of their brothers from across Canada to come to Vancouver where the BCMA held a joint Board meeting with the Council of Muslim Communities of Canada (CMCC). The CMCC had been founded in 1971 by Dr. Ahmet Fuad Sahin in Ontario. Many of the early members were part of the group that founded the Muslim Students Asso-



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ciation (MSA) in Canada in 1962. Their goal was to form links with Muslims across Canada. This meeting was significant historically because it indicated that Muslims on the west coast had made a presence nationally.

The CMCC visit took place just after celebrations were held to celebrate Dhul-Hijjah 1400 AH. This time was not just significant for Islam in a chronological sense, but for local Muslims, it was an exciting time overall, as the soil on which the Richmond Mosque would be built was being prepared for construction. A sod turning ceremony was held and in 1981, almost eight years after the land had first been purchased, a building permit was obtained to begin construction on the first mosque to be built from the ground up in British Columbia.

And while the soil in Richmond was being turned, soil in Burnaby, albeit for a different purpose, was being secured by the BCMA. The association decided to scoop up another 200 burial plots from Ocean View Cemetery in the Metrotown area. This was followed by a purchase of another 33 plots, in 1983 and 112 in 1989.

**T**he 1980s were an extremely productive time for the BCMA in which its assets grew tremendously in value, it hired staff and started new institutions. The organization was having to now meet the needs of 8,000 Sunni Muslims in British Columbia. Nearly 5,000 of these lived in Greater Vancouver, while 2,000 lived throughout the lower mainland and 1,000 others were scattered elsewhere in the province. But for many Muslims around the world, outside of Canada, the situation was much worse. In the early 1980s, the war in the Persian Gulf between Iran and Iraq was claiming casualties. Also, in Afghanistan, a proxy war against the Soviet Union was destroying the nation. Economic difficulty was felt in other places as well. Throughout the eighties, Pakistan was the third largest recipient of US developmental aid after Israel and Egypt, out of necessity. There was also mass starvation in eastern regions of Africa. The membership of the BCMA came together and helped provide some relief to those who were suffering abroad. This was not just done for relief, but also for the growth of Muslim communities in places with less economic resources than Canada. For example, in 1983 the association collected \$3,500 for the Nadroga Jamiah Mosque in Sigatoka, Fiji. That same year, \$2,300 was also donated to the Miftahul Uloom Madressa school in Jalalabad, India, and to the Human Concern Relief Fund Society. In the early part of the decade, the BCMA also established a working relationship with the Afghan Relief Committee of British Columbia. When-

ever a Muslim nation experienced a natural disaster, such as the numerous earthquakes in Turkey, the BCMA made a donation of either money or useful goods.

This was also a time of immigration to Canada by many refugees during the many wars, coups and political battles that effected Muslims worldwide. This meant more Muslims coming to all regions of the country, including BC. For example, during the height of the Lebanese civil war, Canada was one of the very few western countries to adopt special immigration measures to assist those Lebanese fleeing the conflict. It later even set up emergency visa offices in Cyprus to help with family reunification and refugee applications.

**B**C Muslims are not only able to look back proudly on the structures they have built in their own community, but to others they have helped to build around the world. In the 1980s, this included Al-Masjid Ul-Jame in San Francisco and a Mosque constructed by the Mount Pleasant Islamic Trust in Batley, West Yorkshire in the United Kingdom. By the mid 1980s, the association also had a relationship with the Macuata Muslim League in Labasa, Fiji; the Eritrean Relief Association; Drasa Islamic Institute in Lautoka, Fiji; the International Refugee and Relief Program, Somalia Muslim Relief Fund; Guyana United Sadr Islamic Anjuman; Muslim Lebanese Relief Fund; The New Zealand Mosque fund and the Fiji Muslim League.

**T**he BCMA did not just make its name as an internationally relevant organization with money, however. By sending Dawah materials and pamphlets and books, including its own newsletters overseas, the BCMA established a reputation as a source of reliable, useful information. One letter from the 1980s is from a student at Ramat College in the Gongola State of Nigeria. He writes "I first congratulate you for the propagation of Islam...please could you kindly send me some Islamic books and a translated Holy Quran?"

One area from which the BCMA has funds available for these types of projects is interest-bearing deposit accounts. In accordance with Islamic law, the association does not retain any funds which count as interest. In the early 1980s, the association was able to meet the dire needs Muslims were facing abroad by using these funds. The majority was donated to Afghan refugees and Algerian earthquake survivors. The association did not just distribute these funds to Muslims however. Organizations such as the BC Children's Hospital, the Heart Foundation and the Kidney Foundation were also given donations.

**MADARSA ARABIA ISLAMIA**  
 In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful  
 Controlling Authority:  
**THE NAQWAT MUSLIM LEAGUE**



P.O. Box No. 2  
 LABASA, FIJI Is.  
 22nd. April, 86.

The Secretary General,  
 The B.C. Muslim Association,  
 P.O. Box No. 3495, Postal Station "D",  
 Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 4P3,  
 CANADA.

Dear brother in Islam.

Assalamu-O-alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

This is to express our most sincere thanks and appreciation for the hospitality accorded to our members namely Haji Abdul Aziz Ali (Trustee) and Haji Saifi Mohammed (Member) during their recent visit to Canada and United States.

This has also made the link stronger between our brothers from Fiji, Canada and United States. Your kind donations towards our Madrasa has helped us most in this critical time, when we have been faced by natural disaster. (Cyclone) May Allah Duhmaan - O - Taha give you best reward in world and hereafter.

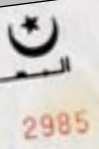
We have 23 full time student who board in this Madrasa learn Holy Quran and religion. They are also recite Quran and praying for betterment of one and all.

Once again please convey our thanks and appreciate your members.

With best regards.

(Mohammed Aziz)  
**MANAGING OFFICER.**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 المسجد الإسلامي واداء الأيتام - صندوق البريد - ٩٣٣  
 داسا - لتوكا - الجزائر نيجي



**AL-MA-HADUL ISLAMI (DRASA)**  
 THE ISLAMIC INSTITUTE

P.O. BOX 923

K. ANZ. LAUTOKA

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11-9-1981

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ZAHAT - FITRA

WITH THANKS  
 AL-MA-HADUL ISLAMI (DRASA)

في سبيل الله  
**SHOW YOU CARE**



**The International  
 Refugee and Relief Program**

203-500 James St., North (2nd fl.), Hamilton, Ont. L8L 1J1 • (416) 529-2621

Dr. Hashmat Ali  
 President  
 B.C. Muslim Association

November 13, 1985  
 Safar 29, 1406

Dear brother Hashmat  
 As Salam Alaikum

Dr. Sahin and myself have planned to be in Vancouver on Friday evening December 13, and stay in Vancouver until Sunday night. Our primary objective is to share information on the relief and refugee program with the Vancouver community. So that, through the consultative process, we can develop projects to suit your community's needs.

Dr. Aziz Khaki has been approached in this regard, and he is planning program for Dr. Sahin to speak to gatherings and in group meetings on Sunday December 14 and Sunday December 15.

It would be greatly appreciated if you, or Dr. Riasat Ali Khan could in touch with Dr. Aziz and develop a program to suit your priorities.

If you need further information please don't hesitate to call me at 529-2621 during the day, or 528-2801 in the evening.

Looking forward to the opportunity of seeing you. Inshallah.

Yours Truly,

*Hameed*

Hameed Shaikh  
 Secretary/International Refugee  
 and Relief Program

Thank

To Whom it may concern:

I am searching to find the true religion of God, and I feel I have reached point in my search where it may be coming to an end. If possible could you please send me information regarding Islam and converting to Islam.

Thank

picked up on the old BCMA Sunday School program, previously lead by Arab Abu-Sharife. They taught voluntary weekend classes at the Richmond Masjid. The class started with eight children, but soon progressed to over 50. The curriculum included seven areas 1) the five pillars of Islam, 2) seven kalmias, 3) basic Arabic leading to Quran reading, 4) the five daily prayers, 5) Islamic way of life, 6) the duties of a Muslim, 7) Prophets of Islam. Roshan Buksh, a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Egypt also assisted in teaching. The classes were free of charge.

The association was also lending a hand in educational endeavours outside its own community. Hasmat Ali, who was in charge of the education portfolio during Syed Madani's second term was approached by Sid Bentley, an author who was writing the third volume of a book called "Religions of our Neighbours." Bentley was asking for assistance in compiling the text. The author eventually used this text to make up a course in which students could study other faiths. Toufeak Hosein was given the task of proof reading the section on Islam before publication.

From July 24 to August 10, 1983, The World Council of Churches, a fellowship of Christian churches in 120 countries held a conference in Vancouver in which it welcomed leaders of different faiths from all over the world. One of the guests was Sheikh Yusuf Khan Shakirov, the Grand Mufti of Central Asia. He had traveled all the way from Tashkent, Uzbekistan which was then part of the Soviet Union. While in town, he became the first foreign dignitary to visit the Jamia Masjid in Richmond. Other guests also started to come to the new Mosque. Dr. Jamal Badawi, a well known speaker who would make many visits to BC came to speak at the Masjid on October 11th, 1984. His topic was the concept of "taqwa" in Islam.

On April 28, 1985, the BCMA made history by holding the first board meeting at the Richmond Mosque. Hasmat Ali was elected President at this meeting. Other attendees were Riasat Ali Khan, Mohammed Akram Chaudhry, Hasmat Ali, Ahmad Daud, Zakir Bukhari, Arif malik, Aziz Khan, Mohammed Janif, Sikander Khan, Ahmad Saad and Yalcin Ilsever.

In the City of Vancouver, the BC Muslim Association's traditional base, the world was coming to visit. In 1986, on the north side of false creek, the city hosted the 1986 World Exposition on Transportation and Communication, which was simply known as Expo '86. Many Muslim countries sent pavilions including Senegal, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. The association took

advantage of this opportunity and embarked vigilantly to further enhance its name and objectives, particularly to the Muslim representatives.

The Saudi Arabian exhibit was one of the most memorable of the entire event. The Saudi Pavilion was composed of six prefabricated modules, a total of 1,500 square meters (16,140 square feet). Inside, photographic portraits introduced the founder of the modern kingdom, King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud and six of his sons, including King Fahd, who was the present ruler. Another introductory display explained that although Canada and Saudi Arabia did not open diplomatic ties until 1973, more than 4,000 Canadians already lived and worked in the kingdom, many employed by Bell Canada, which helped manage Saudi Arabia's vast



telecommunications system.

The pavilion devoted plenty of space to Islam. The Islamic displays included three handsome fragments of the Kiswa, the black-cloth covering which is replaced each year on the Kaba. There were also color photographs of the cities of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, as well as a panorama of Mecca as photographed by an Arab pilgrim in 1886, a hundred years before.

Another structure was built in a tent, but under a dome which made it appear like a traditional Mosque. In it, was a theatre in which visitors watched an eight-minute, multi-image slide show. It featured powerful images which showed how Islam, as it spread across the planet, both enriched and learned from the cultures it encountered. It



concluded with scenes of individual pilgrimages: men and women of every race and color making what the commentary called "The journey to the heart of Islam ... to Mecca, that focal point of a lifetime of prayer, where each one must make that fearful private journey to the depths of his own heart." Education was another theme stressed at the Saudi pavilion, a theme echoing the Prophet's (PBUH) insistence that Muslims "seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."

Other Muslim countries represented included the state of Brunei, where pavilion manager Mohammed Zaini Bagul was always passing out souvenir postcards of Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque. Pakistan's single module was full of Islamic motifs and patterns - on ceramics, calligraphy, printed cloth, embroidery, carpets, wood carving, copper engraving, and stone. It also featured a decorated bus which travelled from Khyber through the Plains of Punjab and Sind and on to Vancouver, which was especially popular with children.

**T**he BCMA tried to meet the dignitaries of all Muslim countries present, but mainly those of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. They ended up chatting with the likes of Dr. Sheikh Hussain Mansouri, the Saudi Minister of Communications; Zaid El-Shawaf, the Saudi Ambassador to Canada; and Sheikh Hossein El Manouri, the Saudi Minister of Transportation. The BCMA also made a submission for financial and other assistance on behalf of the association to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through Sheikh Abdul Aziz, who was the Commissioner General of the Saudi pavilion.

The association must have left an impression on the Brunei delegation. The BCMA received \$20,000 from Brunei in 1988. Politically, this was a pretty stable time for the association. Whereas the first ten years of the BCMA's existence had seen 10 Presidents come and go, there were only six who served in the 1980's. In 1987, Sikander Khan became the youngest President in BCMA history, at 37 years of age. During this period, the strength of the association was really shifted to the committee level where much of the decision making took place. In 1988, Mohammed Shafique became the treasurer of the association. He would go on to serve over 18 years in this capacity. During his time at the helm of the BCMA's finances, the organization's fiscal health improved dramatically. His attention to detail and transparency when it came to the collection and distribution of funds instilled confidence in the membership at large.

Even with all the activity that was occurring in the lower mainland, the BCMA resolved not to forget their brothers and sisters in the small communities scattered across the province. In 1984, with the help of the small Muslim populations in North Bend and Boston bar, the association purchased a 40 foot trailer. This was to serve as a place for Muslim families in the area to get together to congregate for various activities and to conduct regular prayers. The trailer was parked on the property of Nazir Ahmed, who graciously leased it to the BCMA for the price of one dollar annually. The trailer was also designed to benefit Muslims who were traveling north, as Boston Bar was conveniently situated just off Highway 1. Muslims could drop in to pray in congregation. A Madressa was started soon after this temporary accommodation was established.

In 1986, Islam was given some exposure in the town of Kelowna. The Kelowna museum held an event called "Islamic art days" featuring art from the Middle East and the Muslim world. The BCMA was invited to the opening session as a special guest.

The next major purchase for the association was in 1989. A 4.36 acre property, slightly smaller than the Richmond complex was purchased in Surrey. Ultimately, this turned out to be an investment more than a project, as the land was sold two years later, giving rise to the purchase of a property adjacent to the Surrey Mosque. This solved the parking problem in Surrey.

**D**uring the 1980s, the BCMA donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to charitable organizations both here in Canada and abroad. It established two Mosques in the lower mainland, hosted international dignitaries, acquired over a hundred additional burial plots, received refugees from various Muslim countries, and established two Muslim schools. The organization was a success. The major shift that was taking place within the community was that many of the people who built the BCMA into the strong organization that it was had migrated to Canada between the late 1960s and the early 1980's. This group of Muslim Canadians had started families and many of them now had school aged children. Although they were thrilled at the level of education offered by curriculum in BC on the various subjects their children would learn. They knew there was no substitution for an education in an Islamic environment in the Islamic context. As a result, a Muslim school became the collective goal.

Vancouver Prov. JUN 13 1987

# Plans for mosque nearly complete

Plans to build a \$30,000 mosque in Vancouver are nearly complete and a site will be chosen before the end of September, says Dr. Semih Tezcan, president of the B.C. Muslim Association. He said the initial phase in the project is to collect \$10,000 from the 100-member Moslem community in B.C. The building will provide facilities for worship and religious education for Moslems as well as being a cultural centre and a meeting place for visiting Moslems.

There are only two mosques in Canada, at Edmonton and London, Ont. Six have been built in the U.S.

# Temple Fund Sun

The newly-formed B.C. Muslim Association will launch a \$250,000 fund-raising drive Sunday at the Islamic Centre, 635 West 10th.

The money will be used to build a mosque for B.C.'s 250 Moslems.

An evening ceremony will be held as the "Night of Rejoicing" Islamic religious calendar precedes, by two weeks, the main object of the fund-raising mosque for the Muslim Association director said The Sun Friday.

plans to use the religious education classes for children. A mosque, its exact location has been decided by the board of directors.

working on the mosque, its exact location has been decided by the board of directors.

insurance deductible so that Muslim schools are eligible for the deduction.

OTTAWA-SMITH - The B.C. Muslim Association is shopping for a new insurance provider for its 12 mosques.

Dec 4 '65

# Islamic Faith Spreading in B.C.

Islamic faith is spreading in B.C. as a result of the efforts of the B.C. Muslim Association, says Dr. Semih Tezcan, president of the association. He said the number of Moslems in B.C. is growing rapidly.

Dr. Tezcan said that the B.C. Muslim Association is working to build a mosque in Vancouver and to provide religious education for Moslems.

# VANDALS DAMAGE RICHMOND TEMPLE

A round-the-clock guard has been posted at a new mosque under construction in Richmond after the temple was vandalized by guests from a house party.

Damage to the mosque was estimated at \$20,000, said Ali Mumtaz, president of the B.C. Muslim Association, which owns the mosque being built at 12800 Blundell.

"It was out and out vandalism," said S.Sgt. John Kovalich of Richmond RCMP, who is in charge of the investigation.

He said the damage included smashed toilets, windows and a banister, as well as graffiti painted on the walls.

Mumtaz said the building is now being guarded because "we don't want to take any chances."

Kovalich said the party being held at a rented house next to the mosque attracted more than 100 guests.

"Apparently things got a little out of hand and police had to be called in around midnight," said Kovalich.

Police arrested 25 persons for causing a disturbance and several were charged with resisting arrest.



The first ever Muslim High School in Canada will be constructed close proximity to the B.C. Muslim Community Mosque in Richmond.

# Richmond The Site Of First Muslim High School

RICHMOND - The thirty thousand strong British Columbia Muslim Community (BCMC) is tackling head-on the issue of instilling in its youth the idea that they can be productive members of Canadian society, and maintain the practice of Muslim values, by building Canada's first Muslim High School in Richmond.

Blundell Road, which has a current enrollment of over 300 students from all parts of Greater Vancouver. This \$1 million dollar project is being funded by the local Muslim community.

# Muslim proposal rejected

A request by the B.C. Muslim Association for a change of use on five acres of Richmond property in the agricultural land reserve was rejected Wednesday by the Greater Vancouver Regional District, even though the soil's suitability for farming is marginal.

The rural property was to have been used by the religious group for a mosque and classrooms. The association had offered to provide a public recreation area on the site.

# BCMA IN THE NEWS

**1. Khwaja Mohammed Shahid**

1966

**2. Abdullah H.Y. Patel**

1966-67

**3. Mohammed Zainul Khan**

(acting) 1967-1968

**4. Dr. Şemih Tezcan**

1968

**5. Oşman Akşehirlioglu**

1968- 1969

**6. Mohammed Iqbal**

1969-1970

**7. Mohammed G. Edwards**

1970-1972

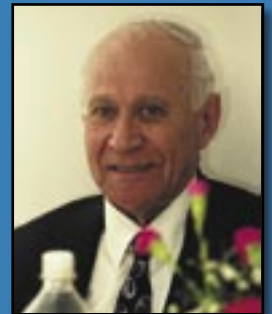
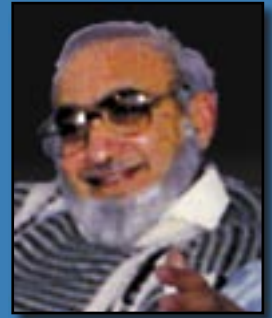
**8. Şyed V. Madani 1972-1973**

**9. Dr. Mohammed Imtiaz Butt 1973-1974**

**10. Toufeak Hoşein 1974-1976**

**11. Abdullah H.Y. Patel 1976- 1978**

**12. Mumtaz Mohammed Ali 1978-1980**





[Redacted]

[Redacted]

13. **Gani Mohammed** 1980



[Redacted]

14. **Mumtaz Mohammed Ali** 1980-1983

15. **Syed V. Madani** 1983-1985

[Redacted]

16. **Hasmat Ali** 1985-1986

17. **Ahmed Saad** 1986-1987

[Redacted]

18. **Sikander Khan** 1987-1991

19. **Ali Mihirig** 1991-1992

[Redacted]

20. **Sikander Khan** 1992-1994



[Redacted]

21. **Usman Ali** (acting) 1994-1996

22. **Sikander Khan** December 1996- 2001

[Redacted]

23. **Tahir Ali** 2001-2003

**Daud Ismail** 2003-

[Redacted]



[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



[Redacted]





BC Muslim High School



Adam Browning ; SMS Principal & Syed Ali; Accountant; Missing BCMS Principal Abdulahi Omar



Board of Education; L-R Jamal Kurtu, Faisal Aziz, Feroz Khan, Mansoor Ali, Mohammad Shamsher, Daud Ismail

# A Brief History of the BC Muslim School

With the association being on sound financial footing, having Mosques in operation, experiencing exponential growth and securing a future for the most unfortunate members of the community, the BCMA was doing exactly what it had been created to do. There was only one component missing however: education. Weekend schools had been running on and off. A successful evening class was taught by Qari Wahab in Surrey. Arab Abu-Sharife had been teaching Sunday classes at the Richmond complex to children, just as Farook Elesseily had done 20 years prior in Vancouver. But the need for a Muslim school had been recognized by the founders of the organization, and the community wanted to move forward to that goal.

In 1984, after Syed V. Madani and Master Shamim Ahmad had secured a license from the provincial government to run a school, the association went ahead and started a school at the Richmond Mosque in the multi-purpose hall. There was some concern as this caused an increase in the electrical bills for the Masjid. Forty children were in the inaugural class. They received religious education about Islam and the Quran, and of course received the regular, secular education as mandated by the province of British Columbia. School supplies were donated by On-Line supplies, a local stationary company owned by Feroz Dean. The association purchased two 23 passenger school busses to transport the students to and from school.

Later, a portable was added to accommodate students. It was purchased from the former Douglas College property on McBride Boulevard in New Westminster. However, the long term plan was in place for a new school building as the foundation was laid.

At the time, the parents paid no school fees, and the teachers were all volunteers. For the first three years they soldiered on in this situation. Because the BC Government refused to license and financially support an independent school unless it was supervised by a provincially recognized teacher, Master Shamim volunteered and served the school. In this time he acted as a principal, a teacher, a bus driver, and a volunteer construction worker on the new building which opened in 1988. In September of that year, the new BC Muslim school building featuring seven classrooms was opened. A massive injection of cash came from the Saudi Arabian Embassy which donated \$200,000 to the school.

During the 1989-90 school year, the school staffed four teachers and enrolled 50 students from Kindergarten to grade four. The teachers and bus drivers were paid by donations from BCMA members. The school was granted group one funding (50% of regular funding per pupil, the rest to be covered by tuition). The next year, 4 teachers were hired for academics, and 2 for Islamic studies and Arabic. One grade level was added every year up to grade eight.

In the interest of educating all children, regardless of their parents' household income, money from Zakat funds was used to finance some operations. Other parents, who could afford it, paid a fee for tuition and busses.

In 1991, the school became an incredibly popular destination for Muslim children across the lower mainland. Enrollment went up to 145 students. Transportation of children was now facilitated by four busses and parents' car pools. Nine teachers were added to the staff and Dr. Mohammed Saleh was hired as the principal.

Once grade eight was established, it became obvious that sending children back to the public system to finish high school was counter productive. The education board, the parents, the students and staff realized the importance of establishing a high school.

This would not be an easy task as there was no precedence in the country for an Islamic high school program. In 1994, the BCMA applied for a building development permit for high school construction. With enrollment at over 300 students, it was time to take the next step.

Just before the high school opened, BCMS went through a major overhaul in its academic structure. The school attempted to develop education strategies that promoted discipline and critical thinking skills among students. Towards this end, the school organized the student body into Houses and incorporated problem solving skills into the everyday curriculum. As well, the construction of a science lab allowed the school to offer grade nine. The school received praise from the Ministry of Education when it conducted its evaluation of the school for implementing sound administrative procedures resulting in fine school tone. It also praised the school for incorporating a teachers' professional library along with the regular school library. With the school now offering a fully integrated Islamic Studies program along with Quranic Arabic and

Classical Arabic instruction, it provided students with over 1300 hours of instruction in some cases, far exceeding the Ministry's requirement of 850. The Islamic Studies program was made much more ambitious and challenging that year, taking up as much as 25% of the school's curriculum, and was coordinated by Imam Zijad Delic. By the time the high school opened its doors, the BCMS was providing financial assistance in the amount of \$56,450 to 82 students from 37 needy families.

1996 was a historic year for the BC Muslim Association. 30 years after its founders said that they wanted to establish an organization, in part, to provide a means of Islamic education for their children, the association opened the first Muslim high school in western Canada at the Richmond complex. The high school was the first major building project of the BCMA in many years. The ground breaking ceremony was held on Friday, December 29, 1995.

**O**n June 29, 1996, the foundation laying ceremony was held. Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt of Richmond attended along with four city councilors, MLA's Linda Reid and Doug Simon. Other attendees included Zainland Zain, the Malaysian ambassador to Brazil; S.M. Ashraf, Vice Council, Consulate General of India; Jack Whyn, Consulate General of Indonesia; Mohammed Hassan, President of the Somalia Friendship Society; Mustafa Focak, President of the Bosnia Muslim Association; Aziz Khaki, Chairman of the Committee for Racial Justice; and Raj Gopal Pillay, the Consulate General of Fiji.

*The construction committee was made up of volunteers. They were:*

**Liaqat Ali:** *Chairperson*

**Daud Ali:** *Vice Chairperson*

**Mohammed Janif:** *Secretary/Treasurer*

**Abbas Elbarbari:** *Fundraising*

**Hussein Dalmir:** *Fundraising*

**Salim Buksh:** *Fundraising*

**Ahmed Amir Khan:** *Fundraising*

**Ayub Khairati:** *Fundraising*

**Usman Ali:** *Past President*

**Farook Elesseily:** *Technical Support*

**Iqbal Nasser:** *Technical Support*

**Albert Ng:** *Project Manager*

**Frederick P. Sly:** *Architect*

Although the majority of funds for the project were raised locally, the BCMA was aided by a \$250,000 U.S. (about \$315,000 Canadian at the time) grant from the Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia. To obtain the approximately \$1 million needed for the rest of the funds, the community fundraised at the grassroots levels. This included bake sales, fundraising dinners, and door to door collections. Some Wealthy Muslims in the United States also donated. Donors could also have a classroom or lab of their choice named after them for a \$6,500 pledge. More than \$200,000 was raised on interest-free loans in the community. The fact that this amount was able to be generated in a short period of time illustrates how committed people were to seeing the high school come to fruition.

**T**he school officially opened its doors at a ceremony held on September 6, 1997. The guests of honor included BC Multiculturalism Minister Ujjal Dosanjh, Malaysian Consul-General Abdullah Ali, Richmond Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt, and Liban Ali Yosuf of the IDB. In his speech Yosuf said "Since its inception, the Islamic Development Bank has set for its primary goal the economic and social development of its member countries which have reached thus far fifty-two member countries...the IDB has distributed \$215 million covering 626 projects in 83 countries...No doubt, education is major foundation of the development of nations. The first verse of the Quran revealed to the Prophet starts with the word "read." Education is as it were a continuous process not limited by age or otherwise. For it to remain sustainable, it needs a permanent care that fosters its noble objectives and goals."

Aspha Dada, a local Muslim lawyer served as the Master of ceremonies on the historic night. Other speakers included Usman Ali, a BCMA founding member and the individual who sat in the President's chair during much of the construction of the project; Sikander Khan, the BCMA President; Liaqat Ali, chairman of the construction committee; Belal Mofteh, the BCMA Vice-President of Education; and Greg Halsey Brandt, the mayor of Richmond making yet, another appearance at the site of the school. Two BCMS students, Shaista Kassamali and Fatima Gulmhussein, who were then both 15-years-old and going into grade ten, thanked all the donors at the event on behalf of their classmates.

**A**fter a dua by Qari Abdul Wahab, the guests were given a tour of the new building. The high school was a state of the art facility that impressed everyone in attendance. It included eight classrooms



including a home-economics lab where students could learn cooking and sewing, a computer room with a network of 30 terminals, and a state-of-the-art science lab.

At the beginning of the school year in 2001, the school was closed for three days following threatening phone calls after the terrorist incidents in the United States on September 11. As the school reopened, the BCMA hired a security company to provide 24 hour security at the school. A surveillance camera was also installed. Later, volunteers from the community served as security guards. That year, security expenses for the school cost the association over \$57,000.

The BCMS now operates two campuses, one in Richmond and the other in Surrey. The Richmond school is home to just under 500 students while Surrey has around 150. After the Surrey school started in 1997,

the school also received approval to begin an English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

In 2005, the Fraser Institute selected the BCMS as a finalist for the Garfield Weston Award for Excellence in Education. From a humble class of 40 students in a volunteer setting in a small, multi purpose room in Richmond, to a thriving educational facility teaching Islam, Arabic, arts, sciences, ESL and the BC educational curriculum, the Muslim school remains as one of the BCMA's greatest achievements. The dream of the pioneers of the BCMA of providing an Islamic education to Muslim children lives on through each and every child who graduates from the facility and applies his or her knowledge in every aspect of life, including both Deen and Duniya.

# YOUTH AND SPORTS

The BCMA was founded on a vision of establishing an organization in which the youth could be nurtured to grow into the leaders of the community tomorrow. That is a vision from which the BCMA has not wavered in 40 years. Since the early days of the organization, there have been programs for youth. These were largely Madressa programs held in the Islamic Centre on West 8th Avenue. Farouk Ellesseily would teach weekend classes to children. He organized the class into different "stations where the kids would learn certain subjects, before moving on to the next "station" to learn something different. Br. Farouk would also take the children on field trips to the park and use the outing as a means of explaining complex topics about creation in Islam.

Arab Abu-Sharife also taught Arabic, Quran and

Islamic classes to children. It was under his watch that the BCMA established a Sunday school program. Sr. Salar Buksh and Sr. Zaitun Kamal also sacrificed many weekends to come together to educate the children of the community. Later, Haji Abdul Rahman, Imam Saber, Br. Feroz Dean, Br. Najah, Sr. Shamim Ghumra, Sr. Hana Naji, and





Br. Roshan Buksh took over the Sunday school program.

Over the years, many other volunteers including Maulana Shahadat, who studied the Arabic language at the University of Medina, Ali Mihirig, Qari Abdul Wahab, Brother Abu-Bakr and others established various weekend Madressa schools where children would learn the Quran and Sunnah. Many of these were held in peoples living rooms, basements, community centres, wherever a Muslim could find a space in which to educate children. These informal schools served the majority of Muslim children who attended public schools. Many of these children have gone on to become leaders in the community, using the knowledge they acquired at these lessons.

It was not just education that the BCMA provided for the youth, however. Another important aspect of the BCMA has been the social environment it has created to bring people together. Youth, men's and women's programs have existed for recreational activities and sporting events for many years. In the early 1990's Naushad Ali of Fraser Meats helped establish the Fraser Meats Golf Tournament for the newly formed BC Muslim Golf Association. The association still holds tournaments every year as players compete for a trophy named after late Muslim golfer Rahmat Ali.

For over a decade, the BCMA has been hosting both boys' and girls' youth camps. These were held both in summer and over the winter holidays. Kids would go to various campgrounds with the volunteer leaders, go on

field trips, play sports and games and have discussions with their peers and with adults. In 1982, there was an essay writing competition held on the Life of the Prophet (PBUH). Since then there have been subsequent Quran recitation competitions for youth.

The BC Muslim Sports Association has been a huge success. Its annual soccer tournaments are a huge attraction and feature fierce competition, which gets better each year. This includes the annual Nations Cup and the inter zone tournament. The Nations cup features teams from Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Somalia, Fiji, Canada, Eritrea, Pakistan, Libya, India and Bosnia. The BC Muslim Sports Association has also participated in the FANCA tournament, featuring teams from Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. This is normally a huge draw and takes place at rotating locations every two years.

There are also various informal sporting events the BCMA participates in. These include martial arts classes held at Masjids, basketball and floor hockey at the Richmond multi-purpose hall, a 3 on 3 basketball tournament and swimming events arranged at various community pools for brothers and sisters.

Sports are a wonderful community activity to promote healthy lifestyles and to bring people together to join in participation. The BC Muslim association has helped its members build friendships and strong social bonds through its sports and recreation programs that will only grow with the organization.



# A Brief History of Women in the BCMA

Over the past 40 years, Sisters from across the province have been a major contributor to the success of the BC Muslim Association. They have assisted in many facets of community building, fundraising, Islamic education, dawah work, charity, and many other areas in which the association has been active. The Women's Chapter, as well as the Women's Auxiliary prior to it has set a wonderful example for young Muslim sisters across North America in participating in the community to the fullest extent and helping to build a strong organization. Going through boxes, archived materials, and recalling memories of the last 40 years, here I have penned a brief history of the women in this organization.

BCMA was established in 1966 by some very determined brothers. Remembering back in late 1970s and early 1980s, I recall gathering at the West 8th Avenue at the Pakistan/Canada Association Centre. This was the only place we could congregate for worship and for socialization. The record shows that in 1976, under the President ship of Br. Usman Ali, a Women's Auxiliary was formed with the following office bearers: Chair Fatima Ali, Vice Chair Qamrul Ali, Secretary Samsun Ali and Treasurer

Tazul Ali. Late Mrs. Hafizan Salar Buksh (aka Khalaji) led the Religious committee. Mehrul Aziz Khan and Kamla Habib were in charge of Social committee with many other ladies who were very involved in the fundraising efforts. Islamic studies and Arabic classes were organized for both ladies and children. Fatima Khanum, Amina Sattar and many other sisters later joined and contributed their time towards teaching Arabic classes. Kamrul Ali and Gedija Simicioni, both of Vancouver are lifetime members of the Association. The late Mrs. Buksh was a mentor to us during those early years when we were most vulnerable. She emigrated here from Fiji Islands and she brought with her good Islamic knowledge.

We came here from our homelands of Pakistan, India, Africa, Fiji South America, Europe and other parts of the world. We left our families and our communities behind but we brought with us the religion of Allah – Islam. We came to this new country of ours and it was important to be able to practice our religion. Lot of young families with children searched for Sunday classes for Islamic studies. Some of the sisters mentioned above gave us the means to be in a Muslim environment.

We are indebted to Mrs. Subratan Usman and late Mrs. Buksh, the first few teachers to teach us the Kafan cutting, Ghushl and shrouding of the deceased Sisters. They were dedicated and actively involved with the women, both young and old.

## Richmond Jamea Masjid

Alhamdulillah, with the Mercy of Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, the first Jamea Masjid was built in Richmond in 1982. Again sisters started to come and volunteered in maintaining the Sisters' area. It was wonderful to be able to come to the Masjid since back home, women did not worship in Masajid. We frequently went to the Masjid for classes and for just getting together.

## First Women's Chapter

1988 was the year when a group of enthusiastic sisters decided to take the responsibility of forming the first Women's Chapter. It was a group made up of women from all over the world. Their mandate was to manage the issues and interests of the women and youth girls. Seeing this need, a Ghushl Committee was established with Sisters Habiba Gamiet, Anjuman Asin, Late Zulekha Razak and Nazmun Asin. This committee remained under the Women's Chapter.

In 1994, the Women's Chapter started an Assault Awareness program. The Vancouver Police Department conducted a seminar with the sisters on how to protect themselves, their families, and to be aware of the potential danger of crime. In 1995 some dedicated sisters decided to purchase a Hearse. A fundraising dinner was organized in Richmond Masjid and the funds were used for the purchase of a Hearse. The Burial Committee is administering the affairs of the Hearse.

In January 1998, the inaugural issue of the BC Muslim Women's Magazine was published. This publication included news on Women's chapter events, articles on health, family relationships, Islamic issues of particular importance to women, marriage, and articles from Imam Ziyad Delic.

A resolution was passed in October 1998 and Ghushl Committee was transferred to the Burial Services section of the Association since it accommodates the entire community.

In 1998, approximately 130 sisters attended a meeting to discuss the proposed building plan for the Surrey Mosque which had little or no facilities for sisters. The sisters sent a petition of over 200 signatures to the Executive and had a meeting with them. The executive then ruled that the design

could not move forward without consultation with the Women's Chapter.

The Women's Chapter sponsored the Home Economics Room in the BC Muslim High School with over \$19,000 and this was accomplished by raising funds.

The unexpected shortfall of the Hajj group became a challenge and the Women's Chapter decided to handle this and raised funds independently and collectively to offset the shortfall. It was a noble thing to do.

Looking back, I see the benefit of a Women's Chapter where there was solidarity and unity for the women. My greatest admiration is for those sisters who took the challenges and quickly accomplished them. I salute to these unsung heroes of our community.

## Women's Council

In 1998, the Association decided to decentralize and form chapters to accommodate the rapid growth of the Muslim population. Chapters were formed in Vancouver, Burnaby/New West, Surrey/Delta, and Richmond. Later, Victoria, Nanaimo and Kelowna established their own chapters to help the Muslims there. North Shore is the latest Women's Chapter that was formed in 2004.

To co-ordinate these chapters, a Women's Council was established and the Board was formed from representatives of these chapters. The Council activities are joint efforts by the chapters.

We organized fundraising dinners to donate funds towards the Richmond Sewer project, Mosque funds and unexpected needs.

Our Youth participated fully for fundraising activities for mosques and other projects. Summer camps, day trips, educational competitions and sports are organized to bring our girls together.

- Islamic and general educational programs and workshops are often presented.
- Workshops on Ghusl and Kafan cutting are organized throughout the chapters. On the guidance of Sr. Habiba Gamiet, a group of sisters cut the kafan and put the package together for easy accessibility.

- Sisters provided and helped out with dinners for the homeless and needy in the Vancouver downtown area.
- We participated in the Eid-ul-Adha celebration at the Provincial Legislature in Victoria with other Muslims.

- Women's chapters have worked side by side with the brothers in the building of the Masjid.
- The Council has ongoing interfaith dialogues with non-Muslim sisters group.

In May of 2003, a Thrift Store was opened with the financial help from Sr. Yasmin Adaya and her family and with lots of donations from our community. During the tenure of this store, many sisters did shift work to keep the store open and to bring this venture to a success. The challenges were overpowering and after about 2 years we turned it over with a profit. May Allah reward all the sisters and brothers for their hard work.

We were very fortunate to participate in the building of the Burnaby Masjid. Sisters were consulted and asked for the input especially in the sisters' area of the Masjid. For me it was God blessed time when we participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of the Burnaby Masjid. This kind of event rarely passes a person's life, especially in this part of the world. The Muslim women have the accessibility to any of the BCMA Masjid.

Volunteering for this organization needs a lot of commitment and a great sense of responsibility and I am proud to say that there are sisters who give their valuable time and commitment for the benefit of the community. May Allah reward them with abundance of blessings!

It was very challenging to gather information going back the last 40 years. It is rewarding to see the strength and dedication of the sisters who began this journey with this Association and who are still continuing with patience and perseverance.

I am grateful to Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala for giving me the opportunity to work for this Association. I thank the pioneer members for their efforts in starting this Association and I pray that it will grow and serve the Muslim community for years to come.

Information submitted by Tazul Nisha Ali  
Chairperson of BCMA Women's Council



BCMA Women's Chapter Executive: (L-R) Hamida Hassan-Treasurer; Jubeda Khairati-Membership; Farida Bano Ali-Social Services; Tazul Ali-Chairperson; Zuleika Husain-Secretary; Missing: Hazra Begg-Vice Chairperson; Leila Akhtary- Education Director; Habiba Gamiet-Burial

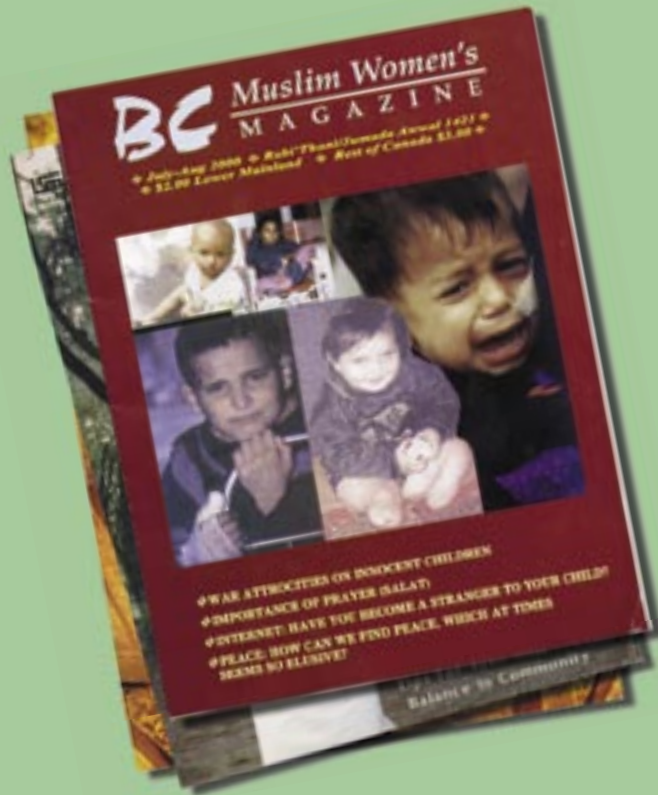


Surrey Women's Chapter: (L-R) Hamida Hassan-Chairperson; Zuleika Husain-Vice-Chairperson; Salima Mohamed- Youth; Zonobia Mohamed-Secretary; Fatima Ali-Assistant Social Services; Leila Akhtary-Islamic Education; Missing: Razia Shafique-Treasurer; Muzima Khan-Membership; Junidah Abdulah-Mosque Maintenance; Sakina Suleiman-Assistant Treasurer



Burnaby Women's Chapter: (L-R) Nazma Lal-Mosque Co-ordinator; Farida Bano Ali-Chairperson; Nisha Zubair-Secretary; Nuzhat Hafiz-Vice-Chairperson/Education; Hazra Ismail-Treasurer; Sadrul Buksh-Assistant Treasurer; Fareeda Ali-Membership; Missing: Zinnat Buksh-Youth





Vancouver Women's Chapter: (L-R) Jahan Mohamed; Saira Ali; Shasul Ali; Jubeda Khairati; Shehnaz Rafiq; Jamila Mohamed



## Part V / 1990's

# BRANCHING OUT

**A**t the beginning of the 1990s, many of the goals of the founders and pioneers of the BCMA from 1966 had been accomplished. There were Masjids and Islamic centres. A Muslim school was operating at capacity. The organization was operating across the province. As a result, the challenge that lied ahead was to expand the organization to meet the growing community needs during the next decade.

Like the 1980s, this decade started with a new face arriving on the scene. In 1990, Imam Saber Zakeieh joined the BCMA. Imam Saber was of Syrian origin. At the time of his hiring, he was in his late twenties, and was seen as a potential long-term fit with the community. He had worked in Montreal prior to coming to BC, and before that was in the United States. He was a graduate of Medina University, with a specialization in Hadth and Sunnah.

That same year, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) announced that they had formed a council of 100 Alims from around the globe to translate the Holy Quran into English. When hearing about this exciting project, Farouk Ellesseily, a founding member of the BCMA was able to secure the first 3,000 copies for the association.

In the summer of 1990, the BC Muslim Association hosted a major Islamic Dawah Conference at the Richmond Masjid. It was hosted by Yasin Khan and featured some of the top Islamic speakers and Alims, some of which have gone on to become best selling authors and authorities on Islam. The lineup for the event was incredible. Speakers included Shaykh Ahmad Zaki Hammad from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt; Muzammil Siddiqi from Cal State Fullerton; Jamal Badawi, a Canadian Muslim scholar; and Imam Siraj Wahaj from Masjid Al-Taqwa in New York. The topics ranged from the role of women in Islam to the significance of Masjids. Women and youth were also given separate sessions to discuss issues relevant to them.

The BCMA also began conducting direct dawah programs out of the Masjid. Asgar Hussein took the responsibility of conducting tours through the masjid, describing features and architectural design elements that were relevant to Islam. He also gave lectures on the basics of Islam to groups that visited. Imam Saber suggested that

schools might be interested in touring the facility and learning about Islam. As a result, Asgar Hussein mailed letters to schools telling them that the local Mosque was offering lectures and tours which were intended to develop a better awareness and understanding of Islam among students. The response was encouraging, as over a dozen schools, college, cultural and church groups comprising over 300 people from as far away as Aldergrove and Bellingham took in the tour and lecture.

**A** new portfolio was introduced in the early 1990s to meet a social demand. Mohammed Yasin Khan and his wife Samshad were asked to take on the responsibility of looking after the new area of Matrimonial Affairs. Immediately, they received plenty of letters from prospective brides and grooms and reviewed them together. But for many Muslims in the early 1990s, the focus was not on love, but war.

In 1991, following the outbreak of the Gulf War, the BCMA spoke out in favor of peace. It sent a letter to Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, as well as to the Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs. The BCMA also conveyed their message to the Federal Justice Minister in person during a meeting in Vancouver. With the association acting as the sole representative for Muslims in the province, and Muslims featured in the news constantly, President Ali Mihirig appointed a media committee. They were Asgar Hussein in Surrey, Azhar Syed and Kareem M. Kareem in Vancouver and Rifat Sele in Richmond. The Vancouver City Council had voted to advise the Canadian Government to remove any Canadian soldiers from the Gulf. Mayor Gordon Campbell actually visited the Islamic Centre in Vancouver on January 25, 1991, as a guest of his friend and longtime BCMA member Riasat Ali Khan. Mayor Campbell told the crowd at the centre that they had his sympathy, and that he would give them any help that he could. The next day, a peace march was held in Robson Square and many Muslims participated. Over 10,000 people attended. The BCMA Women's Chapter also started an Iraqi children's fund.

Muslims in the media was a hot button issue during this period. It was the beginning of a new phenomenon: 24 hour news. With that came sensational news reporting in which items like religion were discussed. When it came to Islam, many of the reports were giving false information and an

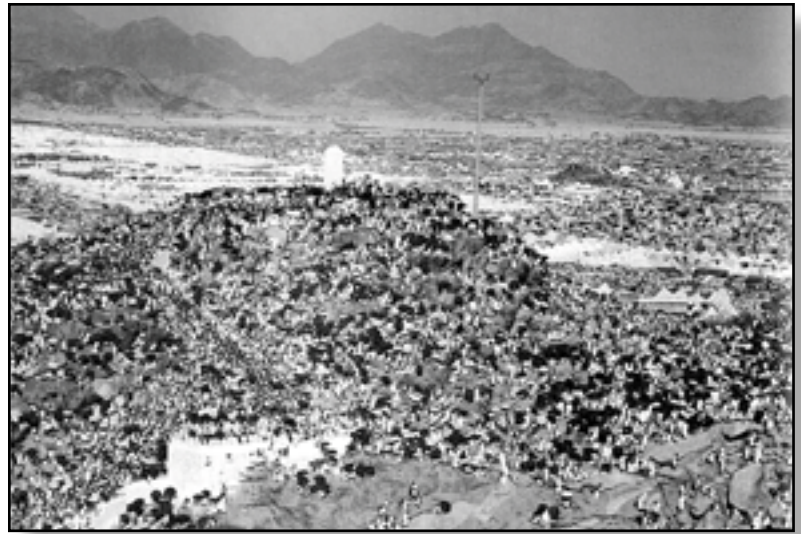
inaccurate depiction of the faith, its followers and its tenets. The Vancouver Sun ran a controversial series called “Under the Veil” which painted an extremely negative view of women in Islam. Also, the publicly funded CBC ran a piece on its program the Fifth Estate which also painted a negative picture of Islam. The association responded in writing to both these stories and voiced the concern of Muslims. At no time did the BCMA fail to stand up for Muslims and their faith when faced with unfair and untrue media attacks.

**T**he early nineties would also be the time when the BCMA moved into the information age. All of the association’s records were computerized. This endeavor was lead by Tahir Ali, the BCMA secretary. These records were also used to produce the BCMA telephone directory which was a popular item.

With many members of the community now settled here in the lower mainland, there was an increasing number who wanted to fulfill their lifelong dream of making the journey of a lifetime: traveling as a Pilgrim to Mecca and performing the Hajj. In the early 1990’s Qari Abdul Wahab would teach seminars for potential Hajjis about the nuts and bolts of undertaking the journey. In 1993, the association was able to offer its first ever complete Hajj package. Twenty-three members took advantage and performed the Hajj in a group led naturally by Qari Wahab. An

event called “Farewell to Hajjis” was also arranged. The program demonstrated the requirements for Hajj and also the necessary etiquette.

Another group from the BCMA visited Saudi Arabia for a different cause. A delegation comprising of Sikander



Khan, Mumtaz Ali and Salah Al-Kateeb attended an OIC conference in Saudi. The delegation used this opportunity to meet with the Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Development Bank, The Muslim World League and Darul Ifta. This trip turned out to be very helpful to the organization in the long run as the relationship formed with the IDB, which is an arm of the OIC helped provide the funds for the BC Muslim high school in 1997.



1993 was not just significant in terms of BCMA members going abroad, but also for foreign dignitaries coming to the BCMA. First, Dr. Hamid Algabid, a former Prime Minister of Niger who was serving as the Chairman of the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) visited with BCMA officials and members at a luncheon. He also toured the Muslim school and was very impressed. The association was invited to attend a meeting of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF). Normally, these meetings were only for member countries. However, the BCMA was allocated time for its presentation, and sent a delegation headed by the President. This was possible due to the work of Dr. Algabid. This visit

was extremely important to future funding from international sources for the BCMA. Upon his visit, Dr. Algabid said: "This memorable visit, though it was short, enabled me to have an informative glimpse of the situation of Muslims in Canada and particularly Vancouver. It is also a valuable opportunity for me to witness the outstanding achievements of your important association as well as the dynamism and vigor which underline its action. I really appreciated the dedicated efforts of all the members of the association in the service of the Islamic community, and wish to extend to them my full support and encouragement."

Later, Sheikh Said Ben Said, the deputy minister of Finance for the kingdom of Saudi Arabia paid a visit. He took blueprints of the school and promised to look into the possibility of helping with finances. With the problems facing Muslims in the Balkans escalating, it was only perfect that the Bosnian ambassador to the United States, Dr. Najid Sachirby also came to the BCMA and met with officials. BCMA was building on its reputation as an organization with an international presence.

**T**he BCMA also continued to help Refugees. As it helped those who had fled Afghanistan, Lebanon and Iran in the 1980s, the BCMA now welcomed those from Bosnia after the ethnic cleansing began in the Balkan states. Over 130 refugees from Bosnia were welcomed by the association in 1993. A welcome reception and fundraiser was held in their honor. Many of these refugees were young families with children. Islamic Studies classes for children and youth for new comers from Bosnia were started to give the children a more solid Islamic foundation in their new homeland. Asgar Hussein and Anes Dzumhur would teach the classes at the home of Musaib and Zaida Talic. The fruits of this program were incredible as many of the young boys and girls who attended these classes have now taken a leadership role within the Muslim community.

The Bosnian refugee situation during the awful ethnic cleansing taking place in the region was a turning point for the association. The Bosnian brothers and sisters who arrived during that period would become a major part of the BCMA, and the entire community would benefit from their arrival and willingness to participate in the association.

Qari Wahab and others in Surrey had a program where people could sponsor refugees from Bosnia. On August 15th 1995, this disturbing message was received from Immigration Canada: "32-year-old mother of two children,

a boy (age 7) and a girl (age 12). Muslim family...Husband killed by Serbs in 1992...Fighting going around so family moved.

Due to heavy shelling, family to sleep outside in fear that house would collapse on them. One night at 4:00 a.m. Forces came by and told them to flee as the 5th corps were coming and killing and raping everyone they found. Family fled...relatives scattered all over. Ready to go immediately."

Upon hearing this chilling information of what was happening in the heart of Europe, a handful of Muslims in Surrey representing five families drove to the airport in Vancouver to welcome this Bosnian family. The Bosnian community is now a thriving force in the lifeblood of the BCMA

With the Muslim population growing around BC, the BCMA was able to successfully establish it's first out of town chapter, in the provincial capital of Victoria. A delegation from the association went and met with the Muslim community of Victoria. A house was rented for their daily prayers and to serve as a location for the propagation of Islam and other dawah work. In addition to the programs for Bosnia, \$13,000 was raised for the needy in Somalia.

The association also participated in a demonstration supporting the rights of Palestinian refugees, and had the chance to meet Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, and various members of the Federal Cabinet, with whom they were able to share facts and opinions. Through their work in helping victims of the Bosnian Genocide, the BCMA also received a fax from the staff of U.S. President Bill Clinton.

The mid 1990's also saw changes within the operations of the BCMA. With an office now set up, some innovations were made. The association developed marriage certificates and issued this standard document at all marriages performed by their marriage officers. In 1994, the first ever BCMA published calendar was printed and turned out to be a real success. It featured paintings by Dale Dumas. Also the full implementation of the preauthorized payment plan was put in place. This made fundraising considerably more efficient.

In 1994, the BCMA expanded its methods of conducting dawah work through the use of new, convenient literature packaged in small folded brochures. These professional looking documents have become a mainstay in the community, and with their pocket sized design and their efficiency in packing a lot of information into a small space, make for an easy item to give to non-Muslims who have questions about Islam but may not necessarily have the time to go through books and track down the information they want. These brochures were



available free to anyone who contacted the BCMA and covered a range of topics including: Islam and the Environment, Islam and Homosexuality, Human Rights in Islam, Islam and Abortion, Islam and Racism, Women in Islam, Some Forgotten Sayings of Jesus, and Life after Death.

The BCMA also hosted the annual Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) conference at UBC from June 3-5 in 1994. The theme was: The Muslim Family: Enhancing the Islamic Identity. Among the speakers were Abdalla Idris Ali, the President of ISNA and Dawood Zwink, a director of the Shura Council. The event was well attended and was popular among Muslim youth and adults alike. ISNA was so impressed that they returned six years later, in 2000 as the Masjid-ul Jami in Richmond hosted the 9th Annual ISNA Canada West Conference. The theme of that conference was Living Islam: Family, Youth and Community. Speakers included Muzammil Siddiqi, Abdalla Idris Ali, Ameena Jandali and Arafat El-Ashi.

The 1990's also saw the expansion of the BCMA prison chaplain program. Asgar Hussein and Zijad Delic were taking the lead in addressing the needs of Muslim inmates in the Federal Correctional Institutions in the province. Their responsibilities now included making sure the inmates had halal food, ensuring that they had special arrangements during the month of Ramadan to eat their meals at suhoor and iftar and to fast throughout the day, providing materials for the inmates to study the Quran, the Hadith, the lives of Prophets and other information, counseling, and providing information to non-Muslim inmates who were curious about the Islamic faith. They visited with inmates at Kent, Mountain, Mission, Ferndale and Matsqui prisons as well as those in multi-level institutions for the detention, treatment and assessment of offenders who required mental health intervention.

The women's chapter of the association, an equal partner in the BCMA, was working diligently throughout the decade. One of the greatest accomplishments of the mid-1990's was this chapter's acquisition of a 1986 Buick LeSabre hearse for the association. The ladies also took the lead in setting up proper guidelines for its operation. Many members donated generously to the cause and some even stepped up to offer to pay for any future maintenance on the vehicle. The BCMA could now provide a

full burial service including ghusl facilities, kafan, coffin boxes, burial plots and now a hearse.

In 1996, Zijad Delic was appointed as the Imam of the Richmond Mosque. After Fazle Haqq had decided not to return from England in 1995, there was a vacancy for this position. Imam Zijad was already a popular teacher and leader in the community, speaking publicly at many events. He possessed a degree in Islamic Studies and Quranic Arabic from the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan. He had previously worked as a teacher and a head Imam in his native Bosnia, before making his way to Vancouver. Immediately, he became one of the most active Imams in the history of the community, talking to groups in schools, universities, doing media interviews and visiting Muslims in hospitals and prisons. By the end of the 1990s, when the community was flooded with various projects, Imam Zijad earned the reputation as a master fundraiser and was in demand at events throughout the province, and later, throughout North America.

Qari Abdul Wahab also remained very active. In 1997, he met with over 60 Sikh students from various schools from the Surrey area. He explained Islamic beliefs and took questions from the audience. Qari Wahab has built a solid reputation with the large Sikh community in Surrey, and is greatly respected by Sikh leaders. In 2005, Qari Wahab and other prominent BCMA leaders met with members of the local Sikh community upon hearing the news of the attack on the Nanakana Sahib Gurdwara in Pakistan in which the Sikhs' holy place of worship was vandalized by an angry mob.

For much of the early 1990's, Eid Salah was held at the PNE show-mart buildings. This was in spite of a small petition circulating in Surrey complaining that the location was too far to travel.

By the mid 1990's there was a push to further decentralize the organization, however. In 1994, local management committees were formed in accordance with a constitutional amendment that took place the year prior. The idea behind these LMC's was that they could do a better job of meeting the needs of their respective communities. These local management committees were set up in Burnaby/New Westminster, Richmond, Surrey/Delta and Vancouver. Each committee would consist of seven members from that area.

Burnaby/New Westminster was the first committee formed. Their goal was to meet the needs of the communities of Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Coquitlam and North Vancouver as well. The first meeting of the committee

was held at the residence of Sikander Azam. Tahir Ali was elected as Chairman. The members knew they had to reach out to the community in order to get input, and involvement. Their first event was an Open House held at the Capitol Hill Community Hall in Burnaby. All Muslim brothers and sisters were invited to discuss the needs for a permanent religious facility, a Madressa school in the area, and new ideas for fundraising. At the time, religious classes were being held at a residence on 19th and Canada Way. By the summer of 1994, however, the committee was able to secure a room at a community centre for classes. They secured a location for Jummah prayers: the Legion hall on Jubilee Avenue in Burnaby. The prayers were lead by Maulana Shahadat Hussein. Madressa classes were being conducted at the residence of Mansoor Khan.

In Surrey, where there was already an existing Masjid, the role for the new LMC, which was chaired by Adam Buksh, was already defined as it was now up to them to care for the building. This included making sure that regular maintenance was completed, the rental property was well looked after, Madressa classes which had been conducted in Surrey since the late 1970's were running smoothly, and that funds were collected and appropriately managed. One of the first tasks of the Surrey/Delta committee included forming a steering committee to look in to the establishment of a full time Muslim school in Surrey. Another priority for this group was the expansion of the small Surrey Masjid for the exploding Muslim population in the area. Surrey had become Canada's fastest growing city. Years later, a fire would result in the building of a new Mosque.

In Vancouver, much like Burnaby, there was a desire for a Mosque. Immediately the local management committee began to look at feasible places to construct or purchase a Masjid. Under Chairman Usman Ali, they called upon their community in Vancouver and West Vancouver to offer suggestions of available places. Immediately, the committee opened two new Jummah Salah locations. As well, when the Islamic Centre in Vancouver closed temporarily for renovations, they found a space on 5th Avenue to use as a Mussallah.

In Richmond, they were slower to get their LMC off the ground, but a Richmond complex Committee was formed. They performed an incredible number of tasks to keep the Mosque in good condition. A deck was put in at the Imam's residence, and a full time custodian was hired for the complex. Everything from the public address system to the awning by the ladies entrance

was overhauled. It was clear that the decentralization of the BC Muslim Association was what was needed at the time, and was producing staggering results.

The Local Management Committees were later given status as official branches of the BCMA. The association immediately took steps to ensure that the branches had enough resources and information to conduct their affairs independently, while still staying within the parameters set by the constitution, the Societies Act, generally accepted accounting practices and Federal law. One of the ways BCMA empowered these chapters and branches was with Executives' introduction of the BCMA Operations Manual, better known as the Greenbook. The association's trustees were given the role of ensuring that these manuals were kept up to date with any changes in constitutional or legal matters. The BCMA also held accounting seminars for the every person within the association who held the position of treasurer. The seminars were held by Mohammed Yasin Takki, a Certified General Accountant who by now had been the association's auditor for many years. He was assisted by Jameel Desai, an accounting student and BCMA employee.

In Burnaby/New Westminster and the Tri-Cities, the branch, formed in 1997, saw that there was need for immediate action on building a facility. The city of Burnaby alone had 500 Muslim families originating from Fiji, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Turkey, the Middle East, Pakistan, India and elsewhere. When the Branch was first elected at the Richmond Mosque on January 5, 1997, it created a post of "project chairman" to oversee the future Mosque construction which was given to Daud Ali. Mohammed Janif Barka was the inaugural Chairman. The Islamic Centre was initially thought of as a place where the local community could pray in congregation, to provide a place for learning and education, to conduct dawah work and to provide counseling and other forms of community support. After much consultation with the local community, however, the idea grew into a complex anchored by a Mosque with prayer halls for male and female worshippers to offer prayers, a social hall with kitchen facilities, a ghusl area, wudu facilities, and an education and resource centre including a library, classrooms and a youth centre. This was also intended to be a place where the non-Muslim neighbors of the community could come to share in Islamic events and learn more about our faith, beliefs and practices.

The branch began holding its regular monthly meetings at Mohammed Janif Barka's home. In looking for a site for a new Mosque, the Burnaby branch looked at 15 potential locations and buildings. Initially, a property located at 7753 Edmonds looked like it would serve the needs of the community. The branch soon discovered, however that the City of Burnaby would force them to have a place with more parking if they were to conduct public gatherings. As well, the branch would have huge costs ahead of them for necessary structural upgrading to the building.

1997 was an election year in Canadian Federal politics. David Ali, the branch secretary, and his wife Farida arranged a meeting between the branch and Mobina Jaffer, a candidate for Parliament in the riding of Burnaby-Douglas. Ms. Jaffer not only pledged her support, but helped enlist the assistance of the Mayor of Burnaby. Although Ms. Jaffer did not win a seat in Ottawa that year, she became a key contact for the association as she was appointed a Canadian Senator in 2002. Her oath of service was taken on the Holy Quran for the first time in Canadian Senatorial history.

On November 7, 1997, the branch met with Burnaby Mayor, the late Doug Drummond to ask for help in securing a location. The construction committee also met regularly with local Muslim realtor Nizam Dean, of Coldwell Banker in Br. Dean's office on Kingsway. Br. Dean had an architect colleague of his; Mr. Wojciech Grzybowicz of WG Architects assist him in finding a property for a Mosque in Burnaby. They eventually suggested the location of Canada Way and Sperling along with the City Planning Department. The branch was excited about the prospects of the location as it was located centrally, near the Trans Canada Highway. As well, as Mr. Dean pointed out, there was great visibility as the land was located on a main road. The branch and construction committee were impressed with the land and were interested in buying it, providing that they could get the zoning.

The branch applied for re-zoning. After the third reading of the proposal in March of 1999, Burnaby City Council approved the construction of the Mosque on this land. The task of designing the facility was now turned over to Sharif Senbel. Br. Senbel mentioned on the Branch's website was his vision of a Masjid was He wrote:



**Sharif Senbel**  
Architect

*"A true mosque is a reflection of its community and its place.*

*A place, which is filled with tranquility and serenity when we enter it to pray.*

*A place where our Grandmothers feel welcome and comfortable.*

*A place where mothers can come, their children having a place to play, as to not disturb others in prayer.*

*A place where the youth can gather to socialize and organize.*

*A place of learning where we can all continue to learn from Muslim scholars.*

*A place where we can bring non-Muslims to experience the beauty of our religion.*

A place that inspires us through the play of space, light and materials to the greatness and oneness of Allah."

The land was purchased for \$750,000 on March 31, 1999. Nizam Dean and Mohammed Janif Barka worked out the details of the deal with the previous owners. Although Mr. Grzybowicz was not involved in the final design and construction of the Mosque, his impact and help is commendable. Other financial challenges arose however, as soil contamination on the property due to previous land use required the branch to incur costs in addressing this problem.

The Burnaby branch conducted new, innovative fund-raising measures to secure the funds for the Mosque. Fund-raising dinners were no longer held in community halls, but in hotels including the Radisson and Clarion hotels in Burnaby. The branch also held three dinners at Robson Square in downtown Vancouver. Burnaby was able to come up with incredible guest speakers, known throughout North America and the Muslim world, and therefore were able to attract large crowds from a huge cross section of people from various regions across the province. This included Imam Abd-al Rashid Brown from Capetown, South Africa who was also invited to come during Ramadan to lead Taraweeh prayers; Rafael Narbaez, a former Jehovah's Witness pastor of Hispanic origin who converted to Islam and is now a well known Muslim speaker who came from

Dearborn, Michigan; Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, from Alameda, California; Dr. Munir Al-Kassem from London, Ontario; and Dr. Ahmad Sakr, a friend of the association since his visit to the Habitat conference in 1976, who also came to a dinner in Victoria in 1994;

**A**nother innovation in Burnaby's methods was the involvement of the youth in the community to help raise funds. In the past, the youth had taken very minor roles in these affairs. In Burnaby, they were given specific, direct responsibilities. In the summer of 1998, the Burnaby youth held an event known as "Family Fun Day," an all-day outdoor carnival for families at the Richmond Masjid. Children could ride ponies, play various games, sports and activities; and for the adults there was a bazaar held in the multi-purpose room of the Mosque, as well as door prizes and a barbecue. All aspects of the event, from sponsorships to food and even first-aid were handled by the youth. Over 500 people attended. The event was such a success that it was brought back the next year.

The branch also had other summer plans to raise funds. In August of 1998, Mohammed Janif Barka and Mansoor Khan traveled to Los Angeles and quickly raised \$5,000 U.S. Later that month, Daud Ali, Salim Buksh and Mohammed Yasin were able to raise \$11,500 U.S. in a three day trip to northern California. A grand total of \$16,500 U.S.

Another new innovative fundraising tool was the website [www.bcmaburnaby.com](http://www.bcmaburnaby.com). This site was set up by Burnaby youth team-leader Irshad Koya and Ardiel Soeker. The website, which is still popular, contains a daily prayer timetable, information for potential donors from all over the world, and a sponsorship directory. As well, Irshad Koya developed a monthly membership program in which businesses gave discounts to those who paid membership fees to the association and became a card carrying member.

In 1997, the BCMA finally had a strong presence on the island with the Victoria branch opening the Masjid-ul-Imaan in October. This was to serve the over 500 Muslims in Victoria. Qari Wahab was on hand to open the Mosque.



*Burnaby Mosque, Under construction*



The next year, Sheikh Saeed Zakaria was named Imam.

The late 1990's also saw the Vancouver branch acquire a new property. In 1998, the branch acquired the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, a church located at 4162 Welwyn Street, half a block north of Kingsway between Victoria drive and Knight street.

The property consisted of two buildings: the first, containing a very spacious main prayer area. The basement consisted of two separate rooms along with an office, two bathrooms, an entry hall, a furnace room, an electrical room and a storage area. The second building was a small, two bedroom house in good condition. The purchase price was \$635,000.

The structure was attractive because of its location (East Vancouver), its size (nearly 4000 square feet in the building, 1200 square feet in the residence) and its features (a prayer hall for women, a classroom and conference room). As a working church, the site also came with additional features such as an emergency lighting system, a public address system, burglar and fire alarms, two built in vacuum cleaners, exit displays and 80 chairs. This project was definitely a community effort, as the Vancouver branch team included 27 members. This Mosque came to be known as Masjid-ul-Haqq.

Vancouver had some innovative fundraising methods of their own. For example, an open house at the church before re-modeling began yielded \$50,000. Instead of hotels, Vancouver held their fundraising dinners on cruise ships, enlisting the help of Imam Zijad.

While construction was underway in other areas, Richmond's branch was focused on helping these other projects as well as doing dawah work. The dawah committee of Richmond hosted Ghulam Nabi Fai, the Executive Director of the Kashmiri American Council (KAC) in Washington for a weekend of lectures in 1999. Dr. Fai, who traveled the world talking about the struggle of the Kashmiri people for the right to self-determination gave three lectures and addressed worshippers during Jummah prayers at the Richmond Mosque. Other dawah programs included a mock court trial held at John Oliver Secondary including parents and children. Sheikh Joban of Olympia, Washington also came across the border on more than one occasion for a series of lectures hosted by the committee. They also arranged for college students and church groups to routinely tour the Masjid. One innovative program this committee came

up with was the basketball clinic held in Richmond. Jamil Popatia, a provincial youth counselor conducted a clinic for local youth on improving their basketball skills.

Over in Surrey, the population of Muslims in the area was booming. In 1995, the building which was commonly known as "The Surrey Mosque" was renamed "Masjid at-Taqwa." In 1999, the Surrey branch successfully purchased the house next to the site. In 1997, A new Masjid was opened in Surrey. As was the case with Masjid-ul-Haqq and Masjid-at Taqwa, the existing structure was a church. Masjid-ur-Rahmah was bought for \$429,000 in 1996. Faiz Mohammed led the collection committee and a year later, in August of 1997, the Masjid held its grand opening.

The ceremony was attended by over 700 people. On the official opening night alone, \$25,000 in pledges was raised. Guests from California were also present. Qari Abdul Wahab and Imam Ubaidur Rahman Sahab of Stockton, California conducted the fundraising. The following evening, the sisters in the community held their own event, raising \$2,000.

Masjid Rahmah was a joint project of both the Surrey and the Surrey East branches. It illustrates the ability of Muslims to come together for a common goal. It continues to serve Muslims in a part of the lower mainland that was virtually undeveloped when the association formed in 1966. Today, the eastern portion of Surrey, Panorama Ridge and White Rock are served by this facility. Imam Ghulam Bhaji was hired in 1997.

A school annex on the property with a playground also serves the children in the area. With its successful acquisition and running of facilities, the Surrey branch and the Surrey East branch have also been able to conduct a special Hafiz program.

In 1999, the BCMA made a purchase of yet another property, this time to help meet the needs of the growing population outside the lower mainland. The Nanaimo branch, serving the Vancouver Island towns of Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Lantzville and Ladysmith was looking for a centre to purchase for quite a few years. Until then, Jummah salah was held at a home of a brother, while Eid festivities took place in rented halls. In 1999, the Nanaimo building which would become the Islamic centre was purchased for \$168,000. The building, run by the Francophone Society of Nanaimo had

been familiar to the Muslims in the area as a place rented in the past for Eid. It was located at 905 Hecate Street and was a completely fenced off structure with a playground, classrooms and was wheelchair accessible.

The Grand Opening of the new centre was held on July 15, 2000. On hand for the special occasion were BCMA President Sikander Khan, MLA Dale Lovick, Mayor Gary Kurpan, Dr. Farid Yunus and others. The event was covered by local media.

Upon obtaining their Islamic centre, the brothers and sisters in Nanaimo and the surrounding areas became extremely active immediately, and were well known throughout the community at large. In November of 1999, they organized a friendly dialogue session between some members of their community along with about a dozen Christians from the Evangelistic Tabernacle. Osman Akhtary, the chairperson of the Nanaimo branch moderated the discussion. Over two hours, the Muslims and their Christian neighbors discussed issues such as the role of Jesus and the Trinity in a respectful manner. Younus Mirza gave a brief introduction to what Islam stands for, while Eli Chiarelli gave an introduction to Christianity. After the discussion, attendees of both faiths shared refreshments and chatted.

The Nanaimo branch also welcomed Muslims from outside of Canada who came to the Island. This included 46 Muslim students who had come from Indonesia to study business Administration at Malaspina College. The branch put on an event for the students, who were extremely grateful and even helped with chores at the Islamic centre.

Although plenty of effort was dedicated toward construction projects during this period, the association also continued to do dawah and charity work. In 1997, at the Richmond Mosque, an event was held on Christmas night. The fact that it occurred on December the 25th was no accident. In fact the event was a lecture about Jesus (Peace be upon him) entitled "Jesus: A Prophet of Islam. Learn why Muslims should not participate in the Christmas Festival." Dinner was served and Muslims were able to spend Christmas night in an Islamic environment. The event was a huge success.

Earlier that year, the government of British Columbia, led by Glen Clark proposed two new spousal benefits laws that would expand the definition of "spouse" to include same-sex couples. Bills 31 and 32 recognized "the marriage-like relationship between persons of the same gender" in the Family Relations Act and the Family

Maintenance Enforcement Act. Gay and lesbian couples received the same legal status with regards to child custody, maintenance and access as would "common-law" heterosexual couples. Many faith groups including the Catholic Archdiocese of British Columbia protested against these changes to the definition of marriage. Syed V. Madani, a long-time member, past-president, and trustee wrote a letter on behalf of the BCMA to Attorney General Ujjal Dosanjh, informing him of the Islamic viewpoint and why this law would have a detrimental effect on society.

In 1997, Vancouver was the host city for the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC). Many delegations such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore had Muslim members. To accommodate them on their visit, Tahir Ali, the General Secretary of the association wrote a letter to the APEC office and informed them of Jummah locations and Masjids. The APEC organizers wrote a reply thanking the BCMA and distributed this information to the prominent people who came for the summit.

In 1998, the BCMA's media council responded to a radio talk show that aired on CFUN AM 1410 in Vancouver on the 20th of July. The hosts discussed Islam in a condescending and prejudiced manner, mocking some practices of the faith such as adhan. Imam Zijad Delic wrote to the station about the concerns, spoke to the hosts of the program and received an apology for their insensitive and ill informed comments and attitudes towards Islam. The station's program manager, Neil Gallagher also sent an apology letter.

The same year, a Muslim family needed help with a permanent residence application to stay in Canada. The husband was from Algeria and his wife was from Germany. Their children were young and in school. The basis of their claim was that being in Germany was dangerous for them as the German government and citizenry frowned upon their relationship and marriage due to the fact that a German woman had married a Muslim and a person of color. They claimed that hostility ran high in Germany towards Arabs, Muslims, Turks and others. BCMA President Sikander Khan wrote a letter to the Canadian Immigration Centre in support of the family. He urged the centre to see the issues of discrimination and to realize that this family "...is the type of individuals Canada should want as permanent residents." On January 23, 1998, the family had been granted refugee status in Canada on humanitarian grounds. The letter

from the BCMA, according to the family's lawyer was a very important factor in the decision.

The 1990s were a time of construction and development for the BC Muslim Association. As in the construction of any facility used for the purposes of worshipping Allah and practicing Islam, the physical and financial impediments to conducting all these projects were of no concern as the community knew that the benefits of having

these structures would be immeasurable and life long. The BC Muslim association would head into the 21st century with infrastructure under development, ready to serve the needs of the Muslim community in British Columbia. In the 1980's many of the dreams of the founders of the BC Muslim Association had been accomplished. By the end of the 1990's, what had been accomplished was beyond the wildest imagination of anyone in the community.

## Part VI / 2000 to the present

# Forty Years & Counting

As the 21st century approached, Islam in British Columbia was in a position of strength. The BCMA was present in the interior and Vancouver Island, as well as in the lower mainland and Fraser Valley with the establishment of the Islamic centre and branch in Abbotsford. The association started the millennium with the launch of [www.thebcma.com](http://www.thebcma.com), its new website. The site was launched and maintained by webmaster Asghar Chaudhry.

When the association was first formed, it was almost exclusively run out of Vancouver. All the directors were residents of Vancouver, that is where the Islamic centre was located, and it was where all the events were held. Heading into the new millennium, times had changed. Many Muslim families were now living in Surrey and Burnaby in the lower mainland, and elsewhere in the province as well. Perhaps as a sign of the times, the three people who have served as the President of the BCMA in the 21st century: Sikander Khan, Tahir Ali and Daud Ismail have all been residents of Burnaby. With Mosques in every region, and Islamic centres and Musallahs to accommodate Muslims where there are no Masjids, there is no real central location of the associations strength, and power has been decentralized to branches, wings, and

chapters who can better serve their local communities.

The Burnaby branch continued to fundraise, hosting events frequently at the Bosnia hall on 6th street in Burnaby. This included regular evening prayers. In November, two directors of the branch went to Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates to collect money for the Mosque. The branch continued to raise money locally by selling food at Jummah prayers at various locations, and also by selling food at public events such as Muslim soccer tournaments. This same month, the branch obtained excavation permits.

In Surrey, November would be an eventful month as well. But this time, there was a tragedy. On November 24, 2000, the Surrey Mosque was gutted by a fire, determined to be cause by the act of an arsonist. The interior of the structure had been charred. The building was 100 years old, although it had only been a Masjid for 20 years. Two brothers, who had been sleeping inside woke up to flames, smoke and heat but were able to get out safely, by the Grace of Allah. Plaster and walls were cracked and burnt, stained glass windows were broken and pieces of the structure were warped and busted. Tears rolled down the faces of some of the members of the community as they arrived to witness the horrible



**Surrey studies Muslim school**  
 By Kent Spencer  
 Staff Reporter  
 Surrey council heard last night the pros and cons of building a Muslim school in the area.

Two hundred people — two-thirds of them belonging to the Muslim Association — attended a public hearing over the expansion of the existing school by 1,000 sq ft. The school fills up the room for more than 500 kids to attend, Mayor Doug Young said last night.

Expansion is needed so that their children can learn traditional religion and grow up to be "good Canadians."

"Our children need to have the same educational standards as other Canadian kids," said school mom Asha Hau. "A Muslim school teaches the values learned at home."

The \$1-million project would expand the existing school for 50 kids to 120 and serve kindergarten to Grade 4.

A prayer hall is currently on the site at 13585 62nd Ave. which accommodates 40 people. It is currently under construction and will accommodate 100 people.

**... school growth**

Residents of the Reedville neighborhood say the school will accommodate more children parked on the street.

"I applaud them for wanting to educate their children, but this location does not serve their needs," said resident David Jackson. "Activities are taking place 24 hours a day."

Muslims said the planned parking expansion will meet city bylaws and pledge that funerals will be held at the Council Hall.

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Arabic teacher Mady El Gasar helps students learn Arabic at the school.

**Muslims being target of terrorism**  
 not, one wrong act and the whole world is in turmoil.

Even if it is learned that an Islamic extremist group is responsible, "there are Muslims in every religion," he said.

Anyone who killed so many is violating the tenets of Islam, Ashour said.

"Our teaching is just like any other religion, spreading peace and getting good relationships with God and other people regardless of their religion," he said.

Rashid Musil, who edits an Arab newspaper in Vancouver, said everyone he's talked to is extremely shocked and dismayed — none of us would condone these attacks.

Musil said he deplores the suspects always turn to him when events like this happen, adding that many in the Arab community here feel this is a well coordinated, like the attack has been internal, like the Oklahoma City bombing.

While he said there is some fear in his community will be targeted.

**... Muslim official**

our experience in Canada has been very positive."

"Canada we haven't noticed overt hostility. We are hopeful that remains the case."

The Canadian Jewish Congress called for calm and expressed condolences to the victims.

"Our hearts are with the people who have suffered so terribly today," said Keith Landy, the president of a national advocacy group for the Jewish community.

"While this attack is obviously unprecedented in its enormity, we must remain calm while the situation is assessed."

"We call for our community and for all Canadians, to carry on as normally as possible under the circumstances."

"We strongly condemn evil acts and call on Canada and civilized countries to determine measures to support international or domestic organizations who have declared freedom and democracy."

**Local Muslims offer education about Islam**

By Michael McQuillan  
 News/Feature Staff

It is a difficult time to be a Muslim. Every day there are regular reports of conflict and strife in the Middle East, considered by many as the homeland for most Muslims. Regular reports of terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan are also causing many in the Western World to blur together the words Muslim and terrorist.

been in the news for very many years. People are very confused as to what it's all about.

Alli said his community are concerned about the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. "Talk to anyone on the street and ask them what they think about Muslims, and the first thing that comes to mind is terrorist," he said. "It's a misconception and we want to invite people here so we can clear up things."

Alli and others have been working on the Burnaby Mosque for a number of years. When it is complete, it will house a library and be open to all so they can learn about the faith that was spread around the world.

**Muslim school closed as a precaution**  
 BY KIM BOLAN

The B.C. Muslim Association closed its Richmond school for two days as a precaution in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

Association president Sikandar Khan said Wednesday that the board felt it was wise to close the school, which has almost 500 students in kindergarten to Grade 9.

Association leaders met with RCMP officials.

**Worshipping difficult after mosque fire**  
 Friday, December 1, 2000

Worshipping is a month of prayer and devotion for members of the Islamic community, but the arson fire in the Surrey mosque has left some of them with a very difficult time.

"It's been a terrible experience," B.C. Muslim Association spokesman Adam Khan said yesterday.

Khan said the mosque, which is located at 72nd Avenue and 15th Street, was destroyed by a fire on Oct. 27.

**BCMA IN THE NEWS**





...in consul-general Ali Abdullah (centre).

# Muslims chow down as fast month ends

By Lora Grindlay  
Staff Reporter

PROV FEB 22 1996

Imagine no food — not even a sip of water — from dawn to dusk every day for a month. After that, a party definitely would be in order. Like the one billion followers of the Islamic faith throughout the world, the Lower Mainland's 35,000 Muslims are celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr this week.

"On this day we are supposed to forget and forget any disagreements or problems and have a fresh start," said Feyoum Khan of the B.C. Muslim Association. Abdullah said fasting brings a Muslim closer to God, teaches self-control and enlightens the privileged to the plight of the poor. He fasts during Ramadan every year and has read the Koran, the Islamic equivalent of Christianity's Bible, about 10 times. "I strictly observe Ramadan every year. It is one of the main pillars of Islam," the consul-general said. "It is natural, it is normal, I don't find it difficult."

The Lower Mainland's Muslims come from throughout the world, including Indonesia, Pakistan, India, the Middle East and North Africa.

# BCMA's first Muslim high school planned for Richmond

SUN JAN 06 1996

The new school is designed for 300 students and is scheduled to open in September. While anyone can attend, all students will have to study Islamic history and the Muslim scriptures as well as the regular B.C. school curriculum.

Khan said the \$1.2-million project is being partly financed by a \$250,000 loan from a Saudi bank. The rest of the money will come from fund-raising by B.C.'s Muslim community. Like most other independent schools, the new school will receive 50 per cent of the amount that government pays per pupil for public education.

Students attending the association's school pay \$600-a-year tuition. Fees for high school have yet to be decided. Khan attended a public secondary school. Muslim students often have trouble with their identity when they are in a minority situation.

"Friday prayers are compulsory for all Muslims and it has to be done in congregation," he said. "This can be very difficult to do. And there is no free mixing of the sexes in Islamic law." Khan said there are about 25,000 Muslims in B.C. Most have come from Fiji, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Somalia and most recently — Bosnia.

Despite their diverse backgrounds and languages, B.C.'s Muslims are a close-knit group, Khan said. "The Muslim community in B.C. is the envy of all the Muslim communities in North America," he said. "We are so ethnically united. There are far more Muslims in the Toronto area. I don't know why they haven't built a school."

The first Muslim high school will be built in Richmond. A member of the board of directors for the B.C. Muslim Association, said the school will begin in late 1996. It will be adjacent to a mosque and elementary school at 12300 Blandell.

...a matter of first...



**Eid Mubarak:** The Lower Mainland celebrated Eid Mubarak on Tuesday after month-long Ramadan fasting and praying (right) to Muslims in the Lower Mainland. Pictures below show Eid Mubarak and the congregation at the Richmond Jam'at Mosque. See greeting's message on page 7.

# Ramadan's holiest celebration



Muslims take off their shawl before entering the mosque centres for prayer, not of religious significance but to the mosque clean.

Everyone stands shoulder in as many rows as room can fit, the sexes separate through a series of gates and kneeling. Feyoum Khan conducts the service.

Following the show, the imam reads the opening of the Quran, warning the congregation of the angels of hell waiting in the afterlife.

A modern concern is the figure in the Quran of collecting and loaning savings and loans. "It kills the economy," Khan said. "If someone has and can't use it, it's a waste of money."

Feyoum Khan — "I like the sense of unity and diversity" offered by Islam. "Islam was born and continues to grow with an estimated 35,000 in B.C. — the sense of unity and diversity of Islam."

# Decade of work gives Muslims school

It took a decade of work to build the school. The B.C. Muslim Association was established in 1985 on a site along Highway 10 in Richmond. It now slowly breaks an elementary school for Muslim children. For the first time, the school will have a mosque on its grounds.



# Fundraisers share million-dollar secret

It also helped that the Development Bank based in Victoria, can provide up to \$1 million in an eight-year loan. The bank donated \$200,000 to the B.C. Muslim Association. The bank is a member of our Community Development Bank. It is a member of our Community Development Bank. It is a member of our Community Development Bank.

# BCMA IN THE NEWS

crime that had been committed. Over 400 worshippers and students regularly attended the mosque for prayers, dawah work and Quran lessons as well as social activities. Temporarily, the members were forced to use a residential building next door to the charred Mosque which was later demolished. What made this tragedy worse is that it occurred just days before the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

By 2001, plans were underway for the new Masjid on the site of Masjid at-Taqwa. The old site, after demolition of the old building, was being prepared for construction. The branch received \$184,000 from the insurance company for the fire. The branch also purchased three adjacent properties which had been amalgamated to have a total area of 1.2 acres on which the Mosque is located.

After the fire, there were bigger crowds at Masjid-ur Rahmah as worshippers would attend the other Mosque in Surrey. The brothers of Surrey East were very welcoming to those from their neighboring branch. Just a month before the fire struck, the boundaries between Surrey East and Surrey/Delta had been determined after a considerable amount of negotiating between the two branches and the Executives. It was determined, finally that the Surrey/Delta branch would encompass all land starting at the Patullo Bridge (along with the Fraser river, separating Surrey and New Westminster); South along King George Highway then West on 92nd Avenue; then Southwest of 132nd Street up to 66th Avenue; then West of Scott Road up to the Number 10 Highway. All land falling to the east of this boundary would be Surrey-East.

One of the new growing hubs of Islam in the province was in Kelowna. A building was purchased there in 2000 for \$240,000. This was significant as it became the only place of worship for Muslims between Abbotsford and Alberta. The Kelowna branch had been raising funds since 1998. In early 1999, the New Apostolic Church of Canada at 1120 highway 33 west became available for sale. Immediately the community knew this was the perfect site for the

future of Muslims in the Okanagan. The next year, this chapter negotiated to purchase 10 burial plots from Cedar Valley Memorial Gardens.

On September 11, 2001, the horrifying attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. shocked the world. On that tragic Tuesday, the association issued a Press Release. It condemned the acts of terror and accurately identified the perpetrators of the crime as “fanatical zealots whose agenda is borne out of political motives without regard for innocent human life.” But it also urged the media “to be careful not to engage in generalized stereotypical labeling...”

The fallout from 9/11 in terms of attacks on Muslims was miniscule, especially when compared to other places on the continent. Imam Zijad Delic praised the citizens of British Columbia for their refusal to conduct themselves in such a way toward their Muslim neighbors. In BC, through the association, Muslims had built bridges with other communities. When tragedy struck, these





friends, neighbors and partners knew that their Muslim brethren were not at fault for the disgusting, inhumane acts which took place.

However, there were some isolated incidents. One man was arrested in Surrey on September 30th after making a threatening phone call to Surrey Muslim School. As well, ten minutes later, an Islamic community centre received a similar call. Students sitting at a Muslim Students' Association table at Simon Fraser University were harassed by a passerby. The December before, even Masjid at-Taqwa had received bomb threats, as it stood as a burnt out building. The insurance deductible soared on Muslim schools and Mosques.

A month after 9/11, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC opened an exhibit called the Spirit of Islam: Experiencing Islam through Calligraphy. The BCMA was well represented in all of the committees involved in ensuring the one of a kind exhibit would be successful.

In early 2002, a Media Watch Committee was appointed by the BCMA to vigilantly monitor the news items which were seen as having an adverse implication on Islam or Muslims. As well, panel discussions were arranged with members of the media from Victoria, Nanaimo and Kelowna. Meetings were also held between the association and CSIS and the RCMP. Some members even met with Stephen Owen, the Federal Minister of Western Economic Diversification to speak on Bill C-36, the controversial anti-terror bill.

2002 was also the first year in which the BCMA co-hosted an Eid celebration at the Provincial Legislature in Victoria. Premier Gordon Campbell and 150 MLA's attended. This event was moved out of the legislature in 2004 when the interior facilities of the building became unavailable for use by non-governmental organizations.

**T**he BCMA also held a meeting with Prime Minister Paul Martin. The Prime Minister met with officials from the association while on the campaign trail in Chinatown, discussing issues which were pertinent to the community. Multiculturalism Minister Raymond Chan also visited the Muslim school in Richmond. Despite these successes, 2004 was a perplexing year with so many issues related to Muslims in the news.

**T**he BCMA dealt with some very challenging issues in the media. This ranged from an anti-Semitic article which appeared in a Muslim newspaper, the issue of Same-sex marriage debated in Canada's parliament, the possibility of bringing shariah courts to Canada, the ban on a headscarf (Hijab) in some jurisdictions worldwide, the growing threat of terror in Canada, Saudi financing of terrorism and women in Islam. These issues were constantly being probed by the news media. As a result, Imam Zijad Delic became an unofficial spokesman, and became proactive in facing challenged from media and public questions. As a result, he helped raise the profile of the BC Muslim association. The media, in turn, appreciated the Imam's willingness to answer questions and to engage in frank discussions about the issues facing Muslims today, and the association finished this period of media saturation with a good rapport with most members of the press. Some even returned to ask questions about the faith and looked into doing a documentary on Ramadan.

Responding to a growing need for counseling and psychological services within the community, as well as in society at large, the BCMA was approached to advertise a grant to cover part of a Master of Arts program in Counseling Psychology at the Adler School of Professional Psychology in Vancouver. The Willis Memorial Bursary was offered to qualified female applicants who held a minimum of a Bachelor's degree or equivalent. Successful candidates would be expected to provide services to the community after completing their studies.



**Farouk Elesseily,**  
*Founding Member of BCMA*

In 2004, 38 years after its founding, the BCMA finally crossed into the North Shore with the establishment of a chapter in North Vancouver under the leadership of a man who had been there from the beginning, Farouk Ellesseily, who had been one of the founding members of the BCMA in 1966. Insha Allah, one day a Masjid will stand on the North Shore among the majestic mountains overlooking Vancouver.

**M**asjid-at Taqwa was finished at a cost of \$3.5 million. This is now the hub of the vibrant Muslim community of Surrey whose population is around 11,000. After the fire, the morale of the community was shot. It was difficult during the Ramadan of 2000 for the brothers and sisters of Surrey to see their once proud structure now burnt, black and breaking. But with their resolve and their faith in Allah, they were able to come out of that rut to erect a new building that strangers driving by on 72nd Avenue look back on in awe. With its imposing minaret, sleek design and spacious construction, the Surrey Masjid is truly a blessing built out of a tragedy.

The Burnaby Masjid opened its doors while it was still under construction. Burnaby has been the leader in establishing a new role for Mosques in our lives. Not only does the Burnaby branch hold regular prayers in the Mosque, but Arabic lessons for children, adult education, public seminars for non-Muslims on Islam, lectures on health, movie screenings on Islam and related matters, a library and laptop computers are available at this modern Masjid. As well, plans are underway to add fitness equipment. The association is also raising funds for a minaret. Burnaby is truly a Mosque for the 21st century.

Today, 40-years after its founding, if you mention the BC Muslim Association in a discussion with any Muslim in British Columbia, the name will illicit different responses. Some of these will be positive, reflecting on the unprecedented success the organization has had. Some of the feedback will inevitably negative, focused around the failures of the organization since 1966. Whether one possesses a positive or negative view of the BCMA's record is really insignificant. What is important is that over the course of 40 long years, the existence of this organization has given us a total of eight Mosques and Islamic centres,

the most engaging public speakers from all over the world to talk about Islam, an award winning private school with two campuses, the means to conduct Islamic burials, the means to conduct an official Islamic marriage, services to brothers and sisters in prisons and hospitals, sports, games, activities and education for youth, and perhaps most importantly, a place within Canadian society in which Islam is visible and vibrant. For these reasons alone, the founding members and pioneers of this great organization should be proud, as well as thankful to Allah. Their goals have been achieved.

And the BCMA, although it is 40-years-old, continues to go on in doing what it does best: providing places for Muslims to grow as people, and to practice Islam which provides us with guidance in this life. The story of the British Columbia Muslim Association, is a great Canadian story.

The year was 1966. A group of Canadians. Many places of origin. Many occupations. Many reasons for coming. One Ummah.





# BCMA LIFE MEMBERS

**ABID, JAINUL**  
**ABRAHAMS, DR. ISMAIL**  
**ABU-SHARIFE, ARAB**  
**AHMAD, SHAMIM**  
**ALI, ABBAS**  
**ALI, HASMAT**  
**ALI, KASIM**  
**ALI, LIAQAT**  
**ALI, MUMTAZ M.**  
**ALI, RAHIMAN**  
**ALI, USMAN**  
**BEGG, JAMURAT**  
**BHAMJI, SULEMAN**  
**BUKSH, ADAM**  
**BUTT, MOHAMMED Dr.**  
**CATTON, HAJI OMAR**  
**DALMIR, HUSSAIN A.**  
**DAUD, AHMAD**  
**\*\*\*DEAN, FEROS**  
**ELBARBARI, ABBAS**  
**ELESSEILY, FAROUK**  
**GAFFAR, ABDUL SAMAD**  
**HOSSEIN, TOWFEAK M.**

**HUSAIN, MOHAMMED**  
**IMAMOVICH, ENVER**  
**IQBAL, MOHAMMMED**  
**JANIF, MOHAMMED BARKA**  
**JANIF, MOHAMMED TAKKI**  
**KHAN, ABDUL AZIZ**  
**KHAN, ABDUL RAUF**  
**KHAN, AHMAD AMIR**  
**KHAN, HABIB**  
**KHAN, HASAN M.**  
**KHAN, IFTIKAR AHMED**  
**KHAN, M. YUNUS**  
**KRDZALIC, ADIL**  
**MADANI, SYED V.**  
**MOHAMMED, FAIZ**  
**MOHAMMED, GANI**  
**MOHAMMED, HASAN**  
**MOHAMMED, SOLOMON**  
**MOHAMMED, YUSUF**  
**QURESHI, EHSAN Dr.**  
**SAHIB, HASSAN**  
**SHARIF, MOHAMMED DR.**  
**SIDDEEQ, ABU-BAKAR**

\*\*\*Youngest person to receive life membership in BCMA History

## FOUNDING MEMBERS

Fikret Akhurt  
Mumtaz Ali  
Murtaza Ali  
Usman Ali  
Farouk Elessely  
Mohamed G. Harris  
Enver Immamovich  
Abdul Aziz Khan  
Habib Khan  
M. Z. Khan  
Abu Bakr Sidiq

## PIONEERS

Arab Abu Sharife  
Kasim Ali  
Yunus Ali  
Jamurat Begg  
Salim Buksh  
Hussain Dalmir  
Feroz Dean  
Abdul Samad Gaffar  
Musa Ismail  
Mohammed Janif (Barka)  
Shorab Khan  
Ismail Manu  
Hassan Sahib  
Nawab Shah  
Sikander Tayob

## Deceased Leaders

Abu-Bakr Ali  
Mohammed Baba Usman  
Mohammed Fareed  
Salar Buksh  
Riasat Ali Khan  
Abdullah H.Y. Patel  
Ragheb Ashour  
Yasin Khan  
Faiz Mohammed  
Yasia Khan  
Kalander Khan  
Chris Khan  
Mohammed Sharif  
Dr. Sharif  
Azmat Khan  
Sheikh Sharqaway  
Zuleika

## EXECUTIVE

President: Br. Daud Ismail

VP-Bruial: Br. Mohammed Asin Bakridi

VP-Education: Br. Mohammed Shamsher

VP-Finance & Development: Br. Feroz Dean

General Secretar: Br. Mohammed Aiub Khairati

Asst. General Secretary: Br. Aleem Kamal

General Treasurer: Br. Mohammed Shafique

Asst. General Teasurer: Br. Mohammed Khalik



## COUNCIL MEMBERS

Abbotsford: Br. Samiullah Monir

Burnaby: Br. Daud Ali & Br. David Ali

Richmond: Br. Aftab Gani & Br. Shams Jilani

Surrey-Delta: Br. Hasmat Ali & Br. Mohammed Adam Buksh

Surrey-East: Br. Ahmad Daud & Br. Mumtaz Ali

Vancouver: Br. Shiraz Khan

Victoria: Br. Nawab Shah & Br. Ikram Ali

Kelown: Br. Ahmed Rizki

Nanaimo: Br. Farooq Ghazi

North Shore: Br. Mohammed Taher

Prince George: Br. Ibrahim Karidio

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Secretary: Br. Syed Madani

Members: Br Fikret Akkurt

Br. Ismail Manu

Br, Mumtaz Ali

AUDITOR: Br. Mohammed Yasin





Surrey-Delta Branch: (L-R)  
Jamurat Begg-Director; Mohammed Hakik-Director; Mohammed Janif-Treasurer; Jummah Khan-Secretary; Hasmat Ali-Chairman; Mansoor Ali-Director; Mohamed Hassan-Director; Adam Buksh-Director



Burnaby-New Westminster-Port Moody Branch: (L-R) Shafique Koya (honorary member)-Burial; Mustafa Focak-Madressa; Mohammed Azeem-Asst. Treasurer; Murtuza Ali-Membership; Salim Buksh-Fundraising; Zakir Mohammed-Treasurer; Mohammed Janif Barka-Vice-Chairman; Daud Ali-Chairman; David Ali-Secretary; Ardiel Soeker-Youth & Publication



Vancouver Caretaker Board:  
(L-R): (back row) Imtiaz Asin; Aiyub Khairat-BCMA Executive; Azmat Khan-Treasurer; Sikan-der Khan-Asst. Treasurer; Zamin Ali-Caretaker Board; Shiraz Khan-Secretary; (front row-seated) Abbas Khan-Vice-Chairman; Asin Bakridi-BCMA Executive; Syed V. Madani-Chairman; Mohammed Janniff-Caretaker Board







*Masjid ul Imaan - Victoria*



*Kelowna Islamic Centre*



*Nanaimo Islamic Centre*



*Masjid ur Rahmah - Surrey East*



*Masjid ul Haqq - Vancouver*



*Future Home of  
Prince George Islamic Community,  
Cultural & Education Centre*



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*Feroz Dean-Realtor*

*Mohammed Vasin, C.G.A.-Accountant*

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*Zahida R. Khan*

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