



CANADIAN MUSLIM LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

STRENGTHENING THE CANADIAN MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY!

This is our 21st century cross-cultural and inter-cultural community leadership program for and by more than 50 cultural and ethnic groups within the broad and diverse Muslim community in Canada.

Our innovative approach is accomplished by collaborating with the other cultural communities where we share our learning. This new and bold initiative was launched in the fall of 2009 by the Canadian Muslim Leadership Institute (CMLI): the first annual Community Leadership Development Program.

A growing multicultural and multi-ethnic community in Canada, the Muslim community recognizes the critical need to build and sustain current and future community institutions, in order to create an even more robust community, strengthening Canadian Society as a whole. There is a pressing need for informed Canadian Muslim leaders of all ages and experiences to develop the capacity of Muslim communities across Canada, and the next generation of its leadership.

This cannot be accomplished from inside the Canadian Muslim community alone. Success will come only through building and sustaining healthy partnerships within the broader Canadian society.

The land occupied by Canada was inhabited for millennia by various Aboriginal Peoples. Since pre-Confederation days families from all parts of the world have been coming to Canada seeking peace and prosperity. Thanks to the Aboriginal Peoples and newcomers, their hard work, freedoms and opportunities available in Canada, generations of new Canadians have helped build one of the best, perhaps even the best, country in the world. This is the source of Canada's strength and its success as a nation.

None of this has come easily for the Builders of Canada and, not surprisingly, for many recent arrivals the struggles continue. Coming to a country where language and customs are vastly different is daunting. Newcomers to Canada over many decades have turned to families and their own cultural and ethnic communities for support. While initially it worked, it took at least two generations for new Canadians to find their comfort zone in mainstream society.

In today's global world the Canadian Muslim Leadership Institute has recognized the need for change both within and external to the community. This has spawned its new community leadership development programs and initiatives.

One of its first initiatives focuses on developing community leadership for tomorrow, today, while simultaneously individuals and groups, inside and outside the Muslim community join hands to meet the challenges of the modern world. They collaborate on ways to build stronger communities for them and for a better Canada.

It is important to identify the core beliefs in the Muslim community they bring people together and build relationships of trust and respect. These include values of knowledge (Arabic word is "ilm"), patience ("sabr"), wisdom (hikmah), allegiance (Bai'yah), accountability (Ihtisab) and deeds (Alma). These bring us together and not separate us as Canadian communities.

Building partnerships with the wider Canadian community will go a long way to meet the many challenges that lie ahead. In a partnership people not only work together; they learn together.



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Our community leadership philosophy, where we *believe*:

- 1. that it is more important to focus on the processes of leading in community - common purpose, common values, and harnessing personal energies to bring a vision of community into being**
- 2. anyone in a group or community can be leading in many ways; increase the opportunities for many individuals in our communities to contribute to building and strengthening community (they do not need to occupy positions or titles)**
- 3. that the leading process is very much about personal learning, self discovery, and personal mastery (developing the individual potential to contribute to understanding community challenges, collaborating with others, and developing long-term solutions to difficult community issues)**
- 4. that community leadership holds many more learning, collaboration, shared vision and processes to achieve the "*Common Good*" for our communities**

These are the roles of community leadership that we support and are developing our participants to contribute to community:

Ø **Community ambassadors and Mediators** – help people in the community organize and associate with each other to be able to influence things that they care about; Demonstrate **Leading** that believes in serving humanity; seeking knowledge; and being the steward to the larger Canadian community; mediate for new understanding of each other.

Ø **Advocates, teachers and coaches** – help people access a range of assistance by learning how things work and learning from each other; building and exchanging new knowledge; building and sustaining community organizations, groups or coalitions; facilitating vision and development of civil society

Ø **Molders or framers of ideas** – foster deliberative processes in which people listen to each other and make shared choices; set agendas, define challenges and identify shared solutions; encourage community-centered and boundary crossing community solution building

Ø **Evaluators and assessors** – ensure that community needs are assessed in an appropriate manner by using rigorous, credible and useful processes that strengthen community competence in this area of community development

Ø **Collaborators and active facilitators** – ensure that individuals within the community have their “voices” heard; understand different stakeholder’s interests; and think on diverse approaches to shared ways to go forward by: organizing opportunities for individuals to contribute to their communities as designers and implementers of their ideas; help individuals to identify and leverage community assets, strengths, energy, resources and ideas; identify ways to energize activities and build support in the community through intercultural and intergroup understanding and exchange.