

Formation Of The Edmonton Council Of Muslim Communities (ECMC)

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The events of September 11, 2001 have been indelibly etched in all our minds not only because of the tragic loss of life and property but also because of the resulting perceptions that, in many ways, lead to widening the chasm of misunderstanding about Muslims and their faith, Islam.

In the immediate aftermath of the events of September 11, there were concerns of a potential backlash towards the Edmonton Muslims. Driven by the need to find ways to mitigate this potential for adverse reactions, the leadership of various Muslim groups held a series of meetings, led by former Alberta MLA and Cabinet Minister, Larry Shaben, and supported by the former Mayor of Edmonton, Bill Smith. Out of these meetings was born the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities (ECMC).



2009 ECMC Board Members

From its inception, the ECMC was conceived in a spirit of dialogue, friendship and harmony so that it could speak with one voice on behalf of the Muslims of Edmonton. Following a series of consultations, an agreement was reached by the Muslim leaders and community representatives to work together to create a vision and mission that would guide the collective efforts of the Muslim communities in our city. The resulting mission statement has since bound the ECMC, which is currently made up of representation from nine mosques and faith based organizations, to speak and act with fellow Edmontonians and Canadians in a manner that protects, promotes, and enhances the understanding of Islam and Muslims in matters of public policy, education, peace and interfaith dialogue.



Formation of the ECMC continued...

In keeping with this mission and the Islamic ethic of consultation and consensus, the newly founded Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities further committed itself to promoting and upholding certain fundamental values, which include:

- Humility, respect and steadfastness
- Integrity and honesty
- Openness in communication
- Non-violence of thought, word and deed
- Recognize, honour and value diversity
(racial, cultural, and linguistic, etc.)

From the outset of its formation in early 2002, the ECMC has recognized that in order to understand Islam, one needs to understand its rich heritage of multiplicity of ethnicities, languages and traditions which have been part of its history for over fourteen centuries. At the same time, one needs to deepen one's understanding of other faiths as well as various interpretations within Islam, to enrich the society that we live in. Based on this recognition, the Council has successfully helped establish the first community-endowed Chair in Islamic Studies in Canada, at the University of Alberta, to provide various courses in Islam and its history - an accomplishment which all Albertans can be proud of. During this time, the Council has also partnered with Alberta Learning in shaping the Social Studies curriculum to include certain modules in Islamic Civilization.

Further, driven by the spirit of discussion and dialogue, the Council has either initiated or otherwise participated in numerous interfaith dialogues and interactions among the various faith groups in the city. The ECMC has supported local institutions such as the Edmonton Police Service through its Hate-Bias Crime Unit and the Chief's Advisory Committee as a multilateral partner. The Council has also participated in and supported a dialogue with representatives of the Jewish community, which has since lead to the formation of the Phoenix Multi-Faith Society for Harmony within the city .

The Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities represents a unique model of community alignment within the city-wide Islamic communities, just as the Phoenix Society represents a model for wider cooperation and collaboration among the tri-faith Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities within the city of Edmonton. The Council hopes that this will serve as a beacon for intra- and inter-faith community collaboration in other parts of Canada, and beyond.