

Ottawa Focus

Highlighting the Arab Community of Ottawa

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INTERESTING FACTS:

- This is the first issue of "Ottawa Focus Newsletter"
- There are 22 Arab countries and Canada has immigrants from all of them
- Ottawa is home to 15 Arab embassies
- Census 2001 reported over 35,000 Canadians of Arab origin in Ottawa/Hull

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NCCAR Calls on Local Arab Groups

By Mazen Chouaib, NCCAR Executive Director

The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations (NCCAR) is working in Ottawa to promote improved ties between community groups. In Ottawa, NCCAR has worked with a number of local organizations to build their capacity and to promote civic participation. Through the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant, NCCAR is hoping that more of the local groups will learn of the available resources that Trillium has for local communities in Ontario and specifically in Ottawa.

The Ottawa Arab community is a diverse one, with vibrant Lebanese, Egyptian, Sudanese, and other groups. While a meeting was held which involved a number of these groups in February, a series of meetings are being planned to involve an even larger number of organizations. It was clear to us during our research on community organizations that their number is much greater than we initially anticipated. When NCCAR talked to some of these groups, we learned of many more groups that are active in their own specific milieu, for which this project and newsletter seeks to promote.

NCCAR is hoping to achieve several objectives from this partnership with the Ontario Trillium Foundation: first to intro-



NCCAR regularly meets with local Arab organizations (Photo: NCCAR)

duce the community to each other, second to introduce the community to the available resources in Ottawa to further their cultural and educational objectives, as well we are hoping that each community group develops their capacity and seek direct support from the Trillium Foundation and other similar resources.

In this issue, Arab organizations working in Ottawa will be presented. This is not an exhaustive list of community organizations, but only a fraction of the number of active community groups in the capital region. In the next newsletters we will be highlighting others and providing information that will be of benefit to the wider community.

Sudanese-Canadian Association of Ottawa

The Sudanese-Canadian Association of Ottawa (SCAO) came into existence in 2002 with the aim of creating a strong unified Sudanese-Canadian community in Ottawa. SCAO is open for all Sudanese who are interested in joining a non-political non-partisan forum, that was established to help in the successful integra-

tion of the Sudanese community into Canadian society. SCAO organizes cultural events and programs throughout the year as well as producing a newsletter highlighting the achievements of the Sudanese community in Ottawa. For more information about SCAO, visit their website at www.scao.ca.

Ottawa Arabs Discuss Media

While the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations (NCCAR) regularly holds meetings with government official, a special engaging meeting was held this winter at the University of Ottawa with members of the Ottawa Arab community to discuss various issues of cooperation, as one of a series of meetings scheduled to involve the community.

Members of different Arab and Muslim organizations in the Ottawa region attended, including the Syrian Arab Association, the Coalition of Arab Canadian Professionals and Community Associations, Arab Canadian University Graduates Association, Carle-

ton Arab Student's Association, Club du Liban, Ahlul Bayt Center, Majdel Balhis Social Club, and the Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The meeting centred on ways to create better collaboration among Arab organizations in Ottawa with recommendations being raised on the best strategies to achieving that goal. Participants noted the need to improve communication networks of each organization, and of the Ottawa Arab community as a whole.

Furthermore, an open in-depth discussion on Canadian media coverage



of news from the Arab world and the Arab-Canadian community transpired, with many community members voicing their unease with the negative images and stories regularly presented in Canadian media. This discussion opened up the doors for future meetings with the Ottawa Arab-Canadian community and the potentials for greater collaboration between the different organizations in the near future.

Ahlul-Bayt Center



Ahlul-Bayt Center - Ottawa (ABCO) is a charitable Muslim organization established in 1993, and is a voice for thousands of members in the Ottawa - Gatineau region. ABCO operates on three main mandates: religious, educational and cultural, in accordance with the teachings of Ahlul Bayt /Jaafari Islamic school of thought.

Ahlul Bayt centre offers various initiatives and services such as a full-time school, part-time Arabic school, a Scouts Canada group (group 151st), a Women's Committee, a Youth Club, and Al-Noor Ethno-Cultural Band. Visit their website at www.ahlul-bayt.org

Arab Canadian University Graduates Association



The Arab Canadian University Graduates Association (ACUGA) was formed

22 years ago to bring together Canadian University Graduates of Arab descent, to promote Arabic literature, language and history, and to interact with other Canadians who wish to learn about these issues. Visit their website at www.acuga.com

Al-Arz Lebanese Art Group



Founded in 1976, the Al-Arz Lebanese Art Group is North America's leading Lebanese performing arts organization. The dance group is devoted to the creation, advancement and dissemination of Lebanese dance in Canada and particularly in Ottawa.

The group brings together over 30 artists in a myriad of events that celebrate the wealth of Lebanese perform-

ing artists in Canada. The Group is committed to the creation, development and promotion of Canadian stage work, shining the light on rising and established artists of Lebanese background. It boasts over a quarter century of artistic achievements with a focus on theatre, music and dance.

In addition to these high profile events, Al-Arz enjoys affiliations with

CIOFF (Conseil des organisations de festivals folkloriques) and Folklore Canada International.

The Group's choreographic works can also be seen in annual operettas and multidisciplinary productions that are traditionally presented in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.

Visit their website at www.al-arz.ca

Lebanese and Arab Social Services Agency



Lebanese and Arab Social Services Agency of Ottawa
Agence Libanaise et Arabe des Services Sociaux d'Ottawa

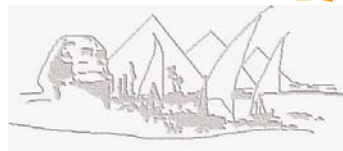
The Lebanese and Arab Social Services Agency (LASSA) of Ottawa is a non-profit organization that started in 1989. LASSA is a settlement and social services agency that strives to provide the highest quality services to facilitate and expedite the settlement and integration of new Canadians in general and Arabic-speaking ones in particular.

Their objective is to operate a social services agency which will assist in: the settlement, orientation, edu-

cation and integration of Lebanese and Arab immigrants into the Canadian community to provide all necessary social services in furtherance thereof, to foster and promote an understanding, learning and appreciation for the Lebanese language, tradition, and culture amongst Canadian Society, and to promote and support humanitarian and charitable causes amongst all members of the Canadian community.

LASSA is located downtown on 151 Slater Street, Suite 302. They can be reached at (613) 236-0003 or (613)236-3111. For more information about LASSA's activities, visit their website at www.lassa.ca.

Egyptian Canadian Cultural Association



The Egyptian Canadian Cultural Association of Ottawa (ECCAO) was incorporated in 1984 by Egyptian-Canadians living in Ottawa.

ECCAO has sponsored Arabic language programs through the Egyptian Co-op school since its inception.

The organisation also sponsors a TV program which runs twice a month on

Rogers Community 22.

The *Voice of Egypt* television program is an insightful view of the Egyptian community in Ottawa that covers a range of topics, which inform the Canadian public about the Egyptian-Canadian community in Ottawa.

Visit their website at <http://eccao.monisys.ca/main.html>

Mowahdeen Druze Society of Ottawa



The Mowahdeen Druze Society of Ottawa (MDSO) works to unite the community members via the religious, cultural, educational and sports activities; to support the members' needs and the protection of their interests; to assist those who are in need, and help new Druze immigrants integrate into the Canadian society; to increase the new generation's awareness to the Druze culture by organizing events and activities which highlight the traditions, and encourage the youth to hold onto and protect their heritage; and to assist the Druze social services' organizations in Canada and abroad.

Visit their website at www.druze.ca

Syrian Arab Association of Canada



The Syrian Canadians in the National Capital Region was established as a social cultural and non-profit organization, working to: foster harmony and cooperation among Syrians in particular, and between them and other nationalities in general; enhance the social status of the Syrian community; and providing necessary counseling and information services to help newly-arrived Syrian immigrants. Furthermore, Syraac,

seeks to strengthen the Syrian Arab community's involvement in Canadian society and provide information about Syria to Canadians.

SAAC can be reached at (613) 794-4425 or info@syraac.com or by visiting their website at www.syraac.com.

Mashghara Benevolent Society

The Mashghara Society was established in Ottawa in 1975 with the purpose of maintaining the existing bond between the Mashghara people and to promote goodwill between them and the rest of the Lebanese community in Ottawa. Its purpose is also to preserve the heritage and culture as well as to help the elderly and the less fortunate who remain in Mashghara. Visit website for information about their activities at www.mashghara.com



CAPCA

Coalition of Arab Canadian Professionals and Community Associations

The Coalition of Arab Canadian Professionals and Community Associations (CAPCA) is a voluntary non-profit umbrella organization that works towards improving the status and profile of Arab Canadian communities in the National Capital Region, and enhancing their equal rights and

liberties. CAPCA's main objective is to develop guiding principles to improve the status and profile of Arab-Canadian communities in Canada. The organization is made up of both Arab community organizations and Arab-Canadian individuals. Members of CAPCA actively seek to participate in the development and implementa-

tion of government policies and holding regular meetings with senior officials of all Canadian political parties, in order to convey concerns pertaining to community and foreign policy issues affecting Arab-Canadians. More information about CAPCA can be found on their website at www.capcaonline.ca.

Majdel Balhis Social Club



The Majdel Balhis Social Club is a non-profit organization, which aims to amass the community of Majdel Balhis, Lebanon. Through social events, this club continuously works towards its mission of bringing together all generations of the community, with a specific concentration towards our youth, as the Majdel Balhis Social Club genuinely envisions in them our future.

With the support of the executive team, board members, sponsors, volunteers and supporting members,

we are able to work together in moving this community closer.

The Majdel Balhis Social Club invites you to visit the MBSC website, where you will find information about the club, keep up to date with our ongoing events, view pictures, get to know our sponsors, as well as contact the Club with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have.

For any other information about MBSC please e-mail info@mbsc.ca or see www.mbsc.ca.



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NCCAR was established in 1985 by Canadians who believed that our national interest is best served through expanded knowledge as well as social, scientific and educational exchanges with the Arab world. NCCAR works with governments, the private sector and community organizations to promote Canadian awareness and knowledge about the Arab world.

This newsletter has been created in collaboration with several Ottawa Arab organizations through the generous support of the Ontario Trillium Fund to assist in the coordination of community activities.

THE ONTARIO
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LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is a catalyst that enables Ontarians to work together to enhance the quality of life in their communities. They believe that communities across Ontario are rich in talent, creativity and drive, and their grants stimulate communities to build on these assets.