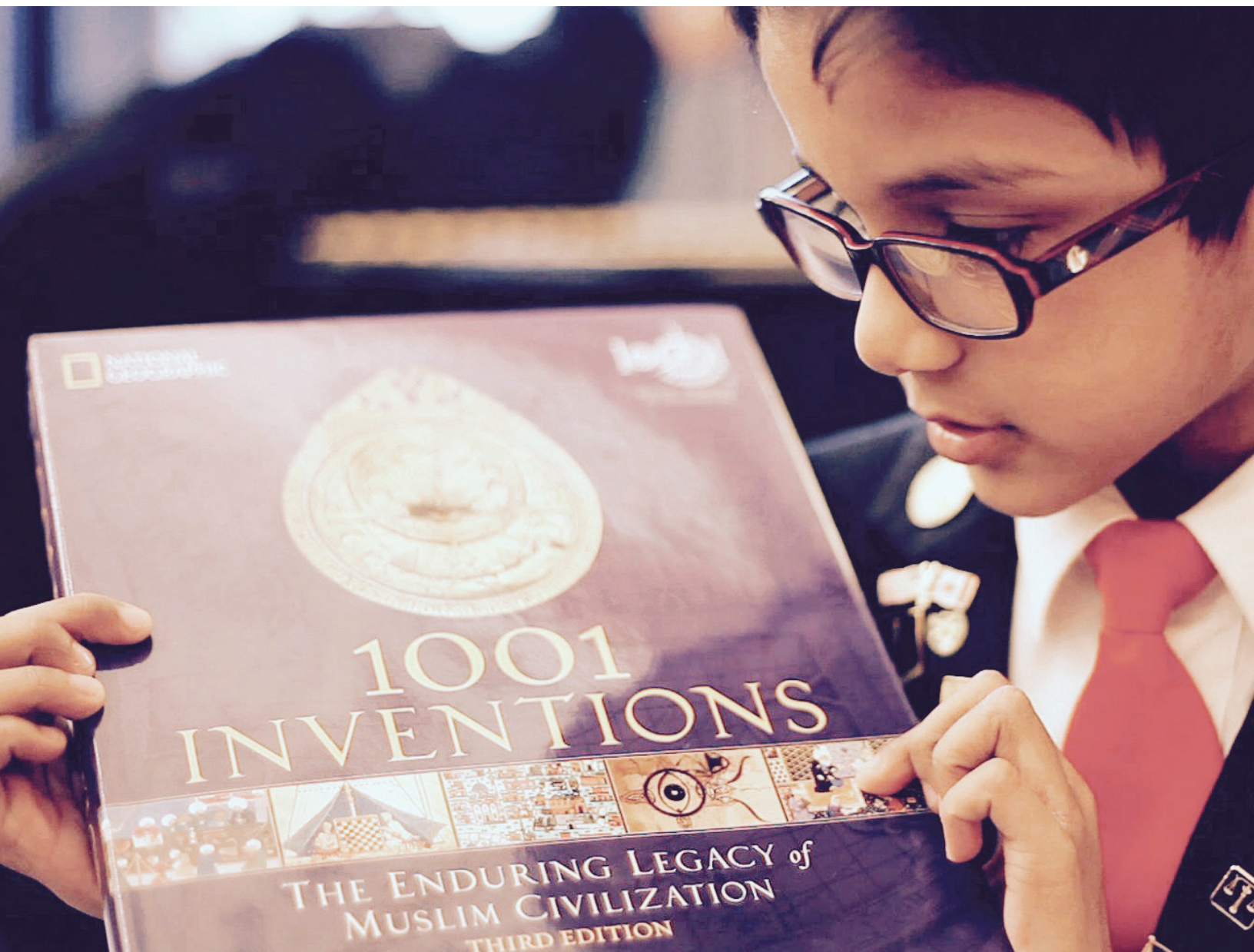


HELPING STUDENTS DEAL WITH TRAUMA RELATED TO GEOPOLITICAL VIOLENCE & ISLAMOPHOBIA



A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



Islamic Social Services
ASSOCIATION



NATIONAL
COUNCIL
OF CANADIAN
MUSLIMS
Your Voice. Your Future.



PREFACE

From interaction with Muslim youth and feedback from parents, youth leaders, and community service providers, it has become apparent that Muslim youth are experiencing high levels of stress and feelings of alienation and marginalization. While some stress is due to the natural demands of growing up, or the pressures newcomer students may face, socially induced trauma can be a significant factor. Most students are aware of the rise of Islamophobia and the subsequent exclusion they may experience. They may also be affected by the direct and indirect impacts of geopolitical conditions — particularly war and terrorism.

It is not always easy to identify or address the trauma that some students may experience upon witnessing images of war and the destruction of ancestral countries, or, what's more, news of the killing or maiming of family members, neighbours and friends.

This Guide is a sincere attempt to help teachers and guidance counselors in the assessment, assistance and support of students dealing with grief, fear and confusion as a result of Islamophobia and geopolitical issues. This Guide will assist educational professionals in understanding the impact of hate, war trauma, secondary trauma and terrorism. This Guide will not answer all questions, nor provide a prescription for solving all the challenges a young person may face. Its aim, rather, is to foster empathy that can assist affected youth in finding a successful and productive way of life.

It is critical that schools provide safe spaces for youth dealing with the impact of hate; where youth can express their grief and confusion and receive compassionate supports. The objective, here, is to offer affected youth a healthy outlet for their pain and resentment, and to build confidence in their identity as Canadian Muslims, and to resist internalizing hateful messaging about their faith and culture. In the absence of supports, many youth will internalize this pain and subsequent resentment and may resultantly act out in unhealthy ways. Those without adequate family and school supports may turn to drugs and alcohol; others may act out in other negative behaviour, while few may turn to the internet to find answers and become targets for violent, extremist recruitment.

Most educators would agree that we must inculcate a strong resistance to racism and xenophobia in our youth from early on, so that they can live lives centered on concepts of human rights and dignity for all. This is one of the central values of being Canadian, and one of our most important legacies as a nation.

We owe it to future generations to show our youth the way forward in a world that is being torn apart — a world which we hope they can help repair one day.

— Shahina Siddiqui

President, Islamic Social Services Association

Board Member, National Council of Canadian Muslims

Chair, Islamic History Month Canada

Chair, Federation of Canadian Muslim Social Services

SECTION 1: CANADIAN MUSLIM YOUTH AND THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

WHAT MUSLIM STUDENTS MAY BE EXPERIENCING

The generation of Canadian Muslims who grew-up in the shadow of the tragic September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States necessarily confronted a double shock. First, as global citizens, who were horrified that such vicious crimes would be exacted on innocent people. Second, as members of the Muslim faith — the same faith espoused by the perpetrators of 9/11's terrorist plot.

Since then, the ongoing conflicts and terrorism inflicted by those claiming to be acting in the name of Islam, has meant that Islam — and its sincere adherents — are often negatively portrayed in the mass media, and regarded pejoratively by wider society. This has led to a distinct rise in anti-Muslim incidents and Islamophobic attitudes, as evinced in countless polls and in Hate Crime statistics.

Consequently, Canadian Muslim youth have been forced into defensive positions — apologizing for things they had no influence over, and feeling ostracized owing to their religion or culture. Indeed, Canadian Muslim youth are often expected to prove their loyalty to Canada: a burden not placed upon their Canadian counterparts. Often, loyalty is demonstrated by remaining silent in the face of Islamophobia, which is a form of self-imposed censorship on freedom of expression concerning geopolitical issues.

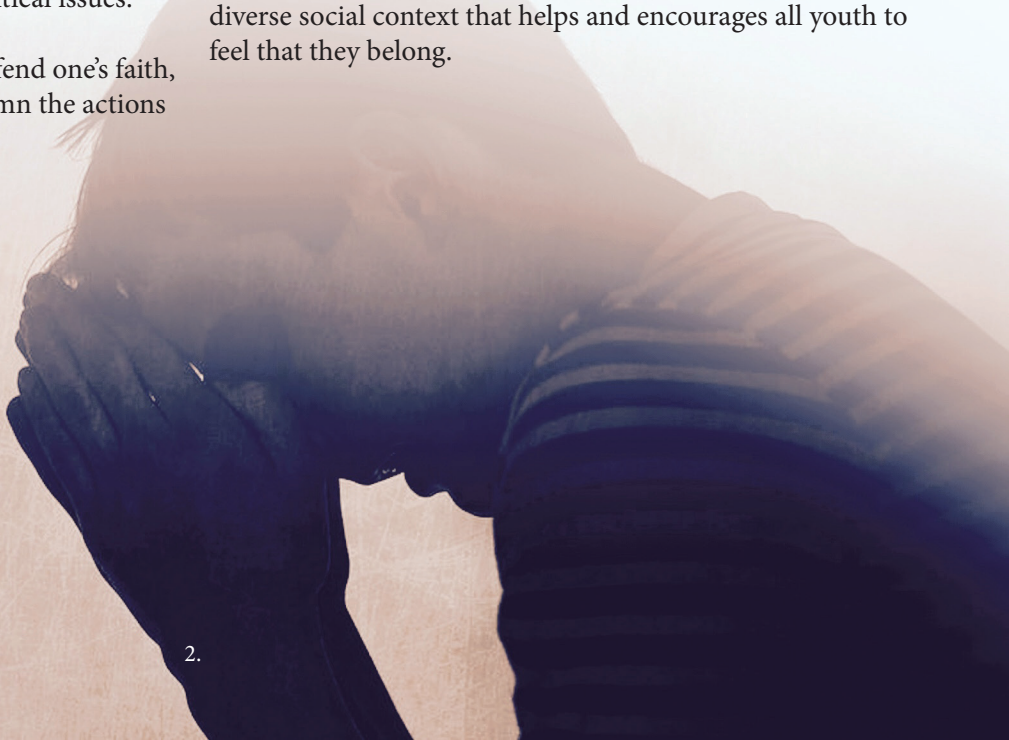
To constantly feel under attack, to have to defend one's faith, and to be continuously called upon to condemn the actions

of criminals and terrorists is emotionally traumatic and can have a significant impact on one's mental health.

Muslim families are trying to cope with these social stressors on their youth. There are discussions about this around dinner tables, at mosques, social events and in organized educational activities.

The Islamic Social Services Association (ISSA) and the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) provide Cultural Competency Training. This training has helped thousands of professionals from various sectors — training, which betters educators to understand Islam and the challenges confronted daily by Canadian Muslims. This training also enables those working in social services, health care and educational institutions to deliver their supports and programs more effectively.

Those working in education — including Trustees, Superintendents, Principals, Teachers and Educational Assistants — are integral in helping youth deal with psycho-social responses to the social, political and international pressures Muslim students live with. While Muslim youth are the primary participants in this effort, other youth can play a significant role in creating conditions for a respectful, diverse social context that helps and encourages all youth to feel that they belong.





WHAT CANADIAN-MUSLIM YOUTH NEED

Educators spend a lot of time with the Nation's youth. As such, schools can have a tremendous impact on Muslim youth and can be very instrumental in providing the supports they need.

Schools can, and often do, create welcoming and inclusive environments for Muslim and other minority students through specially designated occasions, like Black History Month, Islamic History Month Canada, Asian Heritage Month and Indigenous Cultural Days. These commemorations legitimize the presence of religious and ethnic minority pupils and help educate, celebrate and encourage relationships amongst a diverse student body, which in turn helps to foster a strong sense of unity among Muslim youth and their peers.

In particular, educators can help with the following:

UNDERSTANDING that Muslim youth often find themselves in a defensive position and find themselves having to apologize for the actions of terrorists acting in the name of their faith.

VALIDATION of their feelings of fear, confusion and betrayal.

ACCEPTANCE as Canadians, without being made to feel like 'the other.'

BE TREATED AS EQUALS under the law and by the same social standards as others — not to be viewed as suspect or racially or religiously profiled.

RESPECT for their choices of dress, diet, social, religious and/or moral values.

SOLIDARITY from teachers and fellow students when fear and hatred is being directed towards them because of their religion, the colour of their skin or their culture.

SERVICES they can access, without fear of stigmatization, from counselors in school to whom they can turn for support during periods of grief and anguish owing to war in their countries of origin.

SHARING their faith and culture with their peers to enhance understanding and friendships.

SUPPORTS for grief management and addressing their feelings of hopelessness and desperation.

SAFE SPACES where they can express who they are in a supportive atmosphere, and where they can find quiet spaces to pray and speak frankly about their fears and questions.

ASSURANCE of their civil and human rights.

SPECIAL ATTENTION should be paid to Muslim girls who wear the religious garb, as they are soft targets for hate and physical harm.



HATE HAS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS

Hate is defined as extreme dislike and to bear malice towards someone or something. Hate has created divisive attitudes with emotional and intellectual fences erected which creates an 'us and them' mentality, alongside related conspiracies and paranoia. Hate is insidious and may negatively impact social harmony.

The degrees of impact of living within an environment of hate depends on the recipient's age, gender, available support and socio-economic status. Long-term impacts of experiencing hate can create a negative self-image and engender self-loathing, which may overwhelm the individual. Those who find themselves targets of hatred can also stimulate fear, and fear can perpetuate negative stereotypes through further detachment from the broader community and society. Fear can lead to anxiety, which deepens social isolation and marginalization. While some become fearful of broader society, others can feel defensive and 'under attack'. Others may feel a need to please the majority and may 'bend over backwards' to prove societal worth, which can leave them feeling guilty and confused. Muslims might feel additional pressure to disassociate from their Muslim identity and even deny their heritage.

**ISSA offers detailed workshops on the psychological impact of hate.*

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination can be complex. Canadian Muslim youth are diverse and may face discrimination based on more than one personal characteristic. For example, a young Muslim man whose family is from Syria may face discrimination based on his race, colour, national or ethnic origin, gender, age, and religion — all at once. This combination of multiple grounds of discrimination is sometimes known as intersectional discrimination or compound discrimination.

ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia is defined technically as an irrational fear of Islam and a hatred or extreme dislike of Muslims. However, the term now can also include attacks on Muslims and their faith. Fear has led some to discriminate against, demonize and dehumanize Muslims. Political terrorism, globalization and social media have led to negative attitudes, violence, harassment, discrimination and stereotyping of Muslims.

The Berkley Institute on Racism Studies lists five prevailing beliefs as elements of Islamophobia. They report that Islam is often seen as:

- monolithic and unable adapt to new realities;
- not sharing common values with other major faiths;
- a religion inferior to the West; is archaic, barbaric, and irrational;
- a religion of violence, which supports terrorism; and
- a violent political ideology.

Anti-Muslim rhetoric would have you believe that Muslims are a monolithic group, despite the fact that Muslims hail from 54 different countries and vary in their level of faith observance. There is as much religious diversity amongst Muslims as there are cultural differences. However, the core values and central tenants of Islam are immutable and are the best counter-narrative to the terrorist ideology of hate.

It is also egregious to assign a faith or a religion to terrorism. Terrorism is based on its own ideology and may use religious or political language that is strategic and not definitive or diagnostic.



MUSLIM STUDENTS: ISLAMOPHOBIA & VIOLENT EXTREMISM

— PUBLISHED ARTICLES FOR REVIEW —

Canadian Muslim youth need support

By Shahina Siddiqui, *Winnipeg Free Press*

December 15, 2014

While the discourse around the radicalization of a few Canadian Muslim youth is leading headlines, I am concerned that by focusing on a few who have been led down the path of violent extremism, we are neglecting the vast majority of young Muslims who are struggling to find their bearings.

The sense of betrayal felt by Canadian Muslim youth in general is receiving very little attention. This is one segment of the Canadian population that continues to find itself under suspicion and maligned through guilt by association in the wider society.

Canadian Muslim youth who thought themselves like any other Canadian got a rude awakening post-9/11 -- a sort of cultural shock that they were not like any other Canadian. Overnight, they were the other, the enemy. This was traumatic in itself, but exposure to wholesale Islamophobia has added another layer of ongoing betrayal. The impact of this backlash against Canadian-born Muslims was devastating. Many experienced racism for the first time and felt rejected by their fellow Canadians. Even worse, they feel like they are seen and considered to be a threat by institutions meant to protect them. Racial and religious profiling has become acceptable when directed toward Muslim youth.

Canadian Muslim youth are being forced into defensive posturing, apologizing and under suspicion. They are expected to prove their loyalty to Canada -- a burden not placed on other Canadian youth, and they do this by remaining silent in the face of Islamophobia, a form of self-imposed censorship on free expression about geopolitical issues. This has placed serious stress on these young minds. To have to constantly defend one's faith, to continuously be called upon to condemn the actions of criminals and terrorists is emotional torture no one should be subjected to.

Even the schools are not paying attention to the second-hand trauma their Muslim students are experiencing as a result of witnessing the devastation in the countries their parents hail from and their extended families still reside. Is there any attempt to respond to their grief, anger and emotional pain? Do we not call in grief counselors to help students deal with natural disasters, shootings and accidents?

It is obvious in the absence of such supports, many will internalize this pain and resentment and it may come out in unhealthy ways. Few with no family supports may turn to drugs and alcohol, others may act out, while some may turn to the internet to find answers and become targets for violent extremism.

Very few resources, if any, have been applied to understanding and listening to the youth themselves. We have made little effort to provide safe spaces for them to express their grief and confusion and receive counseling. Why? Are we willing to validate their pain and embrace their anguish and express the same outrage over the suffering of Palestinian, Iraqi and Rohingya children that we do over the suffering of Israeli, Canadian and American children? Do we have a response when they ask that while Muslims continue to condemn violence committed by Muslims, fellow Canadians turn a blind eye to violence being committed against Muslims?

The extremist messaging coming through imported ideology of "True Islam" or "Real Islam" has caused a disconnect in many cases between immigrant parents and their Canadian-born children. Why have the youth been left to fend for themselves through this geopolitical religious maze? It is the responsibility of the Muslim community to provide a counter-narrative to the hate propaganda of the likes of IS and Al-Qaida.

As a society, we have been indifferent to the plight of Canadian Muslim youth far too long. It is time we took notice of their pain. We have to reject any attempts to marginalize Muslims as second-class citizens. Let the lessons learned from the internment of Japanese-Canadians be a reminder of how the politics of fear can divide our nation and diminish our humanity.

Fortunately, an overwhelming majority of Muslim youth, thanks to their spiritual resiliency, continue to maintain a strong commitment to a secure, just and inclusive Canada.

Fellow Canadians must reciprocate.

http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/canadian-muslim-youth-need-support-285791721.html?cx_navSource=d-top-story

Hateful backlash stokes Muslim children's anxiety

By Michael R. Sisak, *The Associated Press*

December 15, 2015

A backlash against American Muslims is leaving a mark on some of America's youngest minds.

After seeing presidential candidate Donald Trump call on television for barring Muslims from entering the country, 8-year-old Sofia Yassini checked the locks on her family's home in Plano, Texas, imagining the Army would take them away. She raced to her room and stuffed a pair of Barbie dolls, a tub of peanut butter and a toothbrush into a bag. She insisted on bringing boots for the long boat ride she imagined was coming.

When her mother, Melissa, arrived home from her work as a human resources manager, Sofia ran into her arms and cried.

"I want people to understand the impact that their words have on these children," said Melissa Yassini, who described the experience in a Facebook post that had been shared more than 21,000 times. "We often forget, we're waging war on one another with words, and we're adults. We can take it. The kids are suffering with this. They go to school every day and they're afraid to tell people they're Muslim. This has to stop."

Anti-Muslim sentiment was building in the days before 14 people were killed on December 2, 2015 in the massacre at a disability centre in Southern California by a Muslim couple investigators say were inspired at least in part by the Islamic State group. Some governors had already said they wouldn't allow Syrians fleeing civil war into their states because of extremist fears. Experts say Trump's call Dec. 7, 2015 to keep all Muslims from entering the United States — a plan he said would apply only temporarily and to non-citizens — only fanned the flames.

Parents say their children hear disparaging remarks in their own communities, see hateful bumper stickers and T-shirts, and have had friends abandon them because of their faith.

Ahad Khan, 12, came home from school in rural Westminster, Maryland, in tears because his best friend called him a future terrorist who couldn't be trusted, according to Ahad's father, Raza Khan.

Khan, the chairman of the science department at Carroll Community College, shared Ahad's experience in an open letter to TruZZmp on Facebook. As of Monday, it had been shared more than 4,300 times.

"He is the engine right now for that fear mongering," Khan said in an interview. "I don't think he realizes that his words matter. He doesn't realize the damaging effect his words can have on people, especially kids."

In the minds of children — many long on imagination and short on political understanding — phrases like "total and complete shutdown of Muslims" can be traumatic, experts say.

"Children expect that society will be nurturing and protective,"

said Mark DeAntonio, a child psychiatry professor at the University of California Los Angeles. "Statements implying detainment or exclusion for arbitrary reasons like race ethnicity or religion create anxiety and trauma."

Some children have questioned their faith and place in American society.

Kafumba Kromah, of Minneapolis, said his 8-year-old daughter asked him: "Why we are Muslims? Why can't we be what everybody else is?" His daughter encouraged him to cancel a trip to his native Liberia for fear he would be barred from returning.

Mehnaz Mahmood, of Dallas, said her 7-year-old son urged her to switch to a black-and-white hijab — so she would look more like a nun — after they were subjected to anti-Muslim remarks outside his school this week.

Sam Madi, of New Orleans, watched coverage of Trump's remarks with his 11-year-old son. He said he feared anti-Muslim sentiment would set back progress in integrating Muslims into American society. Zane Madi plays soccer and spends most weekends with his mother helping the city's homeless.

"We're not prepared for this," said Madi, whose father fled Iraq in the 1970s. "We're not prepared to sit and educate our children why they're not any different from anybody else. I don't think any parent is prepared for that. I don't care what religion you believe or don't believe."

Parents needn't shoulder the burden themselves, said Patricia Greenfield, a psychology professor at UCLA. Teachers should talk about not generalizing Muslims and ask children to reinforce their friendships with Muslim students, she said in an e-mail.

As Khan, the father in Maryland, tucked his son in last week, he left him with the words he recited when he became a U.S. citizen two decades ago: "One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

"I don't know why, I don't know how people forget that," Khan said later, fighting back tears. "We have to; otherwise we're dividing ourselves."

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/hateful-backlash-stokes-muslim-childrens-anxiety/article27755201/>

What Canada Needs Now: A Strategy Against Hate

By Amira Elghawaby, *The Hill Times*
November 20, 2015

A radio show host in Saskatoon tweets out an anti-Muslim message and is immediately taken to task by his own wife. He later deletes the tweet, but not before it was seen by many.

He is not the only one to express views that would be considered racist were they targeting any other group. Some people have even acted out on these views: fire-bombing a mosque, smashing windows at a temple, assaulting a woman, and verbally harassing others.

Anti-Muslim sentiment is out there, and given global events, may only increase. And it's exactly what the terrorists want.

University of Ottawa Professor Noomane Raboudi pointed out this past week that ISIS has made it clear that one of their aims is to drive a hateful wedge between Muslim communities and the societies in which they live. This, he said, would help make it easier to recruit Western Muslims who would increasingly find themselves marginalized and discriminated against as hatred grew.

We must not fall into this trap.

Canada, though far from perfect, has succeeded in nurturing diverse, welcoming spaces for people of all faiths and backgrounds for decades. This was not by accident; the 1971 policy on multiculturalism set the stage for a concerted and deliberate effort to ensure that Canadians of all backgrounds would work collectively to positively contribute to the country's success.

The passage of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would entrench the rights of all citizens to equal and fair treatment. These principles have informed both national and provincial human rights policies and allowed our society to thoughtfully balance competing rights.

To a European Muslim, this sounds like "Disneyland," as I was once told at an international conference in Poland.

Yet the events of the past few days, both the terrorist attacks and the apparent

backlash, must reinforce our commitment to ensuring Canada remains one of the happiest places on earth—for everyone. Our history shows that we have to work for the country we want.

How should we do this?

First, the federal government should immediately partner with Canadian Muslim communities to fashion an effective strategy to combat extremist narratives. This new brand of terror promotion is a contemporary phenomenon that few know how to tackle. The previous government did provide limited funding for an initiative called Extreme Dialogue which highlights the experiences of a mother of a young Canadian who was killed fighting overseas for extremist groups and the experiences of a former white supremacist. There was also some funding provided to explore community resilience through workshops and public fora. We need more of this, implemented strategically across the country.

Second, community stakeholders must come together to find new ways to teach about acceptance and to promote multiculturalism. Again, leadership is key: for example, provincial ministries of education must ensure that teachers are using the resources that national organizations like MediaSmarts and others provide to ensure curricula are taught through a lens that allows young people to identify stereotypes and to challenge popular misconceptions. We need to create safe spaces for our increasingly global classrooms.

Third, police services must bolster hate crimes units and their responses. Victims are often reluctant to report and it's important to provide both adequate resources and support. Perpetrators must also be swiftly brought to justice.

Fourth, Islamophobia must be considered as offensive and as socially unacceptable as any other hate-mongering out there, whether anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia or sexism. This means that even in political discourse, there must be a responsibility to ensure that questions about refugees, for example, are not giving

people license to air anti-Muslim sentiments and fuel suspicions about people fleeing the very same type of terror we witnessed in Paris.

Fifth, it's time to take the Islam, out of ISIS. Most of the world calls this terrorist movement Daesh and ISIS has been widely condemned by Muslim scholars and institutions worldwide. Muslims and Islam should not be synonymous with a group of barbaric criminals. It hurts our communities, it hurts our children, and it only bolsters their false claims. Even law enforcement agencies agree that language has the power to cast suspicion over entire communities, and provide a veneer of credibility to the terrorists' claims.

Finally, Canadians must choose "love over fear," to echo the touching sentiments expressed in a Montreal metro earlier last week by three young men who posted a video of their solidarity. Holding each other's hands, a Muslim originally from Egypt, his friends from Paris and New York, did what many Canadians must do now—defeat the extremist narrative by coming even closer together.

Amira Elghawaby is the communications director at the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM).

<http://www.hilltimes.com/2015/11/20/what-canada-needs-now-a-strategy-against-hate/34291/44291>

SECTION 2: STUDENTS EXPERIENCING WAR TRAUMA

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

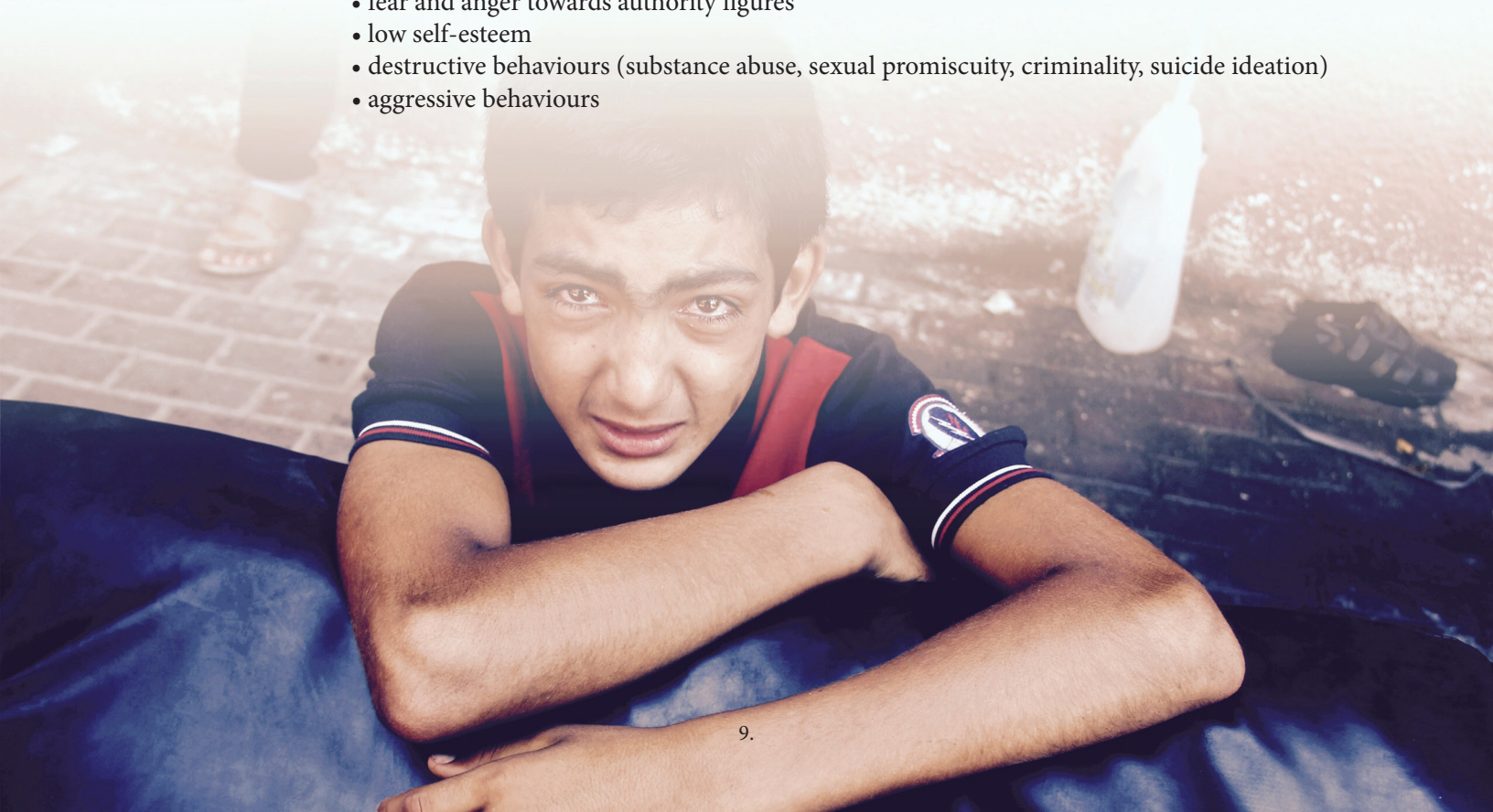
Educators have the privilege of spending time with students, and therefore have the opportunity to identify trauma or emotional distress.

A traumatic experience is typically unexpected, as will be the recurrence of the memory or trauma. As the event is unexpected, the person is not prepared for it and knows there is no way to prevent or stop the event. Furthermore, what characterizes a 'traumatic event' is that once the event is over, the memories do not fade or 'get better.' A traumatic event is a truly profound experience, which leaves a permanent or lasting memory on the individual who experienced it.

Further, trauma is an intimate experience, which is unique to the beholder. People who suffer from a traumatic event will continually relive the experience, they will try to avoid reminders of it, and if they do experience reminders, they will exhibit increased agitation. What one individual finds traumatic, another may not, and how that trauma manifests itself is equally as unique and individualized as the person who experienced it.

There are many external manifestations that may indicate an individual is experiencing distress from a traumatic event. While not exhaustive, some of the most common indicators of trauma are:

- alienation
- isolation
- shame
- self-hate
- externalized racism
- internalized racism
- fear and anger towards authority figures
- low self-esteem
- destructive behaviours (substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, criminality, suicide ideation)
- aggressive behaviours





FIRST-HAND TRAUMA

First-hand trauma occurs where the recipient is in direct contact or responding to the traumatic event. These events can be a single event, such as a car accident, or they can be related to ongoing family violence such as abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. Trauma can be related to historical events such as the history of colonization, residential school involvement, ethnic genocide, or the refugee experience. A particular kind of first-hand trauma can be experienced through the exposure of ongoing violence attributed to war or terrorism.

SECONDARY TRAUMA/VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Secondary trauma can be associated with all of the same events as those of first-hand trauma, except that the trauma is experienced vicariously through hearing stories of others, or seeing images or hearing reports through media. Vicarious trauma can also be experienced through contact with others who have been traumatized and by association (when people are linked by race, religions or other characteristics to others who have been involved in violent events). For Muslims, being marginalized and categorized as ‘the other’ in this context can be traumatic. It is important to note that the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and social impacts of secondary trauma can be as real and as deeply seeded as for those who have experienced the trauma directly.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

PTSD afflicts a person when he/she goes through an event of an extreme nature where his/her life and safety have been threatened. Nightmares or flashbacks can occur where one relives the event(s). Being edgy, anxious, getting startled easily and being jumpy are some of the symptoms associated with PTSD patients. While some who suffer PTSD will find silent coping mechanisms to deal with the disorder, others will exhibit symptoms of anxiety, such as having nightmares and suffer insomnia, which may get worse over time and get in the way of their day-to-day functioning.

After witnessing a traumatic event, many people will have a hard time adjusting to their daily routines for a while. But not everyone develops PTSD. With time and support, most people generally learn to deal with their emotions in a positive way.

WHAT SYRIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS COULD BE EXPERIENCING

GRIEF

For most refugee children, grief is deep and is not readily recognized or addressed. They may be grieving the family (grandparents, friends) they left behind in their home country, their school and the loss of their daily routine. This grief is more than being homesick, as there is the feeling of loss that could be too painful to even talk about. The security of a sanctuary may provide them an opportunity to express their grief. Teachers can provide healthy functional ways to acknowledge their feelings and to express their grief. Amongst refugee families, it is not unusual to see that members do not share their pain with each other in order to spare and protect each other.

MISTRUST

Refugees coming from war and oppressive situations have a hard time trusting people. Their world view has been informed by how to identify and avoid 'enemies,' which can inhibit them when letting their guard down. To build trust, children should be given time to feel secure and to open up to people. Children will remain distrustful if exposed to Islamophobia or name-calling by teachers or fellow students, so efforts to develop empathy in the general student body is important for refugee children while developing their trust in others.

DEPENDENCY

The refugee process takes-away a person's ability to feel self-sufficient and responsible, which may persist even after having reached a place of sanctuary. It is important to care for refugees, but not smother or coddle them. They need to regain their independence, to stand on their feet and feel that they can manage their own lives. The same should apply to children.

OBSESSIONS

Extended exposure to refugee camps can leave refugees in 'survival mode,' which will take time to change. Thinking like a survivor may result in peculiar behaviour as their actions may not make sense where there is opportunity and resources, but this attitude is how they learned to survive and it can persist. Giving gifts that may not be theirs to give, hoarding food or vying to have the teacher's attention may be some of the behaviours they exhibit. But this attitude will disappear as integration moves forward and a sense of security is restored.





FLASHBACKS

Mundane actions, sounds, smells or events can provoke a memory or cause a flashback and can stimulate a traumatic reaction. A loud bang may sound like a bomb and send the children hiding under a desk or feeling agitated. A fence around the school yard may be a reminder of a refugee camp or an internment camp enclosure, and children may try to run-out or act aggressively towards fellow students when a traumatic memory is triggered. Some may withdraw and become non-communicative. Care should be taken to not label such behaviour, but provide safe spaces to talk and examine what is triggering the negative action. Talking to a family may offer some insight. Having students write stories about their country of origin, their family and their life before Canada, may be a helpful way of understanding their experience and feelings.

MULTIPLE LAYERS OF BETRAYAL

Due to the complex nature of conflict in Syria and the region, students may be internalizing the sense of betrayal and be feeling torn between the different sides of the conflict. Civil war and terrorism, in addition to years of living under dictatorship, may have led to cognitive distortions that can take a long time to unlearn. Civil conflicts tear families, neighbours and friends apart and lead to a resistance to relationship-commitment and civic engagement.

STRESS AND ANXIETY

Refugee students may experience high levels of anxiety brought on by trauma, as well as adjusting to a new home and the challenges it entails. Anxious children may be fidgety and have trouble focusing. They may also experience anxiety attacks or panic attacks brought on by triggers or feelings of inadequacy of not being on par with peers due to language barriers and different cultures from their own. Understanding, patience and positive encouragement and offers of help can ease anxiety of afflicted students. Fellow pupils can play a healing role and be a comfort by offering a hand of friendship and companionship as they navigate their way through the school environment and expectations.



STRENGTHS OF REFUGEE CHILDREN

RESILIENT

Refugees are highly resilient. Their resiliency can be tapped into to foster confidence and nurture self-esteem in children.

RESOLUTE

Refugees have a strong resolve to make things better, to start a new life and to succeed. These are all positive characteristics that will ease their integration process.

RELIANT

While refugees could be dependent on systems and structures, because of their stay in a camp, they are at the same time very adaptive. Refugees can be very self-reliant and this strength must be encouraged and fostered, both in the students and their families.

RIGOROUS FAITH

Note that faith plays an extremely important role in the lives of Muslim refugees and their children. Their faith sustains and fortifies them.

REGAINING NORMALITY

Refugee children in particular regain their normality when structure and consistency is added to their lives gradually and with patience.

REPAYING KINDNESS

Refugees are also keen to repay the kindness of their host and will seek out ways to repay, sometimes overtaxing themselves. This can also motivate them to stand on their own and can be channeled in positive ways.

FINAL TIPS: HOW EDUCATORS & COUNSELORS CAN HELP

ACKNOWLEDGE that Muslim refugee students and Canadian Muslim students are experiencing trauma and some very intense feelings of marginalization, isolation and fear for their future.

RECOGNIZE your own judgments and biases and how they may contribute to how you understand geopolitical issues, and therefore the context from which refugees come.

RESPOND in a timely manner to the needs of your Muslim students when/if they are confronted by Islamophobia, world events or news media treatment of evolving events that affect them.

RESPECT diversity within your school body and facilitate conversations and interaction between students from diverse backgrounds, cultures, value systems and faiths.

PROVIDE SPACE for Muslim students to speak to their peers about their faith and about their feelings on world events that impact them. For your entire student body, bring-in speakers who can help them understand the challenges that refugees will face and how racism impacts their Muslim peers.*

INFORM yourself and others about the backgrounds of your immigrant and refugee children. Have a database of information on historical events that have impacted communities that your students may hail from. Keep informed on current geopolitical issues from various sources for a balanced world view.

ORGANIZE anti-racism and human rights days at your schools to raise awareness, empathy and understanding among your students in general.

REACH OUT and be proactive in seeking out community partners, so when an issue does arise you can have the support and experience you need to address the issues for your students.

PREPARE AND EDUCATE your school staff and administration in cultural competency working with refugee students so they are prepared to respond to their special needs and to decrease the potential for conflict and/or crisis.

CONDUCT field trips and other activities outside the school for students to learn about various places of worship and have conversations that help dispel stereotypes and misinformation about Islam.

REVIEW suggested lesson plans and/or materials before assigning to students. Sometimes a passage in a book, or a set of comprehension questions about world events, is framed in a negative way and may impact on how students understand or perceive a culture or religion. Ensure that adequate context is provided. When in doubt, consult with parents and/or staff and colleagues, or a diversity expert.

www.issacanada.com

** Generally, some care should be taken by teachers on the language and tone they take when discussing world events and the Islamic faith. Painting issues in 'black and white' or 'us and them' undermines social harmony and deeply hurts refugee and other Muslim children. Note that refugees dealing with trauma should not be casually probed to talk about their experiences, as disclosure should come from them or in a counseling or therapeutic environment that can respond to their needs. Treat your students naturally and compassionately and be there for them when and if they are ready to share.*

APPENDIX A: HUMAN RIGHTS AND ANTI-RACISM RESOURCES

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

General Information: <http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/general-public>

Webinars: <http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/webinars>

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBIUe4PtXTH_ZBOvClwvmHA

Human Rights in Canada: A Historical Perspective (Teachers' Guide): <http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/en/teachersGuides/index.asp>

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/humanrights/index.php3?number=1043543&lang=E>

NOVA SCOTIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

<http://humanrights.gov.ns.ca/human-rights-education>

YUKON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

<http://www.yhrc.yk.ca/education>

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

<http://nwthumanrights.ca/resources/forteachers/>

COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE ET DES DROITS DE LA JEUNESSE

<http://www.cdcdp.qc.ca/en/droits-de-la-jeunesse/Pages/default.aspx>

SASKATCHEWAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

<http://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/learn/citizenship-education>

MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION: HUMAN RIGHTS IN SCHOOL

http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/publications/school/humanrightsschool_chapter1.html

BRITISH COLUMBIA: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/5>

TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS IN ONTARIO: A GUIDE FOR ONTARIO SCHOOLS

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/teaching-human-rights-ontario-guide-ontario-schools/introduction>

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION RESOURCE COLLECTION

http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/curriculum/bal/cit_com/cit_culturepeace_humanrights.html

VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD

<https://www.vsb.bc.ca/district-policy/aca-r-1-multiculturalism-and-anti-racism-regulation>

CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

<https://humanrights.ca/learn/museum/school-programs>

KAWARTHA PINE RIDGE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

<http://www.kprschools.ca/students/equity%20and%20diversity/humanrightsandpeace.html>

NATIONAL CHILD DAY: LESSON PLANS, GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncd-jne/educators-links-eng.php>

LAW LESSONS: TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

<http://lawlessons.ca/>

ALBERTA'S TEACHER ASSOCIATION

<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/For%20Members/Professional%20Development/Diversity%20and%20Human%20Rights/Resources/Pages/Resources.aspx>

REFUGEE EDUCATION IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS: UNHCR CANADA

<http://www.unhcr.ca/how-you-can-help/teachers/>

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION IN CANADA: PROVINCIAL & TERRITORIAL CURRICULUM

<http://unac.org/provincialterritorial-curriculum/>

PERSPECTIVES

<http://perspectives.ctf-fce.ca/en/article/3083/>

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES RELATED TO ISLAM IN SCHOOL

BROCHURES & GUIDES

Muslim Students: Their Faith and Culture: www.issacanada.com

Hijab: A Primer for Canadian Teachers: www.issacanada.com

Dispelling Myth About Islam: www.issacanada.com

Educators Guide on Islamic Religious Practices (The National Council of Canadian Muslims NCCM): www.nccm.ca

United Against Terrorism: www.issacanada.com

BOOKS

Teaching Against Islamophobia.

Kincheloe, Joe L., Shirley R. Steinberg, and Christopher Darius Stonebanks. New York: Peter Lang, 2010. Print.

God in the Classroom: The Controversial Issue of Religion in Canada's Schools.

Sweet, Lois. Toronto: M&S, 1997. Print.

Muslim Voices in School: Narratives of Identity and Pluralism.

Sensoy, Ozlem, and Christopher Sandbanks, eds. Özlem Sensoy and Christopher Darius Stonebanks (Eds.) Rotterdam: Sense, 2009. Print.

LESSON PLANS & EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS

“Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.” *Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Addressing Islamophobia through Education.*

OSCE; Council of Europe; UNESCO, 2011. Web. 04 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/84495>>.

“Toronto District School Board.” *Guidelines and Procedures for Religious Accommodation.*

<http://tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/HighSchool/docs/Guidelines%20and%20Procedures%20for%20Religious%20Accommodations.pdf>

MediaSmarts Website: <http://mediasmarts.ca/search/religion>

Islamic History Month Canada Website: www.ihmcanada.com

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