

Br. Yusuf Abdulrehman

Prepared by: Br. Abdulaziz Mian

Muslim community in Winnipeg is growing. This is why community profile is one of the best methods to introduce community pioneers to new members of our community. Let me take this opportunity to introduce Yusuf Abdulrehman family.

AA: Can you tell me a bit about your background?

YA: I was born and raised in Zanzibar Tanzania. Zanzibar Island is 99% Muslim. Dar Es Salaam, the costal capital is approximately 60 percent Muslim. I was working for a company called Olivetti (similar to Xerox) where I was responsible for business and market development. I got married to Roshanara in 1974. We have three children namely; Abdulrehman, Yaasin and Ahmed. We moved to Winnipeg in 1980.

AA: What did your experience when you arrived in Winnipeg?

YA: I knew there were Muslims in Winnipeg. It took a while to find Muslims and the Masjid. I use to go to an Indian Grocery store on Portage in hope of finding other Muslims and the Masjid. I could not find any Muslim or the Masjid. One day I was at University of Manitoba where I met a Muslim brother who gave me directions to the Masjid. I came to the Masjid and met many people such as Yousef Siddiqi, Pervez Siddiqi, Akram Rana, Mian Hameed, Haji Nasim, Helmi Alshrif and many other brothers. These people made us feel at home and we are thankful for their warm welcome.

AA: What is your involvement in the community?

YA: I began to get involved in the Muslim community as soon as I found the Masjid. The community was small and everyone had to do their share to keep up with Masjid maintenance and other community needs. I played my role whether it was snow cleaning, painting, roofing or renovations. We wanted to spend more time at the Masjid so we bough a house close to the Masjid. I use to open the Masjid for Fajr. We had a key to the Masjid and every Muslim traveler somehow knew that we had the key. We use to keep food in the fridge for Muslims who use to stay over during their travel.

I also served on MIA executive during Br. Mirghani and Br. Kibria's presidency. It was very functional body and we worked as a team. We tried our best to serve the community and to improve services. Br. Golam Kibria, Rahim Abduljabbar, many other brothers and I worked together and started first Islamic School at the Masjid. I also helped Br. Khalid Atebi, Ahmed Shah, Br. Mirghani, Tayib Soufi and Br. Siraj start Dar-ul-Sunnah school which became Al-Hijrah Islamic school.

AA: What did your Kids learn from your involvement in the community?

YA: It is everybody's responsibility to help the community. They see the value in community work. This is why they are involved in various community activities. Both Abdulrehman and Yaasin have been involved in Muslim Youth Council. Abdulrehman is also helping with Takaful committee. In addition, he is involved in MYNA (Muslim Youth of North America), which was a youth organization that organized camps and conferences for youth, by youth. Yaasin was the MSA (Muslim Student's Association) president last year as well.

AA: What is your impression of the Muslim community in Winnipeg? Do you feel the Muslim community has progressed?

YA: The community has grown especially in last few years. I believe that the community has done well. We are self sufficient. We have many places of worship. We are providing many services. I am sure more services will be made available once more funds are secured.

AA: What are your views on the MIA, and the plans for the new centre?

YA: We need to support MIA executive so they can do a good job. If I am not happy with their directions, instead of criticizing, I should step up to the plate and help with work. MIA is trying to provide service to all Muslims. Our numbers are increasing and community is expecting more from MIA. It is upon all of us to help them in various roles. They are doing a good job with resources on hand.

I am very happy to see our new Center under construction. The community realized the need for a new centre many years ago. Br. Khaled Iqbal, Yousuf Siddiqi, Helmi Alshif, Br. Mirghani, some other brother and I opened the

account for our new centre in 80's. We should be proud of our achievement. I commend all of those who made this dream a reality.

AA. As a community what is our biggest challenge?

YA: Allhamdu Lillah, as I had said, the community is growing fast. And we have many different types of Muslims that are now in the city, from different cultures and different countries. The biggest challenge I think is to make sure that we don't divide ourselves on ethnic lines, but instead unite ourselves on our faith.

Aug 2004