

**Putting Down Muslim Roots in
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada
1964-2000**

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About the author

My name is Ali Hussain Rajput. I was born in village #30 near Sanghar, Sindh, Pakistan but have spent most of my adult life (since 1967) in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, which makes me one of the early Muslim settlers in Saskatoon. I graduated in medicine from Liaquat Medical College, Pakistan and specialized in neurology.

I am a Sunni Muslim.

Objectives

The main objectives include the following:

1. Brief outline of Islam for those not familiar with the religion.
2. First known Muslim settlers in Saskatoon – their efforts to become an identifiable group within the city.
3. Role of institutions that facilitated Muslim settlement.
4. Examples of some early Muslims in Saskatoon.
5. Create historical record for all interested and for the future generations of Muslims.

Scope

This publication has limited scope. It is restricted to the first known Muslims that settled in Saskatoon in the 1960s and later but spent significant time in Saskatoon until 2000. It will include Muslims who migrated to Saskatoon and those who accepted Islam as adults.

As noted above, I am a Sunni Muslim and my comments about the religion are pertinent to Sunni Islam.

Sources of Information

I have relied on the information available from the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan, the University of Saskatchewan, the City of Saskatoon and the Province of Saskatchewan. I have consulted the early Muslim immigrants and adults accepting Islam, currently living in Saskatoon, for their input. Where definite documentation or individual information was not available, I have relied on my personal recollection regarding the events and the individuals in the Muslim community. Those facts, figures, dates and opinions are my own. I am including individual profiles of some Muslims who lived in Saskatoon for significant period up to 2000. Individuals currently living in Saskatoon were asked to verify the information.

I regret that I cannot include every Muslim who settled in Saskatoon and made significant contributions during that time period.

Canada and Immigrants

Except for the Indigenous people, the population of Saskatchewan and of Canada is made up of immigrants or descendants of the immigrants. Most early immigrants were of European descent and were Christians albeit of different sects, who brought their own traditions and churches. Canada is now a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-

religious country. The City of Saskatoon reflects the Canadian national profile. Muslims constitute a sizable identifiable group in Saskatoon.

Some Basic Facts About Islam

Muslims follow the religion called Islam. They are relatively new in Canada and in Saskatchewan. Although a minority in Canada, Islam is the second most common religion in the world, with nearly 2 billion followers (approximately 24% of the world population), second only to Christianity with 2.3 billion followers.

There are different sects in Islam. The largest sect is the Sunni Muslims. Sunni Muslims constitute 87% to 90% of the world Muslim population and are the vast majority of Muslims in the city of Saskatoon. What I write is appropriate for Sunni Islam.

Basic belief

The fundamental Muslim belief is that there is only one God whom the Muslims address as Allah and Muhammad is His messenger. The religion is based on the revelations to Muhammad the messenger of Allah. In Arabic and those languages that use Arabic script, there is only one way to write Muhammad. In English, Muhammad is spelled several different ways, though the pronunciation is the same. These include: Muhammad, Muhammed, Mohammad, etc.

Allah is known for many special and unique attributes, such as Most Gracious, All Knowing, All Wise, etc. The most common term used in the Quran to identify Allah is "Rubb (Lord)". Muslims believe in all biblical Prophets like Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Moussa), Jesus (Eissa) as messengers of Allah that came at different times. The Christian tradition in most of the Western world is such that they do not name their children as Jesus. Therefore, the name Jesus is restricted to the one particular individual. On the other hand, Muhammad is the most common Muslim male name. In order to identify Muhammad as the founder of the religion, we address him as "Prophet Muhammad" or "Muhammad, Peace be Upon Him (PBUH)". We also name our children as Ibrahim, Moussa, Eissa and Mariam (Mary), the Mother of Jesus.

Quran

The holy book of Islam is called the Quran. It can be broadly classified in modern terminology as the Islamic constitution. It is written in the Arabic language but is translated into different languages around the world. More than 466 million individuals in the world currently speak Arabic. Not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. There is only one version of the Quran and in 1400 years, not one word has changed. Like all constitutions, the interpretation of some parts of the Quran by experts during different times may vary in some respects.

The Quran was revealed in small segments to Muhammad PBUH over a period of 23 years, and later compiled as one book. It has 114 chapters (Surah, Surat). Some of these Surahs are only three sentences (verses) while others up to 286 sentences. It is not necessary to read the Quran sequentially to get the message. Each short Surah

and section of a large Surah has specific message. There is internal consistency in the Quran.

There is no individual comparable to the Pope in the Catholic Church, who the Sunni Muslims regard as the head of Islam. There are expert scholars who can be consulted, but the final responsibility for an action, is that of the individual and cannot be assigned to someone else.

There is no Islamic practice comparable to Baptism in Christianity. A child born in Muslim family is Muslim. There are five pillars of Islam. When a person wants to accept Islam, the process is simple. 1) The individual declares in the presence of others, "I bear witness there is no deity except Allah and I bear witness Muhammed is messenger of Allah". That is done of free will and declared in the presence of witnesses. This is the first act of a new Muslim. It is called Kalma (Shahada). 2) Mandatory formal structures prayers. 3) Daily fasting during lunar month of Ramadan. 4) Zakat (charity). 5) Hajj (pilgrimage).

There is flexibility in each of the last four. For example, you can postpone or shorten the prayer if necessary. You are expected to fast if your health permits. In the event your circumstances do not permit, you can fast at a later date or if that is not possible you can compensate by feeding the needy. If that is not possible, you are excused. You give 2.5% of your income if you have the means to do so. You go to Hajj (pilgrimage) if you are financially and physically capable of doing that.

Formal prayers

There are five, short, structured daily prayers. The prayers can be done alone or in congregation, except the Friday prayer and Eid prayer, which are always done in congregation. In general, when two or more people pray together one of them leads the prayer and is called the "Imam". All prayers are performed facing towards the Kaaba (a cube like structure 42x36 feet and 43 feet tall, located in the city of Mecca). The Muslim Sabbath day is Friday. On Friday, soon after midday, there is a special congregational prayer which is called the "Friday prayer". The Muslim Sabbath does not have any work or dietary restrictions. Those who want to work before and after the special prayer can do so.

The mandatory prayers have distinct structured components. The term "Imam" is used for someone who leads the prayers. When there is a small group praying together, the Imam is chosen by the group at that occasion. Usually that honor is given to someone who has greater religious knowledge. There are no specific qualifications to lead the prayers – any Muslim can do that. When there is a large group of Muslims praying together, in order to avoid quick decision making at the time of prayers, the community may assign one person (paid or unpaid) to organize and lead the congregational prayers. The Imam is not head of the community in the political sense or the head of an organization. The Muslim organizations in Canada are democratic and are run by democratically elected executive members.

Whether you pray behind an Imam or pray alone, the prayers are the same. You face towards the Kaaba, regardless of where you are. The obligatory prayers have a certain number of structured units, known as Rakat (Rakah), and the prayers have specified time. Some of the obligatory prayers have two, others three and others four Rakats.

For each Rakat, one assumes different postures. In each position, specific prayer is recited. You start the prayer in a standing position with arms folded in front, then you bend at the hips with hands over the knees, and the final position is going down on your hands and knees with forehead touching the ground twice. There is a fourth component which is performed after two Rakats or after end of the prayer. That is performed in the sitting position. During the congregational prayer, the Imam calls the signals loudly to assume different postures. The most common command is Allah-o-Akbar (Allah is great). A practicing Muslim would say Allah-o-Akbar more than 100 times a day.

Religious events and calendar months

The Muslim religious events are based on lunar calendar which is approximately 10 days shorter than the solar calendar. There is a month of fasting called the "Ramadan". Those who can physically fast (not eating or drinking from dawn to sunset) do so. As the lunar calendar is used for religious events, the month of Ramadan would be experienced during different seasons of the year. We may have Ramadan in December or in July. This allows the inhabitants around the world to experience Ramadan under different weather conditions.

Zakat (charity)

Those who can afford are expected to give 2.5% annual charity for the needy. This is applicable to those whose income is higher than personal/family needs.

Hajj

Muslims who can afford to financially and physically are expected to perform a pilgrimage called Hajj once in life. This is held at a specified time of a lunar month, when approximately 2.5 million Muslims from around the world gather to perform different rituals in and around Mecca. This takes between 5 to 6 days to complete.

Special religious celebrations

There are two special celebrations called the "Eid". One is after the end of the month of Ramadan. It is called Eid-ul-Fitr. The other is after completion of Hajj known as Eid-ul-Adha. There are special congregational prayers and the social events as the individuals choose. There is no event comparable to Christmas in Islam. The birth of Prophet Muhammad is not celebrated universally, but those who wish to may celebrate it in their own way.

Greetings

The Muslim greeting is the same for every time of the day and every season. It is "Salam Alaikum (peace be upon you)".

Marriage

Muslim marriage ceremony is simple and is called the “Nikkah”. Individuals getting married take their wedding vows in the presence of others, each openly declares that he/she wants to marry the particular person and is witnessed by others. After the brief ceremony, there is a short prayer by the gathering for the happiness and welfare of the newlywed couple.

Funeral

After the death of a person, there is special prayer called the “Janaza”. That is done as a group and lead by an Imam. The coffin is placed in front of the congregation. The prayer is all done in standing position. There are three segments in Janaza prayer. During each of those, you recite certain prayers. That silent individual prayer by the members may have some variations. A common format is: In the first segment, you recite the first Surah of the Quran (Surah Fatiha). In the second segment is the prayer for the progeny of Prophet Muhammad. In the third segment, there is prayer for forgiveness and Mercy of Allah on the deceased.

Jihad = Struggle = Effort

It is applied broadly to struggles of daily life, including struggles of survival in physical fight. For the first 13 years of Islam, Muslims were strictly pacifists. They were, in some cases, tortured but they never retaliated. Subsequently, fighting was allowed in self-defense.

Diet

Muslims do not eat pork or pork products. The term Halal (means permitted in Islam) is now well known in the grocery stores. It applies only to the meat from a slaughtered animal or poultry. Any Muslim can perform the slaughter and is done simply by saying, “In the name of Allah, Allah is great”. The fish, dairy, fruits and vegetables are all considered Halal. Muslims are not expected to consume alcohol (except for medicinal purposes) or other intoxicants.

Muslims Settling in Saskatoon

No large organization or a government agency sponsored early Muslims in Saskatoon. They came as individuals or as one family at a time. As such, there is no central record of the Muslims coming to Saskatoon and settling in the city. Each individual and each family found place to live, which they could afford. As such, there is no one location in Saskatoon where the Muslim population is concentrated.

I have heard that there were some Bosnian Muslims in Saskatoon, maybe since the 1940s, but I have not met any such individual and there is no documentation. The earliest Muslims that settled in Saskatoon came in the 1960s. The diversity of the Muslims in Saskatoon is evident in the fact that the first four individuals that settled in Saskatoon were from four different countries – Hong Kong, India, Pakistan and England. The same day that I arrived in Saskatoon (July 1, 1967), there were two other Muslims who arrived – Dr. Noor Muhammad, a law professor (India) and Dr. M. Yakoob

Memon, a neurosurgery resident (Pakistan). The three of us lived in the same apartment building and got to know each other. Each of the other two stayed for 2 to 3 years and then went to the USA. All three of us came because of our affiliation with the University of Saskatchewan (U of S). That was the case in most early Muslims in Saskatoon.

In 1969, I discovered a Professor Ahmed Razak in the College of Engineering. I do not know when he arrived. He performed our Nikkah in May 1969. He left to go the USA soon after that.

There was no mechanism to determine the number of Muslims in Saskatoon in 1967. My guess is that there were no more than 40 Muslims (children included) at that time.

Early Major Milestones for Muslim Settlement in Saskatoon

There were three major milestones for the Muslims settling in Saskatoon during that era (1964-2000): I) having a charitable legal organization, II) buying property for the first Islamic Centre in 1978 and, III) buying a larger property for the Islamic Centre in 1994.

I. Forming the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) (IAS)

This was the first major step in establishing the identity of the Muslim community in Saskatoon. The credit for organizing the IAS as a legal entity goes to Dr. Ahmed El-Serafi, an engineering professor from Egypt. He joined the university faculty in 1968. He was a devout Muslim. By February 1970, he led a group of others to establish a Registered legal charity known as the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) (IAS). I do not know all the names who signed that petition. I believe Mr. Shamim Ahmad, geography professor from India-Pakistan was one of those. Dr. El-Serafi was a very well-known Professor of Engineering and he attracted many graduate students from Muslim countries, mostly from Egypt. He and his students ran the IAS in the early years. Although I became a life member of the IAS in the early 1970s, I was not signatory to the formation of the IAS. The first president of the IAS was Dr. Fook Ma, a family physician from Hong Kong.

The University of Saskatchewan was the primary attraction for most Muslims who came to Saskatoon during that time. There were graduate students from Muslim countries. Most were from the countries that had English as the medium of instruction in the high school and university. Most of those were members of the British Commonwealth. These countries included: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and graduate students of Professor El-Serafi from Egypt.

The earliest Muslims who settled in Saskatoon that I can identify came in 1964.

The U of S was also the focal point for most of the early Muslim religious activities. If there were no U of S, I would not have come, or stayed in Saskatoon for long. That is probably true of many other Muslims of that time.

By mid-1970s, we had Islamic education classes for the children on Sundays. Those were held in the students' residential building, the Assiniboine Hall. Graduate students in the U of S, mostly working with Dr. El-Serafi, conducted those classes. One notable example of that was Dr. Sameh Khalil. We also held Eid functions in the Assiniboine Hall in those years. In the early years, the Friday prayers were held in a university building, that too was possible due to the efforts of Dr. El-Serafi.

I recall being invited to Friday prayer by Professor Shamim Ahmad and a graduate student named Hassan Khan (Pakistan) in Chemistry Department, around 1976. After going there a couple of times, I felt a bit awkward. I was a university professor. Most other university professors had their own places of worship but we, the Muslims, were using the university property for that purpose. Sometime in early 1977, I started seriously thinking about having a place of our own. That thought was not new. The original organizers of the IAS had thought of having a place of our own, but there were logistic problems, that were hard to overcome.

II. Role of Mosque/Islamic Centre in Muslim Identity in Saskatoon

The second major milestone during that time period was, having a building on 25th street. For the first time in 1978, we had a building which we could call a mosque. It was a community property, where every Muslims felt free to come at any time. Prior to that, if we met someone on the street we would not know if that person was a Muslim, as there are no distinctive features by which one could tell most Muslims apart from others. I am not able to name the number of countries where the Muslims came from. My guess is, that by the time we finished purchasing the first mosque, we had representation of Muslims from close to 25 countries. It was a modest structure but it was a good start for the Muslim identity in Saskatoon. With that development, we could now identify most of the practicing Muslims in the city, and the Muslim community became more established.

Some Obstacles in Acquiring First Mosque in Saskatchewan

Early members of the IAS thought of having a building which would be called Mosque/Islamic Centre, but there were significant problems in achieving that goal. The constitution of the IAS included, that we would not give or take interest. So the option of a mortgage to acquire a building was not available. We were a small community with many students and others with relatively low salaried positions. That is evident in the fact that by 1977 – 7 years after the formation of IAS, we had collected only \$4000. The money was held in a non-interest bearing bank account. That depreciated every year. Some members were reluctant to donate money that would depreciate, but there was nothing to show what the IAS was doing with the funds. Additionally, there were some philosophical differences regarding the type of building that we should have. Dr. El-Serafi was of the opinion that we should have a building with minarets, resembling the Mosques in the Muslim countries. We did the calculations to have such a building; it was out of our reach for the foreseeable future.

To put our financial situation in perspective, I want to note few facts. Since most of the early Muslims were university students or university professors, I will comment on the

university salary of a young professor. In 1957, the U of S annual salary for a PhD new appointed professor was \$9000. By 1967, it was \$12,000. The purchasing power was also different. In 1967, you could buy a nice four bedroom house in a desirable location in Saskatoon, for approximately \$35,000. Such accommodation would now cost anywhere from \$500,000-\$600,000.

I recall clearly walking with Dr. David Russell near the university main library around late 1976 or early 1977, and talking about having a building of our own. As I have noted above, there was a widespread desire for having a building of our own which we would call Mosque/Islamic Centre.

Decision to buy a building

In October 1977, the IAS general body appointed a committee to look at the issue of having a building. I was a member of that committee. Soon after that, we had a meeting at the house of Dr. Farouk Saleh (commerce professor). There were five of us at the meeting: Dr. Ahmed El-Serafi (Egypt), his student, Adel Shaltout (IAS secretary) (Egypt), Dr. Farouk Saleh, College of Commerce professor (Egypt), Mr. Zia Hassan, an insurance broker (Pakistan) and myself, a neurologist (Pakistan). The issues to be considered included if we needed to have a building of our own. It was unanimously agreed that we should have a building of our own. The second issue was the financing. According to our constitution, we could not pay interest or take interest. Therefore, the option of a mortgage was not available. We had to pay cash. There was no disagreement on that. However, there was disagreement on two other issues: the type of building that we should have and the urgency of that. Two of us, Zia Hassan and myself thought that we should have any building to call it a Mosque/Islamic Centre, where we could gather. Dr. El-Serafi and his student, on the other hand, wanted a mosque which looked like a mosque in the Muslim countries with minarets. The second controversy was the level of urgency to proceed, Mr. Hassan and I felt that we needed to have a building as soon as possible. Dr. El-Serafi and his student felt no urgency for that. That deadlock was broken by Dr. Farouk Saleh, who voted with Mr. Hassan and I.

The decision was made that we should purchase a building as soon as possible. The first mosque in the history of Islam was at Quba. It was a modest structure near Madina with four walls and roof. So we were comfortable having any building that served the purpose. Dr. El-Serafi who had formed the IAS and ran it for several years, almost single handed was naturally disappointed with the committee decision. However, we had a democratic organization and the majority decided on the issue, on behalf of the IAS.

Acquiring the First Building and Financing

When the decision to proceed, with acquiring a building made by the special committee was transmitted to the IAS membership, there was considerable enthusiasm and some funds started to come in. I should say that, there was more an element of faith, that if we tried something good may happen. We had no idea how much even a modest building would cost. We had only \$4000 and we needed all cash to pay for the building. Everyone in the community, which was by now approximately 100 to 125 persons

(children included), was willing to do whatever they could. For example, I decided to contact some Muslim physicians in the province. I wrote letters, asking for their support from those, who I thought were Muslims. In the Middle Eastern countries, Muslim and Christian names are similar. One of the recipients of my letter was a Christian. He was upset on receiving my letter. I apologized to him for that. I remember traveling with Dr. David Russell and Mr. Zia Hassan to different communities like Humboldt and Prince Albert. We were received warmly and some financial support started to come in.

There were other IAS members, who were travelling and contacting different groups of people all over the province as well as outside the province. Dr. Farouk Saleh contacted different embassies of Muslim countries. Dr. David Russell had served as President and as Treasurer of The Council of Muslim Communities of Canada (CMCC). He requested financial support from the CMCC, either as a donation or an interest-free loan.

By December 1977, we had increased our finances to \$16,000 locally.

Mr. Zia Hassan had personal connection with a local real estate agent named Narwar Singh. He represented Koyl Agencies. Zia was told that there was a church building on 25th Street listed for \$38,000. We made an offer of \$33,000, hoping that we would be able to get the donations or interest-free loan to make up the difference. The community was excited about that possibility. However, the owners of the building decided not to sell it to us through this agency and sold the building on their own. We were all disappointed that we could not get the building. As luck would have it, soon after that the same real estate agent listed another building at 120, 25th Street West – an old church. The list price was \$65,000. Eventually the building was sold to us for \$44,000 cash. As soon as our offer was accepted, we received the good news of \$15,000 interest-free loan from the CMCC. I attribute that to the efforts of Dr. David Russell.

In addition to paying for the building, we needed money for the legal fees, land titles, power and water, repairs, etc. By August 13, 1978, our newsletter indicated that we had \$43,200 which included the \$15,000 loan from the CMCC. The deadline for the building was August 17th. We were optimistic that we could get the remaining \$800 to purchase the building, and succeeded at that.

In less than nine months, we had collected four times as much money as in the previous seven years. The main reason was that the community members saw that there was a definite goal for which we needed funds. We were highly grateful to CMCC for the timely loan. After a couple of installments, the CMCC realized that we were in financial difficulty and they forgave the loan.

Renovation and Maintenance of the 25th Street Building

Much work was needed both inside and the outside of the building, for it to function as a Mosque/Islamic Centre. The church building was constructed such that there was a wooden platform at a higher level for the priest and at a lower level; there were chairs

(pews) for the parishioners to sit. For the mosque, everyone has to sit and stand at the same level. The Imam and the congregation pray at the same level. Therefore, we needed some structural changes. Some members who had never hammered a nail were doing the repairs. Those included: Dr. Zaheer Alvi, an Ear, Nose, Throat specialist, Dr. Shakeel Akhtar, a laboratory director/chemist, Mr. Zia Hassan, an insurance agent, and many others. We also had Mr. Khalil Rehman who had a working knowledge of electronics and electrical appliances. He provided support for that. The news of the first mosque in the province spread. We had many students, who helped paint and repair the building. There were volunteers from Regina and North Battleford, who helped with the repairs. Mr. Turhan Okeren, a Turkish origin architect in Saskatoon, kindly provided much material and additional financial support for the repairs. The building was made suitable for a mosque.

Members of the IAS did the maintenance of the building. The inside vacuuming was done by members of the community, using their own vacuum cleaners – frequently all the family members joined in. For the outside yard work, a small area of lawn needed to be mowed. The members would bring their own lawnmowers to do that. Young student volunteers often did the snow removal in the winter. It was a community effort and everybody did what they could.

From then on, all the IAS functions, including the Islamic school for children, were held in the 120, 25th Street West Islamic Centre. We used this building from 1978 to 1994 when it was sold and the proceeds used to purchase of a new building at 222 Copland Crescent.

During the early years, we had some feelers that if we wanted an Imam sponsored by a Muslim country, we could get that and also some financial support. We decided against that, as we wanted to avoid any direct or indirect political interference. We had to do it all on our own.

Islamic education classes for children – early years

As noted above, since the mid 1970s, the children's Islamic education classes were held on Sundays, in the Assiniboine Hall (University building). Graduate students of Dr. El-Serafi conducted those mainly. After we purchased the 25th Street building, the classes were then held there. The teachers were all volunteers.

There were classes on Islamic principles/practices and history. Anyone who was willing and able to teach did that. I taught those classes for several years. The individual teachers determined the content. Although this was a Sunni Muslim organization, there was no discrimination between children from any other sect. Anyone who wanted his/her child to attend the classes, was welcome. There were no fees to attend these classes. I recall teaching students from Shia families and even children from an Ahmadiya family. There were also Arabic language classes that were taught by Arabic-speaking members – mostly graduate students of Dr. El-Serafi.

Friday Prayer

With the new mosque on 25th Street in 1978, Friday prayer was now held in that building. All Muslims were welcome to attend. There were prominent Shia families, including a family named Haider and another family, Bhimji (of Dr. Raza Bhimji) from North Battleford. The Bhimji family would travel to Saskatoon for Sunday school and at times for Friday prayer. I also remember some Ismailis (followers of the Agha Khan) who joined in Friday prayer.

The Friday prayer sermon (Khutba) and the leader of the prayer (Imam) was often done on a rotational basis, as we could not afford a full-time Imam. That did not happen until well after we acquired the Copland Crescent building. For many years in the Copland Crescent building, the task of Imam was handled by Fouad Abdelwahab who also functioned as IAS Secretary for Religious Affairs.

With time, the IAS executive decided to look for a fulltime (paid) Imam. There was a debate in the community, about the type of person we needed. We had previously turned down an offer, from a foreign country to send an Imam. The decision to hire an Imam was made by the executive and then reversed, and then reversed again. A full-time Imam was finally hired in 2009.

With a large community now (2022), prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were five sessions of Friday prayers held at four different locations – each lead by a different Imam. These included two prayers at the site of the Copland Crescent main mosque, one in the university for the students and faculty members, whose classes and teaching duties would not permit them, to take the approximately two hours off in the middle of the day to go to the mosque.

III. Copland Crescent Building

The third major milestone during that era, was the purchase of the Copland Crescent building in 1994. By the mid/late 1980s, the Muslim community had grown and the small 120, 25th Street West old building was not sufficient to accommodate all our needs. The IAS started searching for a new building. The Muslim community was now larger and more diverse, but our financial resources were still limited. There were a few of us who were gainfully employed, but the salaries were still low. Individuals made donations, sometimes for specific projects. For example, Dr. Salim Afridi (Pakistan), a urologist in Saskatoon made a generous donation for the educational needs, of the children in the IAS Islamic classes. But, by the mid '80s, we did not have enough cash for a larger building. As noted above, our constitution prohibited getting a mortgage, to acquire a mosque.

The IAS considered all the options, including buying a building inside the city, constructing a new building inside the city, or building a structure outside the city, on the land which the IAS had purchased. There was vigorous debate on the pros and cons of each option. Many of us favored staying inside the city, for the main reason that the facility would be accessible to everyone, including those who did not have their own transportation.

A new group of ISA members was spearheading this effort, though some of the old timers also pitched-in when asked. Everyone was trying hard and I cannot possibly name them all. Notable among them were: Dr. Mustafa Abdelbar, computer science professor (Egypt), Said El-Fakhani, commerce professor (UAE), Dr. Ashfaq Shuaib, neurology professor (Pakistan), Dr. Ahmed Shoker, nephrology professor (Egypt), and Mr. Amer Kassem, graduate student/businessman (Egypt). No doubt, many others were working hard towards the goal of acquiring a more suitable building for the IAS.

Once the decision to stay within the city was made, the options for building a new structure, or purchasing an existing building were considered. Around that time, Saskatoon School Board decided that the Grosvenor Park Elementary School at 222 Copland Crescent did not have enough students and put the school building up for sale. That advertisement aroused interest of the IAS; however, the cost was too high for the IAS.

Our members spearheading the initiative, did very careful assessment of the situation. They contacted the City of Saskatoon and were informed that the two acres of land near the school building was owned by the school, and it could be used for a housing development. They did further exploring to determine the value of the land near the building if it were used for a housing development, and consulted Northridge Realty as a future developer. Based on that information, they concluded that with some help from our members we could buy that school property.

By June 1993, the IAS made an offer of \$492,000 and a deposit of \$49,200 was made. The schoolboard wanted to remove some contents from the building and the asking price was reduced to \$467,000. Once a deposit is made and is accepted by the seller, if the purchase does not proceed that deposit cannot be refunded. Thus, we were risking nearly \$50,000 loss, if we did not purchase that property. That was a large sum of money for the IAS.

While it all seemed well from the IAS perspective, after the news of the purchase of property by the IAS became public, some neighbors were upset. One can understand that. The community had existed in certain configuration and a significant change would disrupt the community lifestyle. There were several stated reasons for the opposition. These included: 1) the aesthetics of the neighborhood, 2) the possibility that there would be a low-cost Muslim housing development, reducing the property value of the neighborhood houses, 3) there would be more traffic than the neighborhood was used to, and 4) the Muslim community will start an elementary school, in the building. The community members opposing the development approached the members of the City Council and made a case that there should be no such housing development. At the least, the new housing should not be in the format that the IAS had proposed. If the city were to agree to the housing development, they insisted that it should have entrance from the Main Street, rather than the Copland Crescent. They also made a point that the lots for the proposed new houses should be larger than requested by the IAS. There were several IAS meetings with the neighbors to address their concerns.

There were also city council meetings where the IAS members made presentations. There was a concerted effort by everyone in the IAS to do whatever they could. I was not personally involved in this project up to that point.

Once it became apparent that IAS project was in jeopardy, Dr. Ahmed Shoker asked me to assist if I could. I was a senior member of the community and had just received the highest Provincial Award – the Saskatchewan Order of Merit. Some city council members knew me and there was name recognition of who I was. I approached some members of the council personally and others with Dr. Shoker or with Dr. Russell. Several other members and I made presentations to city council. All concerns of the neighbors were brought to our attention, and we answered the questions as best as we could. I recall doing detailed analysis of the traffic patterns based on the size of the Muslim community at the time. We emphasized the point that the new neighborhood houses entry from the Main Street would expose the children of those families to excessive traffic safety risk. Among the questions asked were, the possibility of an elementary school in the same building. We (the IAS) had never discussed that possibility at a general meeting, so we told them that we had made no such plans.

The IAS modified its housing proposal by increasing the lot size for the new development, and reducing the number of new houses. The new plan was presented in August 1994 and was accepted by the City. The City was also satisfied with the housing entry from the Copland Crescent.

The IAS members made many personal contacts with the neighborhood and held an open house to discuss the nature of our plan, and emphasized that we were coming to become peaceful and good neighbors. Most of the neighbors were understanding and welcomed the IAS purchasing the school building. Some of the neighbors were however still not satisfied. One non-Muslim member from the neighborhood launched a lawsuit against the IAS, the City of Saskatoon and the Northridge Realty/Development, in September 1994. That lawsuit was dismissed. However, she did not give-up and filed an appeal in November 1994. The appeal was dismissed and the court ordered the plaintiff, to pay part of the legal costs of the IAS, the Northridge and the City of Saskatoon. Thus, the IAS offer for the building made in June 1993 did not get the final clearance until November 1994 – 17 months later.

Financing of the Copland Crescent Building

The IAS had agreed to the price of \$467,000 for the property and put a deposit of \$49,200. But we needed more than \$400,000 additional cash to close the deal. The IAS committee had concluded, that most of the funds would come from the sale of the land near the school building. But the land could not be sold to a third party, until the IAS had the title to the property. That would happen only after we had paid the full price. We could not borrow from a bank as that required interest payment. This bridge funding had to come from the IAS community. The committee members did their homework on that. They sold 9 (nine) lots to the IAS members at approximately \$24,000 each. They also sold more than 200 shares at a price of \$1000 each to community members who advanced the funds to the IAS to complete the purchase.

Late Dr. Karamdad Choudhry who was practicing in Gravelbourg bought a last minute lot – site unseen. One member (Dr. Shuaib) who bought a lot donated that to the IAS. That was used to increase the size of the housing lots but reduced the number of lots. All others who purchased the lots or the shares received their money back when the land was sold to the developers.

Mr. Daniel Kuhlen, a private practicing lawyer and member of the Muslim community, handled the legal aspects of selling the old property, purchasing the new property and the lawsuits. Most of it was done pro bono. On the recommendation of a senior judge, the IAS also hired another lawyer, to help us with the lawsuit by the non-Muslim member noted above.

In all, it turned out that the purchase of the Copeland Crescent property net cost to the IAS was \$98,000. The center has 23,750 square feet of covered area. The adjoining 2 acres of land was sold as the housing lots. Details of the financial transactions are noted in publication of IAS, written by Dr. A. Shoker and Mr. Khalil Rehman in 2008.

We very much appreciate the understanding and the fair treatment of our case by the City of Saskatoon.

Making 222 Copland Crescent Suitable for an Islamic Centre

The Grosvenor Park Elementary School building as it was structured, was not suitable for a mosque. It needed major renovations. The building had to be configured such that there was a large hall for the congregational prayers. It also needed a place to wash before prayers (Wudu), a kitchen, some classrooms for the Islamic classes and a place where we could hold meetings. It was important that the integrity of the building was not compromised. It required an architect. Mr. Jim Cemil Akin (Turkey), an architect and member of the IAS, played a major role in the renovations. Not only did he design the new structure free of charge, he also spent \$40,000 of his own money (without getting tax receipt) to make that happen.

In spite of many generous donations and pro bono work, funds were needed to maintain this large structure. An innovative approach was needed to have ongoing funding support. Mr. Khalil Rehman was a major player in that respect. Mr. Rehman is a real estate owner. He also had an electronic/electrical background. He helped the IAS purchase rental buildings. Mr. Rehman and his wife, Nuzhat Rehman helped manage the rental properties. The rent from those properties provided, much needed steady income to help run the Islamic center. There was no cost to the IAS, for their services.

Contrary to the concerns of some non-Muslim neighbors, that, there would be a low-cost Muslim ghetto in the neighborhood, the new houses are some of the most expensive in that area. If anything, the value of the neighborhood houses increased because of the new housing development. To my knowledge, no Muslim built a house in that area. The Muslims settled in Saskatoon were happy in their own neighborhoods and saw no reason to relocate.

Elementary School for Muslim Children

Prior to the purchase of the Copland Crescent school building, there was no decision by the IAS to have an elementary school for the Muslim children in at the Islamic Centre. That was a sticking point for some City Council members during our negotiations. I recall, Dr. Shoker and I talked to some members of the city Council who brought-up that issue. As there was no decision by the IAS to have an elementary school for the Muslim children, we transmitted that information to those Council members. No doubt, there were some other members of the IAS, who were lobbying the city Council and faced similar questions from Council members.

After the building was acquired, some members championed the cause of an elementary school for Muslim children, in the same building. The IAS approved that proposal and 18 months later it was amended such that the school can go ahead only after certain conditions are met. It was not until September 2009 that the IAS had a resolution to rent some space for an elementary school to the “Saskatoon Misbah School” for Muslim children. The rent was fixed at \$1 annual. Some members did not agree with that. Such disagreements within any organization are not uncommon. Given the democratic nature of the IAS, the majority decision had to be followed.

This elementary school has a limited number of spots. With a growing Muslim population in the city, this school cannot accommodate all the Muslim children. Most Muslim elementary school children in Saskatoon attend the public schools.

Profiles of some early Muslims in Saskatoon

As noted above, early Muslims did not come and settle in Saskatoon as a group. They came as individuals or as small families and settled for their own reasons. Like all new immigrants in Canada, Muslims chose to pursue whatever legal options were available to make a living. Most early Muslims were graduate students, professionals or university professors.

In order to avoid generalizing as “We” or “Muslims”, I will present some specific examples of large groups that share the same profession and the same workplace, and of some individuals. I will restrict my comments to adult Muslims who migrated and settled in Saskatoon and those who accepted Islam as adults, during that time. They must have spent a significant amount of time in the city before the year 2000. They also must have played some role in the IAS. I will not include children of immigrant Muslims. Regrettably, I cannot include everyone who settled in Saskatoon and made a significant contribution during that period.

For the individual profiles, I have relied on my personal contact with those still living in Saskatoon, to verify the accuracy. Where that was not possible, I have relied on my own recollection and understanding of the individuals and the events. The identity of the individuals will be presented by name, occupation, country of birth-country of upbringing, and year of coming to Saskatoon.

Cancer specialists (oncologists) physicians

Cancer is a major health problem in Saskatchewan. It requires specially trained physicians to make the diagnosis and to treat it. It also has a need for special equipment which only a trained expert can use. To keep up with the advances in the discipline, cancer researchers are needed. Collectively these specialists work in the Saskatoon Cancer Clinic (SCC). They are very rare medical specialists and are hard to recruit. Unlike most other physicians who are in private practice, cancer specialists work as a group in the SCC.

The first Muslim SCC specialist was Dr. A. Rauf Qureshi (Pakistan) who joined the clinic in the early 1970s. He was followed by Dr. M. Mohammad (Sri Lanka) in the mid/late 1970s. Dr. Mohammad served as the Director of the SCC for several years. Subsequent to that, SCC medical staff has had a large proportion of medical experts who are Muslim. They have provided this much needed service in the province, for many years. No doubt, the presence of a viable Muslim community in the city was a significant consideration for some of them to join the SCC. Thus the presence of the IAS in the city, was important to attract these much needed specialists.

The Muslims have also been active in Saskatoon Open Door Society and multicultural organizations. They have also helped new immigrants to settle in the city.

Individual Profiles

Dr. Fook Ma, Family Physician (Hong Kong) 1964

Dr. Ma was born and raised in Hong Kong. By the time he was eligible to enter medical school, the fees for the medical school in Hong Kong were so high that his family could not afford that. He went to medical school at the National Taiwan University in Taiwan. After graduating from medicine, he went to the USA where he did rotating internships, as was usual at that time. He completed one year of pediatrics and one year of surgery residency. There was no family practice residency program at the time. He came to Saskatoon as a family physician to work at the Saskatoon Community Clinic in 1964. He worked there for seven years and then went into private practice. Dr. Ma practiced family medicine in Saskatoon for 56 years and retired in 2021.

He and his wife, Theresa, are major philanthropists. They recognized the role of Saskatoon hospitals in the patient care. They contributed a total of \$300,000 - \$100,000 to each: St. Paul's Hospital Foundation, Saskatoon City Hospital Foundation and Royal University Hospital Foundation, to enhance the standard of patient care in the city. Dr. Ma was the first president of the Islamic Association of Saskatchewan, elected in 1970. I believe he was a signatory on the application for the IAS charitable status.

Dr. Shakeel Akhtar, Graduate student-laboratory director U of S (India) 1964

Dr. Akhtar received his MSc degree from the Aligarh University in India. He came to Saskatoon in 1964 as a PhD student. He obtained a PhD in radiation chemistry. After

a post-doctoral research fellowship, he joined the U of S, and set-up the Kjeldahl unit of U of S feed testing laboratory. He also served as the Director and Laboratory Supervisor of the Saskatchewan Feed Testing Laboratory in the Department of Agriculture and Poultry Sciences. He served as a consultant to the Belize Government Agriculture Health Authority for two years and was a consultant to the Cigar Lake Mining Corporation in Saskatchewan. Since his retirement from the U of S, he has worked with the Saskatchewan Movement Disorders Program as a senior scientist.

His volunteer work to help others in need began early. He was the secretary of the International Student Association and a guest speaker at a provincial United Nations Assembly. He has held multiple board positions in the multicultural organization, and has been a part of committees on cultural diversity and race relations within the city. He served as the chair of the Canadian Languages Association, president of the Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages, and as chair of the Canadian Languages Network. He also served as president of the Saskatchewan Multicultural Council and as a board member of the Saskatchewan Parkinson's Disease Foundation.

In recognition of his multiple contributions to Saskatoon, the Province of Saskatchewan and Canada, he has received numerous prestigious Awards – Saskatchewan Centennial Medal, Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal, Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal, Saskatchewan Cultural Volunteer Award, City of Saskatoon Community Service Award, Living in Harmony Award, Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Award, and from his Alma Mater - Aligarh Muslim University, the Vice Chancellor and Provost Award. He received the Governor General of Canada Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers Award for his work promoting social harmony, intercultural understanding and diversity.

Dr. Akhtar's major contributions were recognized by the city. A street "Akhtar Bend" has been named after him, in Saskatoon.

He has held multiple IAS executive positions between the mid-1970s until 2008, and was one of the members who did hands-on work in the first Islamic Centre on 25th Street.

Dr. David B. Russell, Chemistry Professor (England) 1964

Dr. Russell was born and raised in London, England. He obtained a PhD in biochemistry, chemistry and chemical physics from the University of London. He joined the U of S Chemistry Department in 1964. He is highly knowledgeable, unselfish, articulate and has excellent communication skills. This combination and his engaging personality made him a very popular teacher with the students. He is also an accomplished pianist and played piano in the Rotary Club meetings for many years.

Dr. Russell's academic talents were recognized by the American University in Cairo, Egypt, and they invited him to help devise chemistry curriculum for that university.

In 1969, he accepted Islam. After that, Dr. Russell had a second name, "Hisham Ahmed". He married Dr. Seham Moussa in 1975.

He also played highly critical role in the early years of the IAS. He served in several executive positions including as president. His presence was vital for the purchase of the 25th Street mosque building, as he went from town to town and from individual to individual in the city to collect funds. He was also active in the Council of Muslim Communities of Canada (CMCC) where he served as president and as treasurer. With that connection, he was instrumental in getting the much needed \$15,000 interest-free loan from the CMCC for the first mosque. For the Copeland Crescent mosque, he was again called upon for help. He used his significant personal connections in Saskatoon City Council to lobby for the purchase of the building. Dr. Russell also played a major role in the Saskatchewan Parkinson's Disease Foundation where he served as president for many years.

His wide contributions were recognized with a Queen's Golden Jubilee Award. He retired from his UoS position and lives in Saskatoon.

Dr. Seham Moussa, Home Economics Professor (Egypt) 1969-1971

She was on the faculty of the College of Home Economics U of S. The Home Economics program was later distributed in different colleges. She became Dean of Home Economics at the University of Helwan in Egypt. In 1975, she married to Dr. David Russell. She passed away in February 2022.

Professor Parvez Wakil, Sociology Professor (Pakistan) 1964

Professor Wakil was educated as a sociologist in Pakistan and subsequently did his Masters degree at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington USA. He joined the U of S in September 1964. I believe he was a signatory on the application for charitable status of the IAS. He served as president of the IAS for one year. Unfortunately, his health started to decline at a relatively young age, preventing him from participating in many personal and professional activities. He has passed away.

Farkhanda Wakil, Librarian (Pakistan) 1964

Farkhanda Wakil is the wife of late Professor Parvez Wakil. She has a sociology degree from Pakistan. The rules of the UoS at the time that Professor Parvez Wakil joined the faculty were such that spouses were not allowed to work in the same department. Therefore, she trained as a library scientist and worked at the U of S main library for many years. Because of the ill health of her husband, she spent much of her time looking after him.

Dr. Ali Rajput, Neurology Professor (Pakistan) 1967

Dr. Rajput grew-up in Sindh, Pakistan. He graduated in medicine at the top of his class from Liaquat Medical College. After seven years of specialty training in the USA and Canada, he joined the U of S in 1967. He was the first Muslim and first Indian/Pakistani full-time academic clinician at the U of S. He served as the Head of Neurology at the U of S for 16 years. He is the longest (55 years) practicing/researching neurologist in Saskatoon. A major attraction for him to stay in Saskatchewan was the universal

healthcare system. He was not comfortable charging a patient for his service. He has never billed a patient, for any service.

Over the years he has had several under graduates and postgraduates students – Muslims and non-Muslims who are now practicing across Canada and in the USA.

In 1968, he established the Saskatchewan Movement Disorders Program (SMDP). It includes special clinics in Saskatoon and in Regina and research. His clinic is recognized as one of the best in Canada.

He established a new regimen of Parkinson's disease treatment in 1968. It reduced hospitalization and saved the province more than \$100 million dollars in drug costs.

In the mid-1970s there was no National information source for the Parkinson's disease patients. He produced English and French brochures which he provided to all Canadians free of charge.

He also devised a new model of Parkinson's disease research. For that, he had to be on 24/7 (unpaid) call. It includes studies of autopsied brains from his patients. So far, more than 605 patients seen in his clinic have had their brains studied.

Dr. Rajput has supported world-wide research in Movement Disorders. The cumulative costs to his program for each autopsied brain is approximately \$20,000, but he shares those samples with the leading experts in the world (approximately 40 so far) free of charge. His research program is widely recognized as the best of its kind in the world. He has published more than 200 scientific papers. A recent international survey of citations (quotations by others) of the world scientists (in medicine and other disciplines) by the Stanford University USA ranked Dr. Rajput's work in the top 2% of those cited by others. Of special note is the fact that all his publications are based on the work done at the University of Saskatchewan.

In 1972, he co-founded with four other members, the Saskatchewan Parkinson's Disease Foundation which served the province for more than 35 years.

He is Founder of a 1.6 million dollar endowment, at the Royal University Hospital Foundation in 2008 known as "Dr. Ali Rajput Endowment". This endowment can be increased (and it has), but cannot be reduced. The money is invested and the proceeds are used for the special clinics and research in movement disorders. It will serve this province in perpetuity.

The annual Kinsmen Saskatchewan Telemiracle is based on one of his severely disabled (dystonia) patient who dramatically improved under his care. Dr. Rajput served as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Working Group on Parkinson's Disease. He co-founded the Canadian Movement Disorders Group. He also served as part of the Canadian delegate to accompany His Excellency The Governor General of Canada, to India and Pakistan in 1998. He has served as a

visiting professor at many Canadian, U.S. and European universities. He has held major research grants including from the NIH (USA) for multicenter studies.

Dr. Rajput has received several major Awards/recognitions. Those include: Spirit of the Royal University Hospital Award (cash award was used for medical student scholarships). He was chosen Saskatoon Citizen of the Year, and Saskatchewan Physician of the Year. In 2005, the Centennial Year of the Province, the Saskatchewan Medical Association identified his work, among the four major advances in medicine made by a Saskatchewan physician. The UoS awarded him with Distinguished Researcher, Distinguished Professor and Honorary DSc degree. He received Distinguished Canadian Award from University of Regina. He received 2021 Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation Achievement Award.

The City of Saskatoon has named a street called the “Rajput Way” in his honor.

Dr. Rajput was the first Muslim to receive the Saskatchewan Order of Merit in 1993 and the first immigrant Muslim to receive Officer of The Order of Canada in 1997. In 1969, his wedding was the first Muslim (partial) ceremony in Saskatoon. The Nikkah was performed by engineering professor, Ahmed Razak. Because that was not officially recognized in the province at the time, part of the ceremony was conducted by a Unitarian church minister. The wedding guests included Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews.

Dr. Rajput has been a life member of the IAS since the early 1970s. He served in different executive positions. He was involved in making the decision to purchase the first Mosque building in 1978 and raising the funds. He also helped acquire the Copland Crescent building in 1994.

Dr. Ahmed El-Serafi, Engineering Professor (Egypt) 1968

Dr. El-Serafi grew-up in Egypt. He received his electrical engineering degree from Cairo University, his PhD from Manchester University of Science and Technology in England and his Doctorate of Engineering from Technical University in Darmstadt, Germany. In 1968, he joined the U of S, College of Engineering. Dr. El-Serafi was an expert in the field of electrical engineering and power system research and published more than 300 refereed journal and conference papers. He received many professional awards including the International Award of Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Fellowship for his major contribution to the synchronous machines and the Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship.

Dr. El-Serafi was a man of principle, with uncompromising honesty in all his dealings with others. He was a devout Muslim and was in essence, the founder of the IAS in 1970, as a legal charitable organization. For many years, he and his graduate students conducted the affairs of the Association. They started Friday prayers in the university buildings, Sunday Islamic school for children in a university building, and organized Islamic functions in the university buildings. He served as the IAS president and as the vice-president for many years.

It is hard to imagine what would have happened of the Muslim community in Saskatoon, without the efforts of Dr. El-Serafi. He took the first major step by organizing the IAS and thus establishing the Muslim identity in Saskatoon. His commitment to Islamic Association was profound. His obituary indicates that the donations in his memory were made to the IAS. He passed away in 2018.

Professor Shamim Ahmad, Geography Professor (India-Pakistan) 1968

Shamim Ahmad was born in India and then migrated to Pakistan. He was in the USA for further training in the discipline of geography and moved to Saskatoon with his wife as a geography professor in 1968. Professor Ahmad had some health issues but he remained active in the IAS. I believe he was one of the co-signatories for the charitable registration of the IAS. He was the first person who invited me to join for Friday prayer in a university building. Professor Ahmad passed away in 1986 after a long illness.

Nahid Ahmad, Psychologist (India-Pakistan) 1968

Nahid Ahmad was born in India and later migrated to Pakistan. She had an MSc degree in Psychology from Punjab University Pakistan and moved to Saskatoon with her husband, Professor Shamim Ahmed in 1968. She worked as a psychologist at the Royal University Hospital for nearly 30 years. In addition to her job, she looked after her sick husband and was also extensively involved in the non-profit organizations, for example serving as chairperson of the Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan. She was actively involved in helping refugee families from Kosovo, to settle in Saskatoon and was Chair of the Royal University Hospital Foundation for several years.

In recognition of her many contributions to the province, she received the highest provincial award - the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Her husband (Shamim Ahmad) died in 1986. The physician who looked after her husband was Dr. Marc Baltzan. Marc accepted Islam around 1991. After being widowed for six years, Nahid married Dr. Marc Baltzan in 1992. Together, they did much community work and established an endowment at the Royal University Hospital Foundation to support kidney disease and heart disease research. Her commitment to the cause is evident in the fact that the donations in her memory were made to that endowment.

Mrs. Ahmad was actively involved in the IAS executive as a vice president and in different other roles, including public relations and fundraising committees. She was a founding member of Pakistan Canada Cultural Association. She and her first husband, Shamim were instrumental in the formation of the IAS. She died in 2018.

Dr. Marc Baltzan, Medicine Professor, Physician/Nephrologist

Dr. Baltzan was born into, a prominent Saskatoon Jewish family. His father, David Baltzan was the first internal medicine specialist in the City of Saskatoon. Marc graduated in medicine from McGill University in 1953. He specialized in medicine and kidney disease at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore USA and joined his father

in medical practice in 1959. He played a prominent role in 1962 Saskatchewan Healthcare Plan negotiations.

He introduced the renal dialysis program in Saskatoon at St. Paul's Hospital and started kidney transplant program in 1963. That program is one of the four major advances by Saskatchewan physicians in the 100 year history of the Province. The Kidney Transplant Program started by Dr. Baltzan was among the first in Canada. He was active in the Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) and the Canadian Medical Association (CMA). He served as the president of each, the SMA and the CMA. In addition, he was a leading figure in the creation of Saskatoon downtown partnerships of businesses.

Dr. Baltzan was appointed as full-time Academic Head and Professor in the Department of Medicine U of S in 1975 for a five year term. He published many papers in the field of nephrology and renal transplant. He along with his brother, Richard and a neurologist, Charles Bolton published the first paper on uremic neuropathy in The New England Journal of Medicine.

Marc received many major Awards for his medical, business and healthcare delivery innovations. He received the Officer of The Order of Canada in 1995 and the Saskatchewan Order of Merit in 1999. In 2004, he received a DSc (Honorary) degree from the U of S. Together, he and his wife, Nahid, founded an endowment for nephrology and cardiac disease research, at the Royal University Hospital Foundation.

Dr. Marc Baltzan accepted Islam around 1991. I was witness to that event. In 1992, he married Nahid Ahmed. He wrote his Will stating that he should be buried as a Muslim and gave me a copy of that.

Although he did not serve in any executive position of the IAS, he provided highly valuable, behind the scenes, advice and support to the IAS, especially when we were facing legal challenges, related to the purchase of the Copeland Crescent building.

Dr. Baltzan died in 2005. In keeping with his wishes, he was buried as a Muslim. I served as Imam for his Janaza.

Dr. Zaheer Alvi, Ear, Nose, Throat specialist (India-Pakistan) 1970

Dr. Alvi was born in New Delhi India. He received his BSc degree from Muslim university Aligarh, India and then migrated to Pakistan, where he received his medical degree from the Dow Medical College, Sindh University. He did his Ear, Nose, Throat specialty training in the UK. He joined the Saskatoon Community Clinic in 1970. He was an excellent surgeon. He remained there for many years, before going into private practice.

Dr. Alvi was a very gentle and kind person. He would lend an ear to any Muslim or for that matter to anyone, who needed his support and provided that help generously. He was an avid golfer and was awarded an honorary lifetime membership in the Saskatoon

Golf and Country Club, where he had been a member for 35 years. He was also a member of the Saskatoon Rotary Club.

Dr. Alvi was committed to excellence of the patient care, and his obituary indicated that the donations were made to the Palliative Care Unit at St. Paul's Hospital.

Dr. Alvi's involvement with the IAS was extensive. He was actively involved in the renovation of the first Mosque on the 25th Street. He was a great proponent and one of the founders of the Saskatoon Misbah School, an elementary school for Muslim children. Over the years, Dr. Alvi served in multiple executive positions in the IAS including as treasurer, president, public relations and as secretary. Any help that the IAS needed, Zaheer Alvi was there. Dr. Alvi died in 2012.

Mr. Zia Hasan, Insurance Broker (India-Pakistan) early 1970s

He was born in India and migrated to Pakistan. Zia and his family were sponsored for migration to Canada by his sister, Nahid Ahmad. He worked as an insurance agent. He was instrumental in the decision to search and purchase the 25th street Mosque. He played major role in fundraising, going from city to city and individual to individual to procure funds. He participated in the renovations of the first Mosque. He also participated in the maintenance of the building, such as vacuuming, lawn mowing, etc.

He served as president of the IAS. He also served in the public relations and publicity committee of the Association. Mr. Hasan passed away at a relatively young age.

Dr. Farouk Saleh, College of Commerce professor (Egypt) 1971

Dr. Salah grew-up in Egypt. He received his PhD degree in commerce, in the USA and joined the U of S commerce college in 1971. As a member of the special committee to purchase the first Mosque in 1977, his vote was critical, to purchase the first mosque in Saskatoon in 1978. He served as vice president of the IAS and helped raise funds, including approaching embassies of Muslim countries in Canada for support. He is now living in the Middle East.

Mr. Khalil-Ur Rehman, Electronics/communication technology, Audiovisual Services Division at UoS, businessman (Pakistan) 1975

Mr. Rehman completed a three-year diploma of Associate Engineer in Television and Electronics Technology, from the Polytechnic Institute in Rawalpindi Pakistan. After that, he worked in television manufacturing in Austria – for the company which manufactured German Grundig TV. In 1975, he came to Saskatoon and worked in an electronic equipment business for a while before joining the Division of Audiovisual Services U of S, where he served for 29 years. He functioned as chief engineer and manager of equipment supplies. Mr. Rehman was a go-to person for faculty lectures and arranging major U of S presentations, and was instrumental in arranging the distant education program presentations at the university.

While he was pursuing his regular job, he was also establishing his own successful Real Estate business. Mr. Rehman has represented different organizations, such as Folk

Fest, Saskatchewan Organization for Heritage Languages, Saskatchewan Intercultural Organization and Saskatoon Multi-faith. He has been active in the Pakistan Canada Cultural Association and served as president. He also participated in the Community Radio Society of Saskatoon.

Mr. Rehman has received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal and Saskatchewan Centennial Medal.

Mr. Rehman and his wife, Nuzhat Rehman, have served the IAS almost continuously since the late 1970s. He has held various positions at the IAS including, president, vice-president, mosque maintenance secretary, chairperson of the IAS strategic planning committee for new mosque, and the fundraising committee for more than 25 years. Because of his technical expertise, he has consistently provided help for the maintenance of the Islamic Centre. Regardless if he was on the committee or not, he was always available. He has provided those services pro bono. He also brought practical business skills to the IAS. He helped acquire and maintain the Copland Crescent Islamic Centre and purchase and manage the IAS rental properties.

Mrs. Nuzhat Rehman has been involved in IAS executive capacity for many years, primarily on the education committee. The two of them helped with fundraising for many years.

Mr. Rehman is far-sighted enough that he has steered the Association to make it sustainable, for years to come. Without Mr. Rehman and his family's commitment to the IAS, we could not have progressed to the level that we have.

Mr. Jim Cemil Akin, Architect (Turkey) 1977

Mr. Akin came to Saskatoon in 1977. He was passionate about wrestling and about architecture. He was equally committed to generosity in a very broad sense of the word. He contributed his talent, time and money. He shared his architectural skills generously with all junior architects joining him. Mr. Akin was the founding member of a large local architectural firm in Saskatoon and practiced architecture for 25 years. There are many buildings he helped with throughout the prairie provinces, and Awards he won are a testimony of his architectural talent.

Jim was not a showy person. He was a no-nonsense, straight forward individual. His generosity was widespread – local, provincial, national and international and it was unconditional. His attitude towards charity was, to do it quietly, without attracting attention. He donated funds, without even getting tax benefit. As a businessperson that is unusual. He has probably done many more charitable acts than we know of. He also served as a volunteer wrestling coach for the UoS Huskies.

Jim was a member of the IAS for a long time, almost as long as he has lived in Saskatoon. However, he never held an executive officer title. He was available for anything the IAS needed him. For example, when the IAS purchased the Copland Crescent building, it needed major renovations in order to accommodate the needs of

the Islamic Association. It needed large prayer hall, as well as renovations suitable for a kitchen, a washing area and the classrooms. For the renovation of the Copeland Crescent Mosque, not only did he provide his architectural help without charge, but he also put his own \$40,000 for those repairs. He died in November 2020. Donations in his memory were made to: Doctors Without Borders, World Vision, Saskatoon Folk Band and Salvation Army.

Dr. Hamid Javed, Nutritionist (Pakistan) 1980

Dr. Javed got his PhD in Nutrition Sciences from McGill University Montreal Canada. He and his wife, Nayyar, moved to Saskatoon in 1980. He worked in the Department of Agriculture, Government of Saskatchewan. Hamid was also a social activist. He advocated racial equality and was extensively involved in multicultural, multi-religious and peace organizations. He supported many such causes. Not only did he support those causes with his heart, he expressed that openly, in words and even participated in public peaceful demonstrations. In keeping with his lifelong work, the donations in his memory went to the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association.

Hamid served on youth and education committee of the IAS. He died in June 2020.

Nayyar Javed, Psychologist (Pakistan) 1980

Nayyar Javed is a psychologist and moved to Saskatoon with her husband in 1980. She worked in the Mental Health Clinic in Saskatoon and at the Saskatoon Community Clinic. She has published articles and book chapters on psychology. Her major interest is in women's equality. Nayyar promoted women's equality at local, National and International levels, and has made presentations at the United Nations forum addressing women's issues. She was the first president of the International Women of Saskatoon. She also has been active in the Pakistan Canada Cultural Association of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Salim Afridi, Urologist (Pakistan) 1981

Dr. Afridi is a graduate of medicine from Pakistan. He then did further training in the UK and in Canada. He and his wife, Dr. Roh Afridi came to Saskatoon in 1981. Dr. Afridi was in the private practice of urology. He was among the best urologists in Saskatoon.

During the 15 years of his stay in Saskatoon, he served on the IAS executive in various capacities. He served on the public relations and social affairs committee, finance and fundraising committee and was vice president of the IAS at one time. He was also a major donor for Islamic education for the children at the IAS. Around 1995, he moved to Florida.

Dr. Roh Afridi, Family Physician (Pakistan) 1981

Roh is a graduate of medicine from Pakistan. She moved with her husband to Saskatoon in 1981. She then established her own family practice in Saskatoon.

She was the secretary of public relations and social affairs, finance and fundraising committees of the IAS. She was active in the Muslim community of Saskatoon in general. Around 1995, she moved with her husband to Florida.

Trio of Experts – Dr. Mustafa Abdelbar, computer sciences professor (Egypt), Dr. Saeed El-Fakhani, College of Commerce professor (UAE), Mr. Amer Kassem, businessman (Egypt)

I have put these three together in one group, because of their collective major achievement in the purchase of the Copland Crescent building. Each of them have made major individual contributions, but collectively they have made the most significant contributions. They are a unique combination – a computer scientist, a commerce professor and a businessman. They were all farsighted and gentle, but tenacious in their efforts. Between them, they served the IAS as president (Mustafa Abdelbar), as treasurer and fundraising secretary (Amer Kassem) and as youth and education committee (Dr. El-Fakhani). They all came to Saskatoon in the mid to late 1980s. Each of them was talented in his own field, but these three along with Dr. Ashfaq Shuaib and Dr. Ahmed Shoker formed a team, that helped us acquire the Copland Crescent building at a price that we could afford. Without their effort, the third milestone of that era of the IAS – acquiring the Copland Crescent building would not have been possible.

Dr. Ashfaq Shuaib, Neurology Professor (Pakistan) 1989

Dr. Shuaib is a medical graduate from Pakistan. He did his neurology residency in Calgary and a stroke fellowship at Duke University North Carolina, where he specialized in clinical and research aspects of stroke. In 1989, he joined the faculty of the U of S. He is among the most gifted neurologists that I know. He has multiple talents – he is intelligent, ambitious, resourceful, well-organized and highly efficient. He is also very generous. He looked after many other colleagues, who needed his help. He was here for about 10 years, but his contributions during that time by every measure are enormous.

Dr. Shuaib started the first dedicated stroke program at the Royal University Hospital and established a comprehensive basic and clinical research program. He hired many undergraduate and postgraduate students, including the foreign medical graduates – Muslims and non-Muslims alike. He also helped some of those working in his lab including the foreign medical graduates, get into the mainstream of Canadian clinical training. Some of them are now working in Saskatoon. He served as neurology residency director and attracted a large number of candidates to that program. He is also a prolific publisher.

Dr. Shuaib is a very popular speaker nationally and internationally and has travelled to many Canadian, American, European and Middle Eastern institutions to lecture. He arranged an annual teaching conference for Pakistani neurologists, over the Christmas/New Year holidays. The North American and European experts would participate in those, at their own expense.

Dr. Shuaib was involved in the IAS for several years in different capacities. The main one being the secretary of the IAS. He was one of the members actively involved in the purchase of the 222 Copland Crescent building. He bought a lot in the new housing project for approximately \$24,000. When the city asked the IAS to increase the lot sizes, to comply with the wishes of the neighborhood, he donated his own lot to the IAS, so it could be used to increase the size of the remaining lots. He did that without getting a tax receipt. We were close friends but he never told me about that gift.

Dr. Shuaib was in much demand, as an expert neurologist at other institutions. Eventually, he moved to become Head of Neurology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, where he has established a world-class stroke program.

Dr. Ahmed Shoker, Nephrology Professor (Egypt) 1991

Dr. Shoker graduated in medicine from Egypt. He then did further training in medicine and kidney diseases in Canada. He received special training in kidney transplant, at the University of Toronto and came to Saskatoon in 1991 with his wife, Dr. Suzan Abu-Al-Ghar (Egypt). Dr. Shoker is a world-leading expert in tissue transplant, notably for kidney transplant. He served as head of the Division of Nephrology (kidney disease) in the College of Medicine for several years, and is Chair of the Kidney Transplant Program in the province. As well, he is now the Medical Director of the Provincial Transplant Program. In addition to running special clinics in Saskatoon, Dr. Shoker runs clinics for kidney disease patients in Regina. His basic research involves immunosuppression, in the transplant cases and he has written nearly 180 scientific papers. He has received grants from the Kidney Foundation of Canada, the Saskatchewan government and the pharmaceutical industry for his research.

Dr. Shoker has served on the IAS executive for several decades in various capacities, notably as president and as vice president. He was a major force in the acquisition of the Copland Crescent Mosque. He has written two books: "Why Islam" and another with Khalil Rehman "Islamic Association of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) Inc." He has also been very generous with his financial support for the IAS over the years.

His wife, Dr. Suzan Abu-Al-Ghar is a graduate of medicine from Egypt. She moved with her husband in to Saskatoon in 1991. She worked as research fellow in the Saskatchewan Movement Disorders Program for several years. Suzan has served the Islamic Association in multiple roles, primarily in public relations, social affairs and religious education committees.

The contributions of this couple to the IAS are diverse, numerous and profound.

Mr. Fouad Abdelwahab, Pharmacist (Egypt) – early 1990s

Mr. Abdelwahab is a retired pharmacist from Egypt. He and his wife, Fawkia Karara, moved to Saskatoon sometime in the early 1990s. While in Saskatoon, they dedicated much of their time to the IAS and the Islamic Centre. Fouad served as chair of the IAS religious affairs committee for many years. He also served as the volunteer Imam for many years at the Copland Crescent Mosque.

Fawkia Karara served on the IAS public relations and social affairs committees for many years.

They were among the regular major donors to the IAS and both of them were at the Islamic Centre quite often. They are very kind and gentle people, not flashy but steady. They are compassionate and highly caring individuals. Their contribution in a quiet and steady fashion to the Muslim community for many years was immense. They did not have a family in Saskatoon and moved to Toronto area, to be closer to their daughter in the early 2000s.

**Dr. Adel Mohamed, Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology Professor (Libya)
1996**

Dr. Mohamed graduated in medicine from Libya. He completed residency training in general pathology, received a cytopathology fellowship from the University of British Columbia, and completed an anatomy fellowship and Master of educational administration from the U of S. Dr. Mohamed is qualified by the American Board in Anatomical and Clinical Pathology.

Dr. Mohamed has been extensively involved in Medical and Dentistry student education. He has won several teaching awards in anatomy. He has been chosen by his students, as one of the most popular professors in the department. He was chosen several times, as one of the 10 most popular teachers by MacLean's Guide. Dr. Mohamed has used an ingenious method to incorporate his clinical background in his teaching of the basic sciences. He teaches students the basic sciences disciplines, making a link between those topics, with the clinical training and the practice of medicine. He has produced two books on anatomy and is the author of 33 teaching videotapes. He has also published more than 40 scientific papers. He has served as department head of Anatomy and Cell Biology at the U of S. His special research has been on multiple sclerosis in animal model.

Dr. Mohamed was chair of the IAS education committee and is one of the founders of the Saskatoon Misbah School.

Mr. Daniel Kuhlen, Lawyer (Saskatoon)

Mr. Kuhlen grew-up in Saskatoon and got his law degree from the University of Saskatchewan. He accepted Islam in October 1990, and married Dr. Saba Qayyum (psychiatrist).

I have commented on the Muslim community and provided individual profiles of some of the members of that era. Most of us were immigrants and none of us had a legal background. For even a small legal issue, we needed an outside help. Mr. Kuhlen provided that much needed support for the IAS. He served as the IAS counsel from 1992 to 2000. He has been an active IAS member since 1991. He looked after the sale of the 25th Street building and the purchase of the Copland Crescent building. This involved much legal work, especially after a non-Muslim community member launched a

lawsuit. Daniel had to defend that, as well as do the other legal work necessary for the IAS. He was in private practice of law at that time, but most of the work for the IAS was done pro bono. Without his support over many years, the IAS would have difficulty establishing as a successful organization.

Daniel has also been generous in other charitable organizations. He served as a member and legal advisor to the Saskatchewan Parkinson's Disease Foundation, for many years. I am personally grateful for that.

Daniel lives in Saskatoon and serves as the co-chair of the IAS media, communication and outreach committee. In that role, he is often the face of the Saskatoon Muslim community in the media. He is knowledgeable, thoughtful and highly articulate. His media communications are an accurate reflection of the Muslims in this community and more broadly in Canada. He has had a major involvement in interfaith dialogue in the city. His commitment to human rights and freedom in Canada is deep. Without his skills and wholehearted commitment, the IAS could not have been as successful as it is today.

Summary and Conclusion and Role of University, City, Province and Country in Muslim settlement in Saskatoon

Muslims as a religious group settling in Saskatoon is relatively recent – with approximate 60 year history. The early Muslims came in small numbers, as individuals or one family at a time, the significance of their presence was therefore not obvious. The number of Muslims is growing in Saskatoon and they are becoming involved in all aspects of the society.

Role of the University of Saskatchewan

If there were no U of S I would not have come or stayed in Saskatoon. That is probably true of many other Muslims who came during that era. The university was the focal point for most of the early Muslim religious activities – a space for us: to worship, to establish religious school for children and to hold special religious functions. It attracted students from many Muslim countries. Those students provided additional support for the Islamic education for children. As I have noted above, the impetus for me to get involved with the IAS in acquiring a building in 1978, was aroused by the fact that I went to Friday prayers in a university building.

By establishing a successful organization, we have attracted other Muslims to the university. I am sure I speak for most Muslims when I express my sincere gratitude to the University of Saskatchewan.

Role of City, Province and Canada

The City of Saskatoon provided excellent environments and major support for the Muslims, whenever we needed that. The city has recognized us, by naming streets after some of our members.

The Province of Saskatchewan has done its part to generously support us. It has recognized our contributions, by conferring special honors on our deserving members.

The country, Canada, has acknowledged our contributions by major Awards to some of our members.

In turn, the early Saskatoon Muslims have made many extraordinary contributions. They have literally put this City and the Province on the world map of excellence, in their own disciplines. For example, during a ceremony of my “Prime of Life Award” for achievements after the formal retirement from university, in 2013, a former university secretary thanked me for my work and said something like this: “when the university has outside visitors we brag about your work”. I have also heard several of my professional colleagues, visiting faraway places and finding out how widely my work is recognized. I am sure that is true of the work of some other Saskatoon Muslims. A program that I established in 1968 also brought major economic benefits to the province. This program brought the prestige of having famous collaborators including a Nobel Prize finalist as Distinguished Professor of Brain Disorders Research to join the university as faculty at no cost to the university.

I am confident the future generations of Muslims will build on what the old timers started. Insha Allah

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