



Yukon Muslim Society

Term Report 2021 - 23

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President's Foreword

All praise is due to Allah alone, our beneficent creator, merciful sustainer, the eternal Lord of all that exists, the most sacred, our refuge and may peace and blessings be upon His beloved, final messenger and prophet, our master, our honor, mercy for all of creation, bearer of glad tidings, warner, reminder, the light-giving lamp; Muhammad ﷺ, may peace, blessings and mercy always shower upon him, his family, his companions and those who love and follow him.

When I first landed in Whitehorse, on the drive from the airport to my hotel, the Farsi (Persian) couplet of Amir Khusrau enveloped my mind like the sun that had enveloped the landscape in its ubiquitous warmth; "Agar firdaus bar roo-e zameen ast, Hameen ast-o hameen ast-o hameen ast." Meaning, "If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this." Although the 14th century Indian poet had rendered this couplet exclaiming the beauty of Kashmir that he was dazzled by, my exclamation on the other hand, infinitely crude in comparison to his but quite apt nevertheless, was, "Amir Khusrau should've seen the Yukon". One must experience the rugged majesty of this place to comprehend and appreciate why it's never just Yukon but "The Yukon". The use of the definite article is justified after driving for a couple of hours in the region, during Summer.

There is a profound spiritual allure to this place, conducive to spiritual wellbeing. Allah says in the Quran, "The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein, glorify Him and there is not a thing but glorifies His Praise. But you understand not their glorification. Truly, He is Ever Forbearing, Oft-Forgiving" (Al Isra' 17:44). In Surah Al Hajj (22:18), He says, "See you not that whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and Ad-Dawaabb [moving (living) creatures, beasts], and many of mankind prostrate themselves to Allah." No wonder the *Tasbih* (Glorification of Allah) by the magnificent mountains, the exuberant rivers, the vibrant flora and fauna has an impact on us oblivious humans, as though reminding us of our purpose of life. It is in this setting that I became involved with the Masjid and began my term of *Khidmah* (Service) as President of the YMS. May Allah bless all those who helped build this Masjid in the land of the midnight sun and may He bless those who strive to render it's functions as that of Al Masjid An-Nabwi (The Prophet's ﷺ Masjid).

I've always been a fervent advocate of community building and socio-economic welfare. Having worked with multiple Non-Profits in India, the US State Department and civil society groups, I wanted to leverage my experience and invigorate the Muslim community in Whitehorse. The first and foremost step was to define the Vision and Mission of the YMS. The Vision of the YMS was defined as working towards becoming "The ideal Islamic community, a force for good in Whitehorse". The Mission is "To build a community with Islam as it's ethos, striving towards becoming better together". Guided by the Vision and Mission we defined, the Board under my leadership has delivered multiple successful, impactful programs and events. We've broken new

ground with several achievements such as the first ever *Khatm* of the Holy Quran in *Taraweeh* during Ramadan, *Iftar* (Traditional breaking of the fast) with our brothers and sisters from other faiths and/or groups, sports tournaments, Islamic Calligraphic inscriptions inside the Masjid and many more that I'll describe in detail in the forthcoming sections.

The journey thus far hasn't been easy as any worth undertaking never is. A young family of 4, a full-time job, a part-time job and lofty strategic objectives for the YMS was challenging but immensely enriching and gratifying as well. Like they say, "No pressure, no diamonds". The only reason I'm mentioning this is to tell you that it is possible. You can do it too if the intentions are right and if you have the zeal. The Masjid can never merely be a hollow space with walls and a roof exclusively for prostrating and standing in prayer, but it is a clinic for spiritual rejuvenation, the epicenter of the community. Whenever the term "community" comes to mind it must first and primarily be construed as the "Muslim community". We can all rise together and soar higher if we lose the fetters of regional, national, linguistic, cultural identities, come together as an Ummah, acknowledging and accepting differences but uniting upon the immutable i.e., the Quran, the Sunnah and the Ijma' of the Ummah. I hope and pray that this community becomes like the community of Al Madinah Al Munawwarah during the time of the beloved ﷺ, a model truly worthy of replication and this will be possible when every initiative that stems from the YMS is rooted in seeking the pleasure of Allah and His beloved ﷺ alone, nothing else. The beloved ﷺ is reported by Abu Dharr to have said, "Allah Almighty says: Whoever comes with a good deed will have the reward of ten like it and even more. Whoever comes with an evil deed will be recompensed for one evil deed like it or he will be forgiven. Whoever draws close to Me by the length of a hand, I will draw close to him by the length of an arm. Whoever draws close to Me by the length of an arm, I will draw close to him by the length of a fathom. Whoever comes to Me walking, I will come to him running. Whoever meets Me with enough sins to fill the earth, not associating any partners with Me, I will meet him with as much forgiveness." (Sahih Muslim 2687).

Remember that we're all on a journey in this world, the Almighty says, "O humanity! Indeed, you are laboring restlessly towards your Lord, and will 'eventually' meet the consequences." (84:6). Everything we do is to seek His pleasure and to gain closeness to Him. Towards that end, a lot more has been planned and will be presented to you in detail. This flawed servant of Allah requests you to extend your support and come together as an Ummah for the collective good of the community.

Everything that was good, was from Allah and His beloved ﷺ. Only the flaws are mine.

JazakALLAH u Khairan Kaseer (May Allah reward you all immensely)

Israr Ahmed
President
YMS (2021 – 23)

Religious Services

Jum'uah (Friday) Prayer

Our largest weekly congregation is the Friday prayer when the Masjid is filled to capacity. On average, there are about 50-80 people every Friday and, on a holiday, the number increases to a 100 and more.

The performance of Jumu'ah *Khutbah* (Sermon), an integral component of the special Jumu'ah prayer was streamlined by incorporating best practices as per the Sunnah, the instruments of oratory, rhetoric, and curating, researching, analyzing relevant topics which the *Khutub* (Plural of *Khutbah*) are devised upon.

Additionally, those interested in learning the art of oratory and the methodology of preparing and delivering the *Khutub* were coached. The option is still available to those who wish to learn and deliver *Khutub*.



Taraweeh (Ramadan Special Prayer)

Alhumdulillah (Praise be to Allah), the *Taraweeh* has been performed in the Masjid ever since it's inception in 2018. During the term of the incumbent Board, the *Taraweeh* was embellished with proper, mellifluous recitation of the Holy Quran. This year, we made history with the first ever *Khatm* (Completion) of the Holy Quran in the *Taraweeh*, reviving a millennium old tradition in the Masjid. After each *Taraweeh*, a few pages from the *Tafseer* (Exegesis) of the Holy Quran were read.



Weekly *Halaqa* (Learning Circle)

Alhumdulillah (Praise be to Allah), in January 2023, we started the weekly *Halaqa* which is held every Sunday from 03:00 pm to 04:00 pm. The Hadith of the beloved ﷺ who said, "Allah says: 'I am as My slave thinks of me, and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in a gathering, I remember him within a gathering; and if he draws one span nearer to Me, I draw one cubit nearer to him, and if he draws one cubit nearer to Me, I draw a distance of two outstretched arms nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him running.'" (Hadith Qudsi, Bukhari) and another where he ﷺ said, "When a group of people assemble for the dhikr (Remembrance) of Allah, the angels surround them, Allah's mercy descends upon them, and Allah mentions them to those who are near Him." (Muslim 2699), were catalyzing inspirations behind this initiative.

The weekly *Halaqa* is an opportunity for the community members to

- Gather for the sake of Allah and His beloved ﷺ and talk about the Deen.
- Share religious experiences and challenges.
- Speak about the love of Allah and His beloved ﷺ.
- Ask questions.

Alhumdulillah, a workshop on Spiritual Wellness is currently ongoing in the *Halaqa* and the attendees are benefiting immensely.



Eid

Alhumdulillah, successful and hassle-free Eid prayers were organized (2 in 2021, 2 in 2022 and 1 in 2023 – *One more to be organized towards the end of the term*) on the occasions of Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha. There was a footfall of atleast 100 people, men, women and children, for each Eid prayer.

A big shoutout to the tireless and selfless volunteers passionate about serving Allah and the Ummah of His beloved ﷺ. Without their hard work behind the scenes, none of the events would've been possible. You know who you are. May Allah bless you, your families and your progeny as per His majesty.



Da'wah & Outreach

Iftar (Traditional breaking of the fast) With Non-Muslim Brothers & Sisters

Allah says in the Holy Quran, "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah." (3:110). The beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is reported by Suhayb Ibn Sinan to have said, "The best of you are those who feed others." (Musnad Ahmad 23926). Propelled by the commandment of Allah and buoyed by the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ, we organized the first ever *Iftar* (Traditional breaking of the fast) in Ramadan, with our brothers and sisters from other faiths and/or groups in Whitehorse.

In this age of heightened Islamophobia, rampant bigotry, stereotypes and misconceptions galore, such an initiative was a necessity. The walls of doubt, fear, animosity and confusion can only be dismantled through dialogue, conversations and opening up to the idea of learning. The invitation was for anyone who wanted to visit the Masjid and feast but limited to a maximum of 40 people due to paucity of space. The turnout was significant, and the evening was beautiful, filled with profound conversations and learning. Again, a huge shout out to all the volunteers who cooked large quantities for this event despite enduring the marathon-like fasts up here in the North. Your reward is with Allah alone. Thank you, from the bottom of our hearts.



Eid Al Fitr Celebrations

As the snow melted, the grass stretched exuberantly outwards to embrace the sun's rays, the flora flaunted its vibrant hues, ecstatically heralding the arrival of a dearly missed beloved; we welcomed the season of Spring that serendipitously coincided with Eid Al Fitr, an occasion of festivities and felicity.

Joy and knowledge are some of the blessings that only increase when shared. In the spirit of gratitude for the myriad blessings that the Almighty showers upon us throughout the year but more so in the month of Ramadan, we invited people from other faiths/groups to the Eid Al Fitr celebrations held in April 2023. An afternoon replete with a lip-smacking spread of Indian Subcontinental food (Prepared by our amazing catering partners – from within the community), wonderful conversations, a bouncy castle that kids absolutely loved, Bubble Suits for kids and adults alike, games of Tug of War and Ping Pong Ball Races made the event splendidly memorable.

This was the third successful Eid Celebration event for the second consecutive year.

Again, a heartfelt shoutout to all the volunteers who made this event a grand success. I can never get tired of expressing my profound gratitude to each and every single volunteer without whom the event simply wouldn't have been possible. May Allah bless you all abundantly.



Website Revamp & Logo Launch

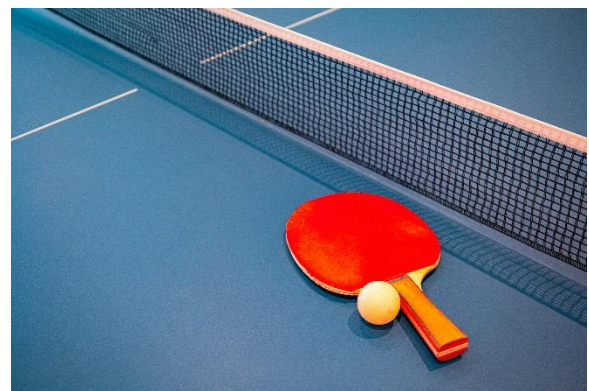
The YMS website was in a dilapidated state and a revamp was long overdue. There were also repeated requests from several members of the community to modify certain aspects of the website. An assessment of the scope of work revealed that the website essentially had to be rebuilt from scratch. This was no mean feat as the requirements had to be mulled, documented, analyzed with the vendor, negotiated followed by cyclic development of each component of the website and final deployment. The duration of the project was one month, and the work was done Pro Bono by our Tech partner, Fusion5ive (Based in Toronto). We're grateful to brother Ayaz who ensured the work was completed within the constrained timeline and as per the required quality. Do check our website out: <https://yukonmuslims.com/>

The website was checked off the To-Do list but there was one more thing that warranted remodeling, the YMS' logo. Brother Mustaali Raj, an Engineer turned designer, a herculean artist and an amazing person, based in Vancouver, volunteered to design the logo for us. After several weeks of musing and chalking potential designs, he finally gave me a presentation that I'll always fondly remember. He describes himself as a circle, living in a square, drawing triangles but for me, he's a truly blessed artist and we pray that Allah grants him every success in this world and the hereafter. Checkout his website <https://mustaaliraj.com/>



YMS Sports Tournament

A community that plays together, excels together. Islam emphasizes physical wellbeing alongside spiritual wellbeing. The Prophet ﷺ is reported by Abdullah Bin 'Amr Bin Al 'As to have said, "Your body has a right over you" (Sahih Al Bukhari 5199). There are several traditions about how the Prophet ﷺ enjoyed and encouraged sports. The companions of the Prophet ﷺ wrestled, participated in races, archery and played many other sports. It is poignant that most immigrant demographics are either averse or indifferent to the necessity of physical exercise. As a measure of encouraging sports, community engagement and strengthening, we're organizing the first ever YMS Sports Tournament. People from the community and outside have registered for sports such as Cricket, Table Tennis and Volleyball. The matches are being scheduled at the time of this writing.



Activities for Kids & Youth

The first ever Skiing lessons for kids were organized in the initial part of 2022 followed by a Snowshoeing event in March. These initiatives were taken in the spirit of “Yukonizing” kids in the community. The rationale was that kids from immigrant families usually don’t get adequate exposure to favorite local pastimes and recreational activities resulting in them feeling left out. Hence, measures must be taken to introduce them to the favorite local sports and recreational activities so that they do not miss out on all the fun. The kids loved skiing on the “Bunny Hill” and thoroughly enjoyed Snowshoeing.

A big shoutout to all the volunteers who helped in organizing these events.



In June 2022, a Glass Blowing workshop was organized for the kids and youth. Every kiddo got to craft their own glass art and take it home!



Philanthropy & Welfare

Fundraiser for Victims of the Earthquake in Syria & Türkiye

On February 6, 2023, a powerful earthquake hit southeast Turkey (officially the Republic of Türkiye) and the northwest region of war-torn Syria, leaving millions of people in urgent need of basic necessities like shelter, food, clean water, and sanitation. According to the WHO, an estimated 23 million people had likely been affected by the tragic earthquake. Winter only exacerbated their problems and the need for aid was acute. Acting as per the axiom that we must do what is within our capacity to help make the lives of others easier, we decided to raise funds for victims of the earthquake. Up here in the North, we may live in frigid conditions, but our hearts were, are and will always remain warm. This Fundraiser Lunch evoked the warm spirit of the Yukon, and people came together to lend a helping hand to those in desperate need.

A scrumptious spread of Indian Subcontinental and Middle Eastern cuisine was prepared by our amazing volunteers who braved the blustery, biting cold weather and yet again proved this community's mettle. Artists from Ontario also extended their support by inscribing names or short messages in sublime Arabic calligraphy for a fee. All proceeds went to the relief efforts.

Most of the people who came to support the cause, preferred to eat inside the Masjid resulting in beautiful, myth-busting, conversations about Islam. The event serendipitously became a source of Da'wah.

Alhumdulillah, we were able to raise \$33,500 (\$8,500 local donations + \$25,000 from the government). Additionally, at our representation, the government introduced immigration, employment and rehabilitation measures similar to that of Ukraine for victims of the earthquake in Syria and Türkiye.



Some more pictures from the Fundraiser



Wilaadah Program

Community building through service has been one of our integral principles in consonance with the prophetic tradition of *Khidmah* (Service). The beloved ﷺ said, "The merciful will be shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you." (At-Tirmidhi 1924). With this as our ethos, we began the Wilaadah Program; much needed help and a gift from the community to new parents and the child(ren).

The rationale of the program was defined as follows.

- The elation at the birth of a baby is a feeling almost all of us share when the wonderful news is broken. However, the toil and labor that is concomitant with postpartum care is mostly left entirely to the parents. Although the parents are primarily responsible for providing care, the community also has a role to play if it wants to rise to the level of an ideal Islamic community, one that Allah and his beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ want the Ummah to rise to. The Muslim community's demographic in Whitehorse almost entirely comprises of immigrants. Extrapolating this data sheds light on the following facts.
 - Most people do not have immediate family to avail much needed help during the postpartum period.
 - Most people will likely have to go on paternity and

maternity leaves resulting in financial belt-tightening at a time when expenses have increased. Yes, EI certainly helps but with the current skyrocketing inflation, more is better.

- The abject lack of Halal restaurants in town is a lament that a lot of us, especially the foodies, which means almost all of us, share. Caring for the newborn, the recuperating mum and cooking is a juggle that is neither fun nor feasible. This need, which ideally is fulfilled by close family and relatives, is left unaddressed.
- The increase in the influx of immigrants (Mostly young adults according to gov data) and Whitehorse increasingly becoming the destination for most of them warrants the initiation of such programs to cater to these dire needs and act as the cohesive force that binds us together as a Muslim Community.

Bottom line is that the community is a group of people that should be an extended family and thereby, helping each other out is not a favor but a moral and communal duty.

Overview of the program

As part of this program, willing members of the community will contribute to a one-time fund which will be gifted to the parents.

Either the parent(s) or any community member who learns about the birth can inform the YMS Board triggering an announcement that shall mark the start of the contribution drive. The contribution drive will be for a limited duration and specific to the family. There is neither a minimum nor a maximum amount, you can contribute the amount you want to.

The contributions will need to be made to the YMS, in the manner prescribed by the Board, that shall be responsible for disbursing the funds.

Cooked meals are another feature of this program. Along with the onset of the contribution drive, an announcement shall be made requesting and encouraging volunteers to take the responsibility of providing cooked food for the parents in a quantity that is sufficient for a day. Based on the number of volunteers, a roster would be set up to cater to the parents for a maximum period of 6 weeks.

The parent(s) could at any time inform the YMS Board to stop the meals in case they no longer want to avail this service.

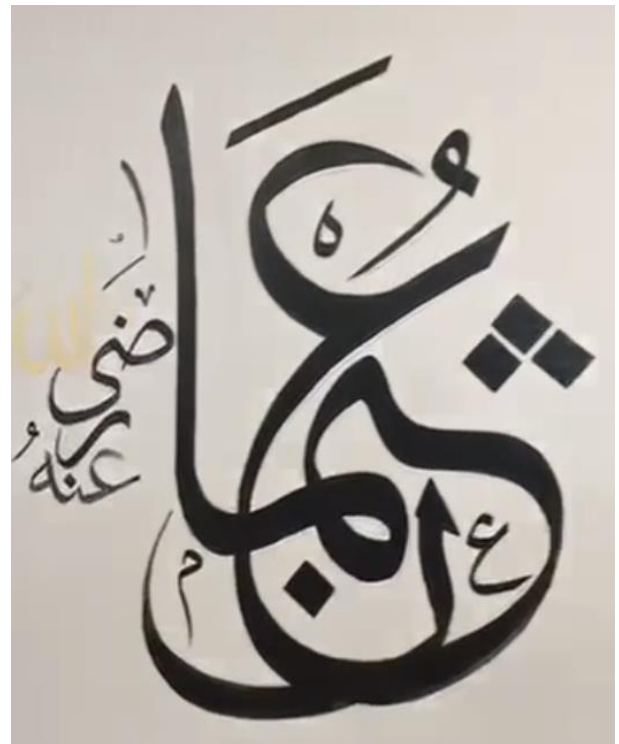
Alhumdulillah, one family was helped through the pilot Wilaadah Program.



Calligraphic Art in the Masjid

There is a proverb in Arabic that says, “The eye eats before the mouth”. The Masjid is the house of Allah, a sanctuary, a portal that leads one out of the bustle of the worldly grind and into a realm of peace and joy. According to a Sahih Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said that one of the 7 people who will be in the shade of Allah on the day of judgement when there shall be no shade but His, will be a man whose heart is attached to the Masaajid (Plural of Masjid) (Sahih Al Bukhari 660). Therefore, no effort must be spared to embellish the Masjid to ensure that the moment a person steps in, all the senses are nurtured. With this intention, we reached out to the renowned Canadian Islamic artist Salwa Najm who graciously agreed to fly up to Whitehorse and decorate the walls of the house of Allah here. Over the course of a week, she and her assistant Aasiyah, worked over 8 hours a day painting life onto the walls of the Masjid in the mesmerizing Thuluth script. After a week of hard work done with the utmost reverence and faith, the interior of the Masjid was illuminated with the verses of the Quran, the name of Allah, His beloved messenger ﷺ, and those of the rightly guided *Khulafaa* (Plural of Khalifa i.e., Caliph).

A huge shoutout to sisters Salwa and Aasiyah who did this sublime work pro bono (*Fee Sabeel Lillah* – In the path of Allah).



The Future

This is just the beginning of our journey and there are miles to go before we sleep. However, at every step of the way, we'll need your support. Following are some of the initiatives that we worked on and tried to roll out but couldn't due to several limitations. We hope the subsequent Boards undertake and implement these as they shall be humongously beneficial to the community.

- Madrasah (Atleast Quran Halaqas to begin with)
- Full-time qualified Imam
- Expansion of the Masjid (Preferably an upper floor that could be utilized for a library and youth recreation space)
- Support services for converts.
- Shariah Counselling Center
- Continuation of and improving on the work done by the incumbent Board

Jazakumallah Khairan Kaseer – May Allah bless you all abundantly!



Testimonials

"YMS incumbent board for the period 2021-2023 has done a great job. Alhamdulillah, we saw gatherings in every Eid. We were lucky to celebrate the festival to our friends here being away from our family thousands of kms away. Really, it's a great job to unite all the Muslims of the territory and share the joys among themselves. They tried to spread out Islam throughout the community. Spreading Islam in a western country is not an easy task but this board has done their level best to do that.

Jummah on every Friday has been conducted successfully. And the Qutbah of the jummah was meaningful to all of us. YMS board acted like it is not only working for the Muslim community but also sharing the news and views of Islam. Besides, different programs and events for the kids, fund raising for victims impacted by natural disasters were memorable events. I wish them to carry out these type of jobs in the future." – Brother Iftakhar Hossain

"The incumbent Board of the Yukon Muslim Society (YMS) has exemplified exceptional leadership during their term from 2021 to 2023. They have successfully revitalized the YMS website, creating a user-friendly platform that serves as a valuable resource for the community. Additionally, the Board's efforts in organizing various community events have fostered a strong sense of togetherness. Their commitment to bringing the community together is evident through initiatives such as organizing gatherings and fostering opportunities for connection. Notably, the Board has also shown great care for the younger members of the community by organizing enjoyable and engaging events like skiing activities. The YMS Board's dedication to enhancing community engagement and creating inclusive events demonstrates their commitment to the betterment of the Yukon Muslim community during their term." – Brother Naser Khan

"It is not easy to find words to describe what I have experienced from YMS Board for the past few months. I have been supremely impressed with the expertise, and quality of work of the YMS board. I'm really glad to be a part of this society where they help and care for Muslim ummah like, we conducted fundraising events for Turkey and other events like Eid and Ramadan celebrations. Being a part of these programs help me to gain a new family. All these events make me (especially as an immigrant) feel like home. Finally,

Yukon became a home away from home by being a part of this society. This board made me recognize that there is a lot more I can contribute to the Muslim society. We can together do much more and leave a mark in this society, thanks to the YMS board. Looking forward to more work from the YMS board." – Brother Nihal Neelambra

"I express my gratitude and admiration for the dedication and selfless service the Yukon Muslim Society (YMS) board members have demonstrated over the years. As a part of this community, I have witnessed the remarkable impact that their efforts have had on our spiritual growth.

Over the past few years, Friday's sermon has been a hallmark of quality content. Furthermore, the board members' commitment to community engagement and contribution to charitable causes is truly inspiring. The recent Eid celebration event involving people from interfaith and organizing a fundraiser for earthquake-affected people in Türkiye and Syria are just a few examples of this work.

I will be eagerly looking toward the future plans of the YMS to engage and empower our young generation with Islamic teachings and values.

I thank the board members for their dedication and the countless hours they have invested in serving our community. May Allah (SWT) reward them for noble efforts and grant them continued strength and wisdom." – Brother Abdul Hafeez

END
