The Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support & Integration (MRCSSI) is a not-for-profit, charitable anti-violence and social support agency promoting family safety and wellbeing within London’s diverse Muslim communities.
Executive Director

In 2018, our work and services have touched and impacted the lives of many vulnerable families and individuals who would otherwise fall through the cracks in the system, primarily due to barriers in accessing mainstream services.

- Our community-based programs continue to provide a safe space for newcomer children and youth, and their families, to support their wellbeing and resiliency and create a safe path for their positive integration.
- Our public education programs have engaged community members to address and raise awareness about gender-based violence.
- Our client service team has been able to continue responding to families with complex needs and critical situations. The team has been working tirelessly to accommodate anyone who has approached us for help despite limited resources for direct client services.
- Our Strengthening Families Program (SFP) entered its third year and we completed three successful cohorts with 37 families in 2018.
- Over the past several years, the MRCSSI has been trying to find the best practices and strategies to balance the growth and success of the community service aspect of our work with research which is essential to continue making progress into the future. Extensive discussion between management and the board has resulted in the concept of developing and establishing a Centre of Excellence. This would serve as a platform to disseminate evidence, expertise, and lessons learned to assist diverse Muslim and collectivist communities to build capacity for family safety, and strengthen service providers’ culturally-informed practices.

Research is an integral component of the work of the MRCSSI to inform our practice and programs, and examine gaps in services and service delivery. One of the most exciting new initiatives was our partnership with Changing Ways and Dr. Katreena Scott to work on adapting the Caring Dads program for Muslim communities. This project is being funded by Islamic Relief Canada. The culturally adapted version of the program will be launched simultaneously in Toronto, Canada and London, England on June 26, 2019.

Board Chairs Report

This year marks the beginning of a very crucial and exciting transitional period for the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration. It is a time to reflect back on the incredible journey that started in January 2009 with a grant from the Ministry of Attorney General of Ontario. Given a mandate to develop and support anti-violence strategies within the context of the family as well as the community, Executive Director Dr. Mohammed Baobaid tirelessly worked to develop and implement innovative culturally integrative services and responses. Over the past ten years the MRCSSI has established a reputation as a credible and highly effective organization with far-reaching impact. We are recognized locally, nationally and internationally as a leader in research, collaboration and service provision, through our unique and highly innovative programming. Our small team of pioneers has also grown into a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who work collaboratively in a number of areas including service delivery, community program development, facilitation, and research.

So many individuals have been instrumental in supporting the Centre’s journey thus far, and facilitating this new period of stability and growth. This last year, our staff and Board of Directors worked very closely with Rhonda Hallberg, first in developing a framework and plan of action to move the agency forward, and then in putting that plan of action into motion. Rhonda’s contributions, initially as a consultant and then as the Centre’s Acting Managing Director cannot be overstated. Rhonda was able to insightfully identify areas of growth for the agency, and worked closely with staff in developing and implementing the necessary systems to move forward. Rhonda was also very generous with her time in assisting the Board of Directors map out a transition plan that would ultimately lead us to selecting our permanent Managing Director. We are deeply appreciative to Rhonda for her service and support, and look forward to future collaborations.

We also say goodbye to two long time Board of Directors members, Razia Hassan and past Chair Melikie Joseph. Razia gave generously of her time and her talents and was a stalwart supporter of our organization. Melikie led with integrity, passion and an unwavering commitment to serve. Her ability to build consensus and ensure that all voices are heard was deeply appreciated by all members of the Board of Directors. We will miss her energy and charisma, and wish her all the very best, knowing that she will be an ongoing advocate for the Centre and its work.

Our staff and volunteers continue to inspire us with their unwavering commitment to serve and uplift some of the most vulnerable members of our community. We see and wish to recognize the deep impact you have on a daily basis in the lives of youth, women, men and children. We hope that you are as excited as we are about the possibilities for innovative growth and development that lie ahead.

Our continued programming and services would not be possible without the support of our funders and donors. We wish to acknowledge both our funders and the many individual donors for their continued support.

We look forward to the year ahead, and sharing it with you all.

We would love to extend a warm invitation to each of you to join us on Saturday, September 21 to celebrate our 10 year journey and kick off the road ahead! We look forward to an evening celebrating a decade of service to London’s diverse Muslim community.

Barbara MacQuarrie and Mihad Fahmy
Co-Chairs of the Board of Directors

Dr. Mohammed Baobaid
About MRCSSI

Mission
MRCSSI provides culturally integrative services that help individuals, families and communities to overcome challenges and ensure safety and well-being.

Vision
Safe, strong and healthy individuals and families in caring communities.

Areas of Focus
- Prevention
- Intervention
- Capacity Building
- Research

Guiding Values
- Dignity and Respect
- Support and Empowerment
- Collaboration and Consultation
- Innovation and Creativity
- Care and Compassion

Approach
All services at MRCSSI are grounded in our Culturally Integrative Model. This approach works to address the unique role played by one’s context of migration, integration, culture and value/belief systems. Through integrating best practices and embedding them within collectivist cultural norms, MRCSSI develops evidence based curriculum to meet the needs of families and individuals from collectivist cultures, those struggling with integration and those migrating from conflict zones. Services and responses are shaped through a family-focused, strengths-based and collective approach.

Meet Our Team

Executive Director
Mohammed Baobaid, PhD
Mohammed has a doctoral degree from the institute of Psychology at the University of Erlangen Nuremberg in Germany. For 30 years he has conducted research on families and children and youth at risk of violence and developing culturally appropriate responses in Yemen and Canada.

Manager of Client Services
Eugene Trembley
Eugene has 40 years of experience in social work and multicultural practice in two provinces. He is responsible for supporting staff who are caring for our community members who are struggling.

Manager of Evidence Informed Programs
Sahar Atalla, MB8Ch, MSc, MPH
Sahar holds a Bachelor’s degree in Surgery and Internal Medicine, and a Masters degrees in Public Health from Western University. She uses her coordinating and facilitating skills in community-based projects, outreach activities, and promoting integration strategies among newcomer communities.

Manager of Public Education and Community Programs
Yasmin Hussain
Yasmin loves chocolate, wishes she could work out at least 4 times a week, and values relationships and stories. Working with and learning from young people, families, colleagues and community partners brings joy. Yasmin is passionate about participatory models of social action, as such strategies expand the space of who participates in the development of solutions to issues impacting communities.
Client Services

Our Social Support and Integration services were in high demand this year and our staff team increased to meet this demand. We experienced a 17% increase in total requests for services, as well as an increase in cases related to child protection, mental health supports and family conflict and/or violence.

- Support services for individuals & families
  - Short-term intervention & response
  - System Navigation & Referrals
  - Advocacy
  - Consultation

- Counselling services for individuals & families
  - Assessment & development of service plans
  - Longer-term intervention & support
  - Attend meetings with mainstream service providers in the community and in the family home.
  - Coordination of service supports

- Consulting & Training
  - Through our consulting services, we enhance the ability of other organizations and agencies to better understand families from ethnocultural communities so as to respond to family safety issues in the most appropriate manner.

Evidence Informed Programs

Evidence Informed programs (EIPs) are programs run by conducting research in relevant fields and putting together a comprehensive program to tackle the issue at hand that needs attention. At MRCSSi we run two culturally adaptive multi-week Evidence Informed Programs: the Strengthening Families Program and Caring Dads.

Strengthening Families Program

Strengthening Families Program is a 14-week skill development program, for children and aged 6 to 17 and their families, to attend together. MRCSSI delivers a culturally adapted version of the Strengthening Families Program in Arabic to newcomer families from conflict zone areas.

- In 2018, we delivered 3 successful cohorts of the Strengthening Families Program. One of which with families from the Yazidi community.
- 75% of the 37 enrolled families in the 3 cohorts successfully completed the program
- The main presenting issues amongst the 3 cohorts were behavioural issues at schools, parent-child conflict, poor parental supervision and settlement/socialization issues.
- We hosted three reunion sessions for the families who completed the program. The sessions were held 6 and 12 months after completion of each cohort. The core concepts of the program were revisited and emergent needs were dealt with as needed.
- In an effort to meet the needs of some of the families that required additional support, referrals were done to services of agencies such as Vanier Children’s Services and Craigwood Children, Youth and Family Services.

Caring Dads

Caring Dads is a group intervention program for men who are struggling with their children, at risk of being abusive or have abused, neglected, or exposed their children to domestic violence.

The Caring Dads curriculum works with fathers to increase fathers’ awareness and help fathers improve their parenting skills to become more child-centred. It also helps them improve their relationship and their communication with their children and partners.

Caring Dads is an evidence-based 17-week program intended to help fathers improve their parenting skills to become more child focused. It also helps fathers improve their relationship and their communication with their children and partners. In 2018, for the first time, Caring Dads have been culturally adapted to be offered in the Arabic language. Five fathers completed the program and were actively involved in discussions and learning. These fathers expressed satisfaction with the curriculum and acknowledged the program impacted change in their attitudes and the way they treat their children and partners. One attendee even claimed “the program has changed my life.”

This program was run in collaboration with Changing Ways and is funded by Islamic Relief Canada.
Public Education & Capacity Building strategies facilitate opportunities to address and respond to gender-based and family violence through community-based education and leadership strategies. Our work also strengthens the capacities of Muslim faith and community institutions, and mainstream social service organizations, to respond to gender-based and family violence and support the safety of girls and women.

Throughout 2018 MRCSSI’s work included the development of community education and awareness campaigns, community education workshops and presentations, as well as the Young Men Leading Change program.

Children & Youth
Throughout 2018, MRCSSI engaged and built relationships with 71 high-school aged newcomer youth. 49 unique high-school aged female and male youth were actively engaged participants or leaders within programs and projects. During this same time, MRCSSI carried out programs for elementary aged girls both in school and after-school and in community with 64 elementary-aged newcomer children. In addition, MRCSSI was part of Thames Valley District School Board’s (TVDSB) Newcomer Summer School program July 2018. A team of 14 young people facilitated spoken word and creative writing activities with approximately 110 elementary-aged newcomer students. MRCSSI also facilitated two Leadership groups at London Islamic School with 21 students grades 4 to 8.

Parent Workshops
MRCSSI developed and facilitated 18 workshops for newcomer adults and parents engaging a total of 79 unique individuals. These interactive workshops were facilitated in Arabic and in collaboration with Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) and/or community partners, including London Cross Cultural Learner’s Center and LUSO Community Services. Workshops created a space for exploring parenting in a new country, integration experiences and stressors, as well as parent self-care. Parent feedback identified that workshops addressed topics relevant to their lives, helped them to feel more connected to the school and staff, community agencies and peers, supported their sense of well-being, and provided them with helpful information and strategies.

MRCSSI is excited to be a partner on this 3-year collaborative provincial project led by Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW). In London, Young Men Leading Change is carried out in partnership with Anova.

Men Leading Change is a 12-week youth leadership program that connects racialized and newcomer men (ages 15-25) with community leaders working to prevent gender-based violence (GBV). This project fits into MRCSSI’s community education strategy addressing gender-based violence and promoting healthy relationships by facilitating opportunities for meaningful action. Young Men Leading Change program creates opportunities for young men to learn about gender-based violence and its impacts on girls and women, as well as develop strategies to further raise awareness with peers.

This project started in the fall of 2018. Anova and MRCSSI reached out to the YMCA YMAP program to host a cohort. In October 2018, the first cohort reached 23 high-school aged newcomer male youth, with 13 participants actively attending each week.

Family Visits
This is one of our favourite projects of 2018! MRCSSI partnered with Eagle Heights Public School/Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) to pilot a Family Visits process as part of the Forward Together project. This project focused on supporting newcomer students in JK and SK in their learning and belonging and highlighted the value of partnership and collaboration.

Eagle Heights Public School has 8 JK and SK classrooms with a high number of newcomer students in each class. The Family Visit process was modeled after best practice guidelines put forth by family engagement expert Dr. Debbie Pushor. Throughout October 2018, teachers and Early Childhood Educators from each of the 8 JK and SK classrooms visited 3 students and their parents. In total, 18 JK/SK educators visited 24 families at home together with staff of MRCSSI, who served as cultural brokers and interpreters. The Family Visit process positively impacted everyone involved. The Family Visits opened up opportunities for parents and educators to interact with one another outside of the classroom setting in an informal manner, inviting new conversations and pathways for relationship building. The positive relationship dynamics that were seeded within the family visit strengthened educator/student and educator/parent relationships and interactions at school. This project demonstrates how educators/schools, families and community agencies can, and need to, work together in order to support newcomer children in their resilience and success.
Families come to MRCSSI when they are experiencing family breakdown from family or couple’s conflict to separation support and family violence intervention. Many of our clients are suffering post migration stressors and are struggling to integrate. This include economic concerns, unemployment, housing issues and tenant conflicts, legal issues and social isolation. Due to complex traumas suffered during their migrations, our clients are experiencing increased risk of addiction and mental health concerns. This is also exhibited through children’s behavioural issues and emotional issues.

Our clients range from a number of countries including Afghanistan, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Myanmar, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. They have experienced complex traumas as part of their migration journeys which have resulted in increased risk for family conflict and violence, integration struggles and mental health problems.

Primary Case Type

- Family Conflict or Violence: 23%
- Struggling with Integration: 26%
- Mental Health: 30%

Number of cases
- Total: 647
- Family: 188
- Female identified: 62
- Male identified: 17
- Country of origin: Iraq: 41
- Country of origin: Syria: 19
- Organization consultations: 107

Country of origin:
- Iraq: 188
- Syria: 62

Female identified:
- Total: 647
- Iraq: 41
- Syria: 19

Male identified:
- Total: 107
- Iraq: 41
- Syria: 19

Organization consultations:
- Total: 107
- Iraq: 41
- Syria: 19

Revenue:
- Grants: 805,928
- Donations and fundraising: 56,001
- Consulting: 53,227
- Employment incentives: 17,401

Expenses:
- Salaries and wages: 588,380
- Contractor fees: 104,934
- Rent: 80,196
- Consulting: 64,648
- Programming meals: 34,032
- Office: 33,607
- Professional fees: 21,933
- Travel: 19,614
- Insurance: 10,058
- Advertising and promotion: 7,891
- Utilities: 5,393
- HST: 5,036
- Amortization: 4,482
- Interest and bank charges: 1,708
- Conference: 50

Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues over Expenditures from Operations: (49,405)

Major Funders
- Public Safety Canada
- Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
- Neighbours, Friends and Families
- United Way
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Supports for Success Grant
- Islamic Relief Canada
- London Muslim Mosque
- Law Foundation of Ontario
- Caring Dad’s Program

“In our opinion, except for the possible effects of the matters described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion paragraph, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration as at December 31, 2018, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year ended December 31, 2018 in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.”