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Najat Boughaba is identified as CIC's Quebec spokeswoman and Samira Laouni as CIC's Quebec project manager

Original address: <http://www.cicnow.com/ar/opeds.php?id=12438>

Author: Elyse Amend

Source: Le Messenger Lachine & Dorval, March 4, 2008

The article was reproduced by the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) on its own website on March 11, 2008.

Highlights:

In an event organized by the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC), in partnership with the Association Al-Arabiya, Najat Boughaba was identified as the CIC's Quebec spokeswoman and Samira Laouni as CIC Quebec's project manager. Bloc Quebecois MP for Ahuntsic, Maria Mourani took part to the event and Souad Bounakhla was identified as a spokesperson for the Association Al-Arabiya.

Original Title: Honouring Women Regardless of Religion, Race, or Language

Acceptance and solidarity were two themes on the menu at a women's-only luncheon organized by the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC), in partnership with the Association Al-Arabiya, early last month in celebration of International Women's Day on March 8.

The gathering at the Nuits de Mosaques restaurant in Cartierville was attended by women of all ethnicities and backgrounds who come together to share each other's differences and common threads.

"The Canadian Islamic Congress wanted to organize this day to honour women," said Dr. Najat Boughaba, the CIC's Quebec spokeswoman and animator of the event. "The objective is really to meet and talk."

And that is exactly what took place throughout this afternoon of good food and enriching conversation. After introducing the guests - which included municipal, provincial, and federal politicians, activists, volunteers, artists, and other community figures - Dr. Boughaba recapped some of key happenings of the past year, including HEMA Quebec blood drives, Black History Month celebrations, the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on reasonable accommodation, and a

memorable February 2007 visit to Herouville - the small Quebec town that adopted a controversial code of conduct some deemed racist and targeting the Muslim faith. Issues surrounding the wearing of veils and hijabs, which was spotlighted by the media after Herouville and the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, inevitably came up.

"I know that a woman who wears a veil has difficulties," said Dr. Samira Laouni, CIC Quebec's project manager. "But all women from all walks of life, from everywhere, have problems. It doesn't matter [whether they stem from] political beliefs, colour, religion, nationality. We are all women and we have to rise above all of that ... I personally am ready to work together with everyone to do so."

Bloc Quebecois MP for Ahuntsic, Maria Mourani, took the opportunity to say a few words on the issue of stereotypes.

"The image of a Muslim woman has become that of 'the victim'," she said. "We have to break these general stereotypes. It's up to us to change these things. We need to get other cultures to understand us, and work to understand them." Ms Mourani added there is still much work to be done to achieve equality between men and women.

In addition to the presentations and dialogue that took place throughout the luncheon, many guests also enjoyed having their hands decorated by a henna artist; admired traditional costumes from across the Arab world during a fashion show; and danced and laugh with friends, both old and new.

"I think what we're doing today is very important," said Souad Bounakhla of the Association Al-Arabiya. "We and the CIC wanted to work together. We are both concerned with women's issues and it is always good to work with groups who have the same goals ... It's really to show that we are here, and that we are implicated in women's issues, and that we are working towards improvement."

(This article was edited for the Canadian Islamic Congress Friday Magazine.)



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HONOURING WOMEN REGARDLESS OF RELIGION, RACE, OR LANGUAGE

by Elyse Amend - Le Messager Lachine, Dorval QC — March 4, 2008

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