

Canada's largest Muslim youth group brings 'Explore Islam' campaign to Bancroft



By Nate Smelle

As part of a cross-Canada tour, members of Canada's largest Muslim youth group visited Bancroft on Sunday, March 19. Stopping in some 1,000 cities and municipalities, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association's nation-wide Explore Islam campaign aims to engage Canadians by giving people a chance to ask Muslims about Islam. According to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's website, the association was founded by Muslims who believe in the Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. Founded in 1889, the community was formed as a revival movement within Islam. With the intention of ending religious wars, condemning bloodshed, and restoring morality, justice, and peace, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad acknowledged the noble teachings of great religious founders and saints, including: Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tzu, and Guru Nanak. Emphasizing Islam's core teachings of peace, love, justice, and the sanctity of life, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community now spans over 200 nations with membership exceeding tens of millions. Hassaan Shahid was one of the association's members who brought the Explore Islam initiative to Bancroft. He said the campaign was initiated by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association in recognition of the need to remove misconceptions about Islam in remote areas across Canada; and, to show people "the true and peaceful teachings of this beautiful religion." "It is important for the Muslim Community because it is a part of our religion to demonstrate to people the beautiful teachings of Islam," Shahid told Bancroft This Week. "We believe it is very important for others because it will help build a more cohesive and united society in which we celebrate our multicultural and religious backgrounds." Shahid said the goals of the campaign are simply to remove any misunderstandings that may exist about the faith of Islam. In order to accomplish this, he said they are connecting with Canadians, and teaching them about the religion. In addition, Shahid said the campaign is also a way for their members to learn what matters most to Canadians; and, find out what the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association can do to offer their support. Most importantly, he said it is important for people to understand that Islam is a religion of peace at all levels within society. Acknowledging how Islam can help people attain personal spiritual peace along with societal and international peace, Shahid said the initiative was well-received by the local community members they spoke with in Bancroft. While carrying campaign signs and distributing flyers to local residents, he said they were able to engage with local residents in two-way dialogue that allowed them to experience and learn from their perspectives. Those interested in learning more about the Explore Islam campaign can visit: www.exploreIslam.ca.