



Farid Ahmed: A Pioneer Muslim Passes Away

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One of Ottawa Muslims' prominent pioneers, Dr Farid Ahmed, passed away on November 16, 2021.

A Janazah salaah, led by Imam Muhammad Suliman was held at the Ottawa Mosque on Friday, Nov 19th, followed by a chilly grave-side funeral service, led by Hafidh Abu Abdallah Jama, at the Pinecrest Cemetery.

Br Farid was a physicist, who served Canada for decades as a scientist with the National Research Council.

Most importantly for Ottawa Muslims, he was a devoted Muslim community leader during most of his life.

“His dedication to volunteer work in the cause of Ottawa Muslims and Ottawa Muslim Association (OMA), really inspired me from early 70s to try following his example,” says Br Akram Khan, himself a pioneer and former OMA Trustee, Sunday School Principal, and Election Committee Chair.

Br Farid was one of a group of OMA and Ottawa Mosque founders--- brothers and very dedicated sisters.

Major challenges during the early construction stage of the mosque faced them. But they prevailed.

One of them was a controversial plan to move the location of the mosque from its present address to Baseline Rd and Woodroffe Ave, *after* the basement had been built, says another pioneer and former OMA Council of Trustee Chair, Dr Syed Misbah Ahmed (not related to Br Farid Ahmed.)

Opinions differed when critical decisions had to be made in the early stage between the then president, Dr Hussein Gawad, Br Misbah, and Br Farid.

It led Br Misbah to resign in protest when contracts for dome roofing and windows manufacturing were not at first approved.

When it was resolved, "The project management was fully transferred to me and project coordination (was assigned) to Farid," says Br Misbah.

"It was all done in good understanding and with a lot of respect to one another," he adds.

Br Misbah praised Br Farid with whom he "worked hand in hand from the beginning."

Br Farid helped in the incorporation of OMA in 1965, and was one of the four signatories of OMA's Charter of Incorporation.

OMA's property at the City Registry was originally in their individual names as trustees. Much later, Br Misbah undertook the challenging work of removing their names from the City Registry Office and having it registered in the name of the OMA Council of Trustees.

Br Farid was also one of the elders who prepared and got the General Body to approve OMA's first Draft Constitution.

He, and his fellow elders, was involved in the procurement of the glass chandelier, for the main hall of the mosque, from Czechoslovakia.

He attended meetings at the Egyptian Embassy to hire the Al-Azhar University scholar, Dr Taufiq Shahin, as the first Imam of the Ottawa Mosque.

Through Imam Shahin the impressive wooden-sculptured Minbar, gracing the main hall, was donated from Egypt.

It was Br Farid who actually encouraged Br Akram to take over as Coordinator of the OMA Sunday School where he served as a principal until 2019, he recalls.

Fittingly, it was his eulogy about Br Farid that was read during the Friday congregation at the at the janazah.

He served several times as OMA's president. In 1981 when he was re-elected again as president, he was tasked with forming an election

committee. He co-opted Br Akram as a member. Br Akram ended up chairing the committee for several elections as a volunteer after that.

Br Farid served OMA over the years through often controversies within the Board and Trustee Council or with the community.

“I had observed his exemplary patience in dealing with people with very offensive behaviours,” says Br Akram.

He once said, in my (the writer’s) own presence, “It’s a thankless job.”

A quiet, soft spoken, smiling man, Br Ahmed was keen on overseeing OMA’s development, including appointing a new imam, always taking a strong stand on key decisions.

He advocated the preservation of Muslims’ positive public image. He felt that before anyone ran for the volunteer, but elective, post on the Board, he or she, had to be someone who had been here for some time and knows enough about Ottawa before joining the Board.

I recall him asking, when a prospective candidate is being considered, “What does he know about our community?”

When it came to selecting a new imam in the latter part of OMA’s growth, he cautioned, “We don’t want trouble makers.”

In the early years, when there were only a few Muslim in Ottawa, some Muslim newcomers to the city said he was one of the first they approached.

Probably, because in the old days of searching for names in the alphabetically-listed phone books, his surname, Ahmed, helped as it was among the first to appear.

Some, like long-time Ottawa Muslim activist Br Idris Biin-Tahir and former OMA president Br Ahmed Ibrahim, have credited him with advising them in their early settlement in Ottawa.

Thanks to the pioneering group to which he belonged, the Ottawa Mosque is today a landmark in the National Capital Region and their legacy is the recognition of the Muslim presence here.

Ottawa Muslims owe all of them a deep gratitude for their work.

His funeral was attended by Br Farid's family, OMA Board Member Adam Odwar, Br Ibrahim, Br Akram, Br Ben-Tahir, and OMA Funeral Caretaker Br Abdul-Rasheed Hussain, among others.

Br Faid was a family man and is survived by his spouse, a son, a daughter, and grandchildren.

Alhamdulillah, Dr Farid Ahmed was 90. We pray to Allah to bless his soul and to heal his family with patience.

*Zulf M Khalfan is a former editor of the **OMA Newsletter**, a two-term OMA Board member, and former Chair of OMA's Joint Board-Council Committee.*