



photo: E. Aboud family private collection. Courtesy Centre d'histoire de Montréal and the exhibition "Min Zamaan"—Since Long Ago: The Syrian-Lebanese Presence in Montreal.

Syrian-Lebanese immigrants Faris and Yusuf Aboud in their dry-goods shop, "E. Aboud," on the corner of Craig and Saint-Urbain Streets in Montreal, ca. 1912. The brothers opened their store in 1908.

The Centre d'histoire de Montréal is holding an exhibition called "Min Zamaan"—Since Long Ago: The Syrian-Lebanese Presence in Montreal Between 1882 and 1940. Running from October 10, 2002, to May 25, 2003, the exhibition is organized by Dr. Brian Aboud. For more information, visit: www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/chm/engl/exptempa.shtm

Flourishing in a new home

Today, there are over 250,000 Lebanese in Canada. Besides Montreal, other major Lebanese communities are in Ontario, particularly in Ottawa (and across the Ottawa River in Gatineau, Quebec), Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor and London. There are large communities as well in Edmonton (Alberta) and Nova Scotia.

Like the first Syrian-Lebanese immigrants who were in business for themselves, the new influx of post-civil war Lebanese immigrants have set up restaurants in every major city in Canada, with Arabic and French or English signs advertising *shawarma* and *felafel* sandwiches.

In many cases the first wave of immigrants never returned to their homeland. In contrast, subsequent generations have maintained strong ties with Lebanon: they send substantial remittances to family, raise funds for charity and return frequently on vacation. Satellite and digital cable television and inexpensive phone cards have made it possible for most

Lebanese immigrants to keep in regular contact with Lebanon in a way that was impossible for the early newcomers. There are economic ties too, with billboard signs in Beirut advertising merchandise "made in Canada" and shops carrying clothes "made in Montreal."

Lebanese immigrants have created strong community links within Canada as well. There are numerous Arabic-language newspapers published across Canada, including several in Montreal with articles written in both French and Arabic. The first Syrian-Greek Orthodox church in Canada was built in Montreal in 1910, and the first mosque in Canada, al-Rashid, was built by Lebanese immigrants in Edmonton in 1938.

The National Council on Canada-Arab Relations is a network founded in 1985 with input from Montreal's Lebanese community. Based in Ottawa, the Council works with government, the private sector and community organizations to promote awareness of the Arab world and of

the expanding commercial, scientific, educational and cultural connections between Canadian and Arab institutions.

In area, Lebanon is only a little over the size of Edmonton. Its population (as of 2001) is 3.6 million, but many more Lebanese live outside their homeland, on every continent, than within its borders. Canada is among the many countries around the world where Lebanese immigrants have forged a new life for themselves. In doing so they have enhanced our cultural mosaic and added to the vitality of our Francophone community. 🍁

(See box, p. 19)

This article is based on research by: Dr. Brian Aboud ("A Truer Reflection: Canadians of Arab Origin: Concerns and Contributions," in *Canadian Labour Congress Anti-Racism and Human Rights Bulletin*, Issue 3, December 10, 2001); Dr. Baha Abu-Laban ("The Lebanese in Montreal," in *The Lebanese in the World*, 1992); Mrs. Jessie Amery, London, Ontario; Dr. Sarah Gualtieri, Loyola University, New Orleans, U.S.A.; and Peter Leney ("Annie Midlige, Fur Trader," in *The Beaver*, June/July 1996).