Annual conference program announced

The Association for Bahá’í Studies–North America warmly invites you to attend its 36th Annual Conference, to be held at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montréal, Canada, over the weekend of 9–12 August 2012. The theme of this year’s conference is “The Vision of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for North America,” in honour of the 100th anniversary of His visit. All are invited to explore this theme from multiple perspectives through a series of plenary talks, and by participating in smaller simultaneous breakout sessions where exploring detailed ideas with greater participation is possible. In addition to theme-related sessions, the conference breakout sessions always include a diverse and engaging range of topics (Read the conference Theme Statement at http://www.bahai-studies.ca/statement).

This year’s plenary programme reflects upon the implications of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit from multiple perspectives.

Douglas Martin opens the plenary sessions with his own review of the significance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit, drawing on his training as an historian and his extensive years of service to the Faith as a member of the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly and the Universal House of Justice, and director-general of the Bahá’í International Community’s Office of Public Information at the Bahá’í World Centre in Haifa.

Friday morning’s programme is a reflection on contemporary social issues and their changes over the past 100 years. Louise Mandell, Queen’s Counsel, one of Canada’s leading thinkers on Aboriginal rights and law, will consider the changing place of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society. Following her talk, Dr. June Manning Thomas addresses inner city poverty, Dr. Mina Yazdani will speak on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s guidance on the process of political change, specifically with the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911), and Chief

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Douglas White III, the spiritual dimensions of the struggle for equality and justice for Indigenous peoples, in a panel moderated by Dr. Roshan Danesh.

On Saturday, a panel of educators considers ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s vision of spiritual education in the context of His visit to Montréal. Professor Luc Bégin, a prominent Quebec academic and an advisor to the Government of Quebec on questions of ethics, joins professors Claire Lapointe and Lyse Langlois. Dr. Robert Henderson, management consultant, diversity training executive, and member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, explores the changes in thought and practice on diversity and models of unity. The 30th Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture, will be delivered this year by sociologist Dr. Shapour Rassekh who will elucidate on assumptions about the purpose and meaning of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to North America.

On Sunday morning, the Bahá’í community’s response to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit is explored. Historian Robert Stockman addresses “What ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit teaches us,” followed by several examples of the profound changes within the community. Journalist and author Patricia Verge will speak on the history of Jim and Melba Loft, the first Aboriginal believers in Canada, and discuss with Bob Watts, their grandson and a prominent Aboriginal leader and administrator, the collaborative process of writing their story. Dr. Louis Venters, historian, will trace the process of reshaping race relations and the discourse on race in the South Carolina Bahá’í community of the early 1900s.

Member of Continental Board of Counsellors, Dr. Ann Boyles will also address the conference, and the Association is pleased to screen portions of the film, Luminous Journey.

Hotel and Registration

Conference registration and hotel information are available on the ABS website: <www.bahai-studies.ca>. For further inquiries, please contact the Association for Bahá’í Studies, 34 Copernicus St., Ottawa, ON, Canada K1N 7K4; tel.: 613-233-1903; fax: 613-233-3644; e-mail: abs-na@bahai-studies.ca. Registration Fees: After July 31st registration fees will be charged at the on-site rate.

Hotel reservations must be made directly with the conference hotel, Fairmont Queen Elizabeth, 900 Rene- Levesque West, Montréal, QC H3B 4A5. To book your room, please call the Reservations Department at 514-861-3511; or call toll-free from North–America at 1-800-441-1414.

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The ABS Bulletin (ISSN 0840-6138) is published quarterly by the Association for Bahá’í Studies, a nonprofit scholarly organization with 1833 international open memberships and 113 institutional memberships. The Association promotes scholarship on all aspects of the Bahá’í Faith; holds conferences and seminars on promising research fields; develops courses, lectureships, and other formal presentations relating Bahá’í principles to scholarly research fields; and publishes books, as well as the refereed Journal of Bahá’í Studies.

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Web site: www.bahai-studies.ca
Mention the Association for Bahá’í Studies to receive the special conference rate. Room rates are $139 CDN single/double. Additional room occupants will be charged $20 per night. There will be no charge for children up to and including the age of 18 years who share with their parents. Maximum occupancy per room is 4 persons. These rates are guaranteed only until July 27 2012. Reservations made after the cut-off date will be based on availability at the Hotel’s prevailing rates. The conference rates are extended to four days before and after the conference dates.

**Visit to the Shrine of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá**

Take advantage of your stay in Montréal to visit the only Bahá’í Shrine in the West, the Maxwell home. This sacred spot is unique in the world, since it is the only Bahá’í shrine outside of the Holy Land and those places in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey where the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh have resided or sojourned. Even though ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed in other homes in Europe and America, the Maxwell home in Montréal is the only place officially designated a “Shrine.” It was therefore a great honour and privilege conferred upon Canada and the city of Montréal. The Shrine will have extended visiting hours over the conference period and one day before and after the conference dates. Contact and visiting hour information can be found at www.bahaimontreal.org.

**Faculty/Student Workshop: Scholarship in the Context of the Plans**

A faculty/student workshop on scholarship in the context of the plans is scheduled for Thursday. It will offer a forum to learn and consult about aspects of Bahá’í scholarship and service most relevant to faculty and students, and an opportunity to devise strategies for possible implementation on campuses. Interactive workshops are dedicated to learning about the relationship between scholarship and the Covenant, the nature of learning, the place of scholarship in the processes of growth and core activities, and enhancing the role of campus groups to become forums to begin learning about “participation in the prevalent discourses of society.”

**SIG Circle**

The Special Interest Groups of the Association will hold informal discussion sessions this year on Friday, August 10, from noon to 2:00 p.m. At the SIG Circle event, the SIGs will organize display tables and provide opportunities for discussions with interested members.

**Arts**

Artistic presentations are integrated throughout the ABS conference, including the devotional programs. There will be an evening program devoted to the arts as well as “After hours” sessions with impromptu musical performances.

**Persian Sessions**

Special session will be conducted in Persian with Dr. Shapour Rassekh during the conference.

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**Children’s Conference**

Be sure to register your children for the educational Children’s and Junior Youth Program at the annual conference. The Children/Junior Youth conference will include speakers from the main conference as well as other activities addressing the conference theme. Important note to parents: Children must be preregistered by 31 July 2012.

**Conference Program Updates**

For the latest conference updates, and to download the full conference program, please visit the ABS website at <www.bahai-studies.ca>.
New Incumbent at the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace

Professor Hoda Mahmoudi is the new incumbent of the Bahá’í Chair for World Peace within the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland. The Bahá’í Chair—whose founding in 1993 was inspired by the Universal House of Justice’s statement entitled The Promise of World Peace—is an endowed academic program dedicated to advancing interdisciplinary study of, and discourse on, major issues of global peace.

The first two holders of the Bahá’í Chair were Professor Suheil Bushrui (1993-2006) and Professor John Grayzel (2006-2011).

Prior to assuming the Bahá’í Chair professorship in July 2012, Dr. Mahmoudi—who holds a Ph.D. in Sociology, an M.A. in Educational Psychology, and a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Utah—was head of the Research Department at the Bahá’í World Centre in Haifa, Israel, where she served since 2001.

Previously, Professor Mahmoudi was Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, Illinois. She was also a member of the faculty in the Department of Sociology at the same institution. Prior to her appointment as Dean at the Northeastern Illinois University, Professor Mahmoudi served as a Vice President and Dean of Olivet College, where she was instrumental in the institutional transformation that brought national recognition to Olivet.

In an official message to the University of Maryland community, Dr. John Townshend—dean of the college that the Chair reports to—praised Professor Mahmoudi as “a proven leader dedicated to scholarship and research and a distinguished member of the Bahá’í community.”

For her part, Professor Mahmoudi said that she “looks forward to building on the strong international reputation of the Bahá’í Chair, while also moving it in new directions.” “The Chair’s affiliation with an outstanding flagship university,” she continued, “combined with its location in close proximity to the nation’s capital, places it in an excellent position to influence both scholarly and policy discussions.”

Following a period of deliberation and reflection, Professor Mahmoudi will announce a new program of research as well as at least one new undergraduate course offering.

Professor Mahmoudi’s research interests have included comparative civilizations, social change, modernity, and gender equality. In her published works she has engaged Bahá’í topics and themes in the context of established scholarly methodologies and debates. Her publications include: “Obligation and Responsibility in Constructing a World Civilization” (in The Bahá’í World, 2002-2003); “Altruism and Extensivity in the Bahá’í Religion” (in Embracing the Other: Philosophical, Psychological and Historical Perspectives on Altruism, eds. Samuel and Pearl Oliner); and “The Permanence of Change: Contemporary Sociological and Bahá’í Perspectives on Modernity” and “Resilience in Children: Within a Spiritual, Social and Neurobiological Framework” (both in The Journal of Bahá’í Studies).
Breakout Sessions at the Conference

Arash Abbassi, “From Fourteen Points to a Turning Point: The Role of the United Nations in an Emerging World Order”

Arash Abizadeh, “Ethical Democracy: A Democratic Alternative to Liberal Democracy?”

Nooshfar Afnan, “Abdu’l-Bahá’s Method of Training and Preparation for Service of Some Early Bahá’ís in the West”

Payam Akhavan, “Reducing Genocide to Law: The Illusion of Words, the Reality of Empathy”

Robert Atkinson, “The Journey of the Soul & the Path of Service”

Rama Ayman, “Treatment of Existential Moral Hazard and Eradication of Poverty in the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”

Hooshmand Badee, “A Bahá’í Inspired Model of Sustainability”

Roger Blaine & Sandra Bean, “Bahá’í Campus Associations - Old Order Thinking or Fresh Opportunity”

Reba A. Carruth, “The Spiritual Destiny of North America”

Helen Cheng, “Memorials of the Faithful: Meaning Making for a New Dispensation”

Yi Chi, “Career Development in the Profit-driven World — Why it is Not Possible and How to Make it Possible”

François Couillard, “The Promise of Social Innovation: Enterprises as a Source of Social Good”

Linda Sue Covey, “Teaching Religion Courses in the Classroom in China”

Mehrdad Ehsani, “Man’s Station in the Universe: A Scientist’s Spiritual Journey”

Kim Ennis, “A Response to the Sacred: The World Tree and the Elevated Perspective in Prairie Painting”

Joubine Eslahpazir, “The Bahá’í Faith or a New Form of Universalism and Modernity: The Analysis of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Trips in the West in a New Perspective”

Gerald Filson & Ben Schewel, “Cognitive Capacities of Science and Religion as a System of Knowledge”

Abdu’l-Missagh Ghadirian, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Essence of Humility and Servitude”


Holly Hanson, Vesall Nourani, Anis Ragland & Kim Naqvi, Panel on “Scale of Economy”

David Hoffman & Donna Hakimian, “Combining Key Business Techniques and the Arts to Drive Effective Outreach in Social Discourse”

Afsoon Houshidari & Sherri Yazdani, “The Science of Storytelling”

Jay Howden, “Comparing Our Activisms: The Anarchists and the Bahá’ís”

Shadi Katirai, “Ethical and Spiritual Implications of Commercial Surrogacy”


Mona Khademi, “Laura Dreyfus-Barney and her Role during ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Visit to the West”

Jena Khadem Khodadad, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Vision for the Role of the Two American Bahá’í Communities”

Camille Khodadad, “Raising the Banner of Equality: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Call for the Empowerment of Women”

Augusto Lopez-Claros, “Removing Impediments to Sustainable Economic Development: The Case of Corruption”

Sovaida Ma’ani Ewing, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá Urges the Creation of a World Federation - Time to Catch Up”


Vasu Mohan, “How to Create a Divine Civilization”

Shahrokh Monjazeb, “Beyond Disclosing the Station of the Most Mighty Branch: A Closer Look at the Contents of the
Sūriy-i-Ghusn (The Tablet of the Branch)

Pejman Mosleh, “From Small-Town Canada to the Co-inheritors of the Tablets of the Divine Plan: Surviving or Thriving?”

Lex Musta, “Some Reflections on Bahá’í Approaches to Social Change - A Case Study of Race-Relations”

David A. Palmer, “Applying Core Values and Spiritual Principles in the Leadership, Management and Service of Faith-Based NGOs”

Anne Gordon Perry & Tim Perry, “Embracing the Vision of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for North America through Documenting His Travels”

Kenton Peterson, “Using Meditation to Moderate Stress”

Phyllis K. Peterson, “Seeking the Spiritual Reality of the Mentally Ill, the Physically Challenged and the Wounded”


Hoda Rahbar, “Understanding Climate Change from a Bahá’í Perspective”

Nousha Ram, “When Profit and Social Responsibility Collide: Seven Transformational Leadership Lessons from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”

Omid Sadeghpour, “Artwork, The Greatest Name” (Poster Presentation)

Kamran Sedig, “The Bahá’í Concept of Spirit and its Correlations with Mathematics and Science”

Hashem Selph, “Meaningful Contributions to Discourses through Media”

Rob Sockett, “239 Days in America: A Social Media Documentary”

Michelle Thelen Steere and John Steere, “Prayer and Meditation: Cultivating the Inner Spirit Dialogue between the Natural Emotions and the Awakening Heart”

Mina Yazdani, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution”

Terri York, “Grey Towers, Blue Waters”

Arash Zaré, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Chicago”

Panel on Fostering the Creation and Delivery of Courses on the Bahá’í Faith at Universities and Colleges

Session on Publishing

Bahá’í Shrine in Montréal
The Vision of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for North America
Association for Bahá’í Studies
36th Annual Conference, 9–12 August, 2012
Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Please register for EACH person attending the conference by fax: 1-613-233-3644, by phone: 1-613-233-1903, online at http://www.bahai-studies.ca or by mail: 34 Copernicus Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 7K4.

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ____________________________ Province/State ______________
Country ____________________________ Postal/ZIP Code ______________
Telephone ____________________________ E-Mail ____________________

If this registrant is a child, please indicate age __________ Do you have any special needs? ______________

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Special Discounts
Senior couple: 10% off total registration fee
Family: 20% off total registration fee***

Children living at the same address (3 persons minimum)

Total Fees: ____________________________
Scholarship Contribution: ____________________________

Method of Payment
☐ Cheque ☐ Money Order
☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Please circle one fee.

ALL CONFERENCE FEES ARE IN CDN DOLLARS

*This fee includes a 1-year membership in the Association, including a year’s subscription to The Journal of Bahá’í Studies and ABS Bulletin, and discounts on ABS publications and conferences. U.S. memberships are charged at the U.S. currency rate.

**This fee does not include membership.

***Parents and dependent Registrants from outside Canada, please note: fees paid by credit card are processed in Canada. Some credit card companies apply a service charge for transactions taking place in another Country.

GRAND TOTAL ____________________________

Cancellation Policy: Registration fees are refundable, less 10% administrative fees if the Association is notified by July 31, and less 20% administrative fees if notified after July 31.

Credit Card Number

Credit Card Expiration Date

Cardholder’s Name (please print clearly)

Cardholder’s Signature
HOTEL AND RESERVATIONS

The conference hotel is in downtown Montreal, and it offers two restaurants, pool, whirlpool, steam baths and exercise rooms, salon and spa, and complimentary internet access in the guest rooms. There are 14 wheelchair-accessible rooms. The hotel is also directly connected to Place Ville Marie, an underground complex with 60 stores and a large food court.

Fairmont Queen Elizabeth
900 Rene-Levesque West,
Montreal, Quebec H3B 4A5

Special conference room rate:
Single/double occupancy - $139 per night (plus tax)
Additional room occupants: Each extra person sharing a room will be charged and additional $20 (must be same as individual reservation charge) per night. No charge for children up to and including the age of 18 years sharing with their parents. Maximum occupancy: 4 persons per room.
Toll-free reservations: 1-800-441-1414
Local reservations: 514-861-3511
Online booking: http://resweb.passkey.com/bahaistudies, code “BAHAI12”

Conference attendees must make hotel reservations directly with the hotel. To receive the special rate ask for the Association for Bahá’í Studies special conference rate when making your reservation.

PLEASE NOTE: these rates are guaranteed only until the room-block is filled or until July 27, 2012, whichever comes first. Reservations made after the cut-off dates will be based on availability at the Hotel’s prevailing rates. The conference rates are extended to four days before and four days after the conference dates.

TOURISM AND ENTERTAINMENT

The Fairmont Queen Elizabeth is situated in Old Montreal and close to its many historical and touristic points of interest such as Notre-Dame Basilica, Saint Paul Street, Cours Le Royer, and the Montreal Museum of History and Archeology, all along Montreal’s cobblestone path. The large urban park of Mont-Royal, with its belvedere, ponds, walking and biking trails, is also within easy reach.

ROOM SHARING

Reduce your conference costs (and make new friends!) by sharing a room at the hotel. To contact other attendees interested in sharing a room, please join the Yahoo! Group “ABS-NA Conference” by visiting its site http://groups.yahoo.com/group/absconference or by sending an e-mail to: absconference-subscribe@yahooogroups.com. NOTE: attendees must make their own hotel reservations and are responsible for contacting interested parties to make their own sharing arrangements. If you encounter difficulties with the Yahoo! Group system, please contact the Association for Bahá’í Studies office for assistance.

VISITING THE SHRINE

Take advantage of your stay in Montreal to visit the only Bahá’í Shrine in the West: the Maxwell home! Contact and visiting hours information can be found at www.bahaimontreal.org.