

With great pride, I would like to share an event that is coming up very soon. The Coalition, in partnership with the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton will be showcasing art by five ethno cultural artists from October 3rd to November 4th in the Community Gallery.

The journey began last summer in June, when Vasudha Tiwari, an accomplished artist in her own right connected with Irene Apon, a volunteer teacher for our seniors in the Kilkenny program, regarding an opportunity for artists to exhibit their artwork at the Art Gallery of Alberta. The only requirement for participation was to come under the umbrella of the Coalition. Soon, I received an email from Irene with a request to participate with the support of the Coalition. We were just 3 days away from the application deadline. The Coalition and the participating artists could not afford to let go of this opportunity. Our then Executive Director Phil O'Hara encouraged us and approved our proposal. This was the first time in the history of the Coalition that an art initiative was seeded. Without losing any more time, we applied and our application was accepted to be part of this prestigious event.

Incidentally, Irene, Vasudha and I had previously participated at the Coalition's Summer Fest in 2017, showcasing our art. Later, Vasudha volunteered to teach art at the Coalition. We wanted to involve more artists from different ethnicities for this venture; and fortunately, we found two more very talented artists, Victoria Ilnytska and Fardos Aissa; they were students for the English learning classes for our Kilkenny program. And lastly, as most of you know I have been working with the Coalition and I am, also an artist.

We all were jubilant to get this fabulous opportunity of a lifetime. And thus, while being thankful to the Coalition for providing us with the platform, we enthusiastically started working on the project.

And then, COVID-19 struck the world; and like everyone else, our lives also changed. It was difficult to concentrate on creating art as we were worried about our loved ones back home. And the situation here at home, in Edmonton, was no less stressful. Adapting to the new changes was not easy.

We moved ahead despite the challenges posed by COVID-19. While we worked together as a team remotely, we were happy to build some capacities, like working in a

team, learning to consult, making strategies and planning how to execute them; we exchanged knowledge about each other's art and developed some skills, like how to navigate through the computer with new software.

The Coalition and the artists truly appreciate the opportunity given by AGA to showcase the artworks at their prestigious Institution.

We are thankful to Elizabeth Hill and Lisa Lunn, our liaisons from the AGA who were extremely patient with our incessant inquiries and guided us effortlessly through the process. We also thank the AGA's Exhibition Manager, Sara McKarney and Marketing Department who helped us put together the exhibition.

MLA Aaron Paquette and MLA David Shepherd, who are both accomplished and amazing artists themselves, encouraged our efforts by donating to the cause. We also received a monetary donation and coupons for the participating artists from Kim Fjordbotten, the owner of the Paint Spot. We are very thankful for their generous donation.

The exhibition is titled **“Canada: Our Home, Then and Now”**. The exhibition will be on display from Oct 3rd to Nov 4th 2020 at the AGA and is being represented by Irene Apon, Vasudha Tiwari, Fardos Aissa, Maria-Victoria Ilnytska and Mitali Banerjee. The Coalition is thankful to all the participating artists for their hard work, cooperation, enthusiasm and coordinating the project as a team.

Please visit the Community Gallery during this one-month exhibition period. This is a free event and there is no entrance fee for the exhibition. I will leave a guestbook for you at the community gallery and will be looking forward to your comments on your experience at our exhibition.

Looking forward to an artistic rendezvous!

Mitali Banerjee

Edmonton Multicultural Coalition