

HOME AND AWAY
Art Exhibit and Sale
The Immigrant Experience

Over 30 artists explore Canadian Immigration
in a unique exhibition of art and story
Facebook: Home and Away - Canadian Immigration Stories

March 1 to March 31
- Reception -
Saturday, March 5th from
6pm to 9pm

FRINGE CUSTOM FRAMING and GALLERY
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Gallery hours: Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 10 - 6:30
Wednesday & Friday 10 - 8:30
Saturday 10 - 5

London Arts Council London



Home and Away

Ingrid Arnet Connidis

February 2016

Painting Title: Family Tree

I was born in London England in 1951 to a Norwegian mother and English father of Greek, English and Irish descent. Nineteen months later, my mother and I joined my father in Toronto after visiting my grandparents in Norway. Our growing family moved to Kingston, Ontario in 1957 and in 1959 I became a Canadian citizen.

In my childhood, the Red Ensign was still the Canadian flag, God Save the Queen our anthem, and at home we read stories like Wind in the Willows, all links to England that made it seem familiar. We carried on Norwegian traditions too, especially at Christmas time, and my Mormor (Grandmother) was an important figure in my life so Norway also felt real to me. We spent much of our time outdoors enjoying the best that Canada has to offer: water, woods, rock, wilderness and the freedom to explore.

Because we didn't have relatives in Canada, our immediate family was our world in our younger years. In grade two, when asked, "When is Christmas?" I answered, "December 24th" and was stunned to be told I was wrong. In the winter, my sister and I were the only girls who wore thick, brown leotards sent from Norway when other girls wore pants under their dresses. I felt more connected to events like World War II through my parents' stories of Norway and England than to the Canadian reality of a war 'overseas.' These experiences made me feel that I was from 'away' when I was at home.

When I was eight, my mother took us by ship to visit my grandparents in Norway. Spending the summer in an old two-story home after living in three-bedroom-bungalow suburbs, eiderdowns, wearing only underpants for bathing suits and hearing everyone speak another language were striking novelties. But I felt at home with familiar foods and with seeing my mother so at home with her family. For the first time, I felt what it was to be related to someone other than my parents and siblings and better understood the lives of my Canadian friends who had relatives nearby.

In 1968 when I was 17, I returned to England, met my father's relatives and friends, and toured Shepherd's Bush – the part of London where we had lived. What a time for a teen-ager to discover her modest English roots: the Beatles and Carnaby Street, as well as iconic historical and cultural sights. Such close proximity to pop culture and the stories of childhood felt both familiar and heady. A year later, I headed off to university in London, Canada, a town filled with namesakes of my birthplace.

A love of the outdoors and countryside brings together where I've come from and where I live. The Northern lights and four true seasons of Norway, the River Thames and natural parks of London England, all are with me as I go for walks or cross-country ski or paint plein air in Canada, the place my parents chose, my home.