

KAC in Conversation: interview with Sunita Gupta

KAC in Conversation, a community engagement and dialogue series from the Kingston Arts Council is back for its second year and exploring the practice of *Creative Placemaking - art, space, and community*. As part of the program, the KAC is shining a spotlight on local community members whose work and practice is connected to the theme of the *KAC in Conversation* program. Read more about the program [here](#).

Below is a conversation with Sunita Gupta, Kingston Immigration Partnership Facilitator, Kingston Community Health Centres, on her work with the Kingston Multicultural Arts Festival.

Kingston Arts Council: “Creative placemaking” is a fairly new term, used to describe the relationship between community development and the arts – how does your work relate to arts-based placemaking and community building?

Sunita Gupta: Kingston Immigration Partnership is committed to provide leadership to the Kingston community in its efforts to attract, welcome, include and integrate newcomers to Kingston. Consequently we work closely with a multitude of ethno-cultural associations in Kingston. Nine years ago the multicultural community of Kingston strongly expressed a desire for Kingston to revive ‘Folklore’. The result was the inception of the Kingston Multicultural Arts Festival (KMAF) in 2010!

This event has become pivotal in connecting arts, culture, and food from all over the world to the mainstream Kingston community. Through the KMAF, we have generated an opportunity for diverse expression. Other initiatives were ‘Box of Cultures’, Culture Days and various other events where artists with a diverse background are sharing talent through dance, music, food, and visual arts.

KAC: How can artists drive change and growth in Kingston and what kind of support/opportunities do they need in order to do so?

SG: They say ‘Art speaks where words are unable to explain’! The strength of expression through art and its ability to connect people is powerful. In the current environment, artists can connect, raise awareness and help clear racial & cultural misgivings. We need to create more paid opportunities for artists. Schools and community organisations can be instrumental in creating these opportunities. Be it for a team building exercise, motivational workshop or a retreat, artists have a great deal to contribute, given the opportunity.



KAC: Our upcoming *KAC in Conversation* event, scheduled for Thursday, November 24, is bringing in speakers from cities outside of Kingston, to shed insight into their experiences in creative placemaking. Outside of Kingston, do you have any favourite examples of “creative places”—communities that have been shaped by creativity?

SG: Most certainly, there are neighbouring cities such as Montreal and GTA that are host to several music festivals, museums and the associated opportunities that the events and physical spaces lead to. Hamilton is a very culturally-rich city. Let’s pick up best practices and implement those in Kingston.

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Thank you for your time and insight Sunita! *KAC in Conversation: Creative Placemaking* will take place on Thursday, 24 November, 6–8:30pm in the former Blockbuster Video building (226 Queen St).

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