

NEWS | CANADA

C MOSQUE SHOOTING

Portraits honour

Paintings of six men will be hung on the wall

AQUIL VIRANI

PRESS CLIPPINGS

ANGELYN FRANCIS
EQUITY AND INEQUALITY REPORTER

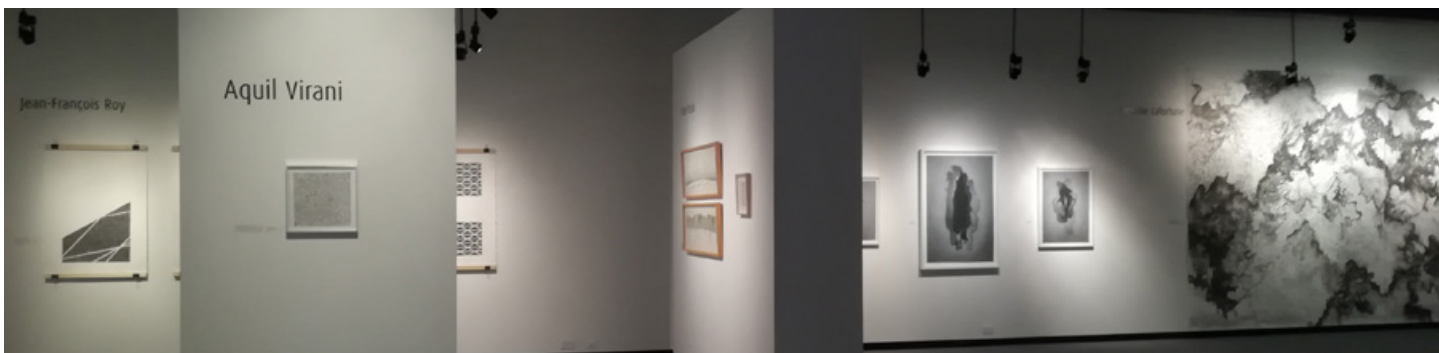
When artist Aquil Virani asked Khaled Belkacemi's family for their favourite photo of him, it was a simple image of Belkacemi at a conference. The university professor leaned forward wearing a tie and a name tag and smiled for the photo taken in October 2016, just a few months before he died.

Virani turned the serene image into one of six paintings of each of the men killed, as their families remember them.

Saturday marks five years since the attack on the mosque in Montreal. Ibrahima Barry, Mamadou Barry, and Abdelkrim Hachach

“

It's so important to me that, if the families are ready, we show the faces ... We



“

His approach, which aims not simply to assert a personal point of view on a pressing social issue, but also to facilitate opportunities for others to express themselves freely – to speak and be heard – is characteristic of all of Aquil’s work.

— CÉLINE LE MERLUS, FORMER CHIEF CURATOR,
STEWART HALL ART GALLERY, 2018.



Des oeuvres, un silence et des mots

[Accueil] / [Opinion] / [Chroniques]



Odile Tremblay

2 février 2017

CHRONIQUE
Chroniques

Et si certaines oeuvres aidaient à éclairer les esprits en ces temps de malheur ? Si les éclairs des créateurs pouvaient parfois nous féconder...

Prenez *Attentat*, le cabaret poétique au titre prédestiné de Gabrielle et Véronique Côté. Ce montage d'une trentaine de textes et poèmes est présenté au théâtre Périscope à Québec, après avoir cassé la baraque du Quat'Sous en 2014. *Le Fuck You* de Steve Gagnon, dans son appel à l'engagement comme à la poésie en arme de jet, doit alors prendre une résonance puissante dans cette ville meurtrie.

« Je dis fuck you à tous ceux qui ne voient pas comment la vie est large et infinie et remplie de possibilités, que ça n'arrête jamais d'être possible, qu'il y a toujours quelque chose de bouleversant partout. Je dis fuck you à tous ceux qui se résignent, se détachent, se désintéressent. » Ne vous rendormez pas, hurle-t-il en substance. Restez vigilant !

Un même message circule en filigrane de la pièce sur le racisme *Froid* de Lars Noren, à Québec aussi dès le 14 février au théâtre Premier Acte. De jeunes nationalistes suédois de droite s'y échauffent avant de faire la peau à un de leurs collègues d'origine coréenne. Attention, danger !

Quant au film *Ceux qui font les révolutions à moitié n'ont fait que se creuser un tombeau* (citation de St-Just) de Simon Lavoie et Mathieu Denis, en salles vendredi, il dévoile mieux les frustrations et les débordements possibles de jeunes Québécois au lendemain du Printemps érable que toutes les réflexions servies sur les causes profondes de l'attentat de Sainte-Foy.

D'autres artistes tendent plutôt des ponts, comme Aquil Virani, avec son oeuvre aux motifs de mains de l'islam sur *tasbeeh* (perles de prière), dont le Centre culturel islamique de Québec recevra cadeau. Il l'a créée durant la vigile montréalaise de solidarité avec les musulmans de Québec lundi dernier, avant qu'une centaine de personnes n'y ajoutent des mots et des phrases en français, en anglais, en espagnol et en arabe. Parmi ces inscriptions, celle-ci, en fragile bouteille à la mer : « Un Québec libre est un Québec uni. »

Là où les mots se cherchent après les tragédies, l'art peut prendre le relais pour brosser le contexte des climats délétères, mettre en garde contre le pire, inviter après coup aux solidarités comme aux remises en cause. Mais quand les oeuvres parlent de concert avec de nombreux analystes, autant tendre l'oreille encore plus fort. Le temps s'est arrêté soudain, après un lourd silence.



De l'art comme outil pacifiste au MBAM

[Accueil] / [Culture]



Photo: Scott Wilson. Au lendemain de l'attentat meurtrier à la mosquée de Québec, l'artiste Aquil Virani a demandé à différentes personnes d'inventer des slogans pour combattre l'islamophobie. Inspiré par ces idées, l'artiste a créé des affiches qu'on a pu voir près du MBAM.

Caroline Montpetit
17 février 2018
Culture

Pour Aquil Virani, tout art est politique. « Même la décision de ne pas utiliser son art à des fins politiques est une décision politique », dit-il. L'artiste Aquil Virani participe jusqu'au 18 février au forum *Le pouvoir des arts*, qui se déroule au Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, en collaboration avec la Fondation Michaëlle Jean, sous l'égide de la directrice du MBAM, Nathalie Bondil, et du cinéaste Jean-Daniel Lafond, cofondateur de la Fondation.

Aquil Virani est cet artiste qui a fait notamment le tour du pays pour réaliser son projet *Autoportrait du Canada*. Dans le cadre de ce projet, il a demandé à 800 personnes de lui dessiner ce que représentait le Canada pour elles. L'un des carrés de l'oeuvre finale, qui a réuni tous ces dessins, a été laissé blanc. Il représente deux choses, explique l'artiste : le passé des autochtones qu'on a tenté de rayer, et l'avenir.

Ce week-end, Aquil Virani participera à deux événements du forum : l'un portant sur la réconciliation avec les peuples autochtones, et l'autre portant sur sa pratique en tant qu'artiste musulman.

Né en Colombie-Britannique d'une mère d'origine française et d'un père d'origine indienne, Aquil Virani sait ce que c'est que le sentiment d'exclusion. Élevé en anglais, il ne maîtrise pas parfaitement le français, donc n'est pas tout à fait considéré comme Français. De peau blanche, il n'est généralement pas identifié comme musulman, mais son nom n'est pas de consonance européenne.

« Parce que j'ai toutes ces identités, j'ai beaucoup d'empathie pour les gens qui proviennent de communautés différentes. Parce que j'ai l'air d'un Blanc, je ne souffre pas d'islamophobie, mais j'éprouve de l'empathie pour ceux qui en souffrent », dit-il.

Différentes croyances

Au lendemain de l'attentat meurtrier à la mosquée de Québec, l'hiver dernier, Aquil Virani a demandé à différentes personnes, musulmanes et non-musulmanes, d'inventer des slogans pour combattre l'islamophobie. Parmi les slogans récoltés, son préféré est le suivant : « On n'a pas besoin de croire la même chose pour avoir foi l'un en l'autre. »

Pour lui, les musulmans ne forment pas une communauté, mais des communautés, parlant différentes langues, provenant de différentes parties du monde, ayant différentes croyances. Il croit que chacun devrait avoir un ami musulman avant de parler de l'islam.

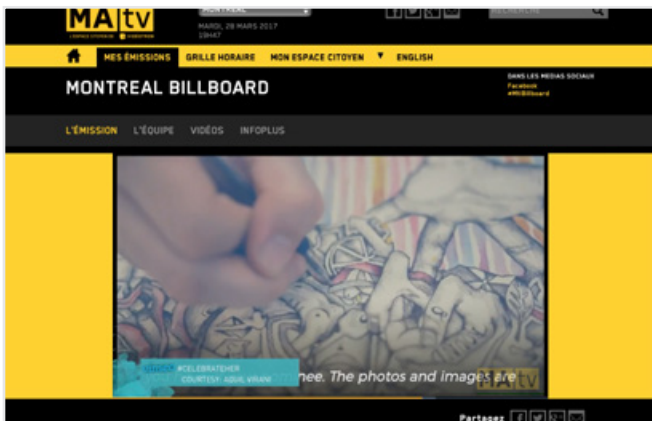
Dans le cadre de sa présentation, Aquil Virani parlera aussi des *gens*, ou'il ne refait plus s'il recommencerait une semaine là.



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One doesn't typically associate the high academia of a university like McGill with talented, driven artists. There are, however, those standout individuals who make the effort to follow their artistic ambitions despite their environment; Aquil Virani is one of them.

— GARRETT COSGRAVE, "MINDFCUK,"
LEACOCK'S MAGAZINE, 2012.



LA PRESSE DÉBATS 27°C MONTREAL Changer de ville

ACTUALITÉS INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRES SPORTS AUTO ARTS CINÉMA VIVRE VINS VOYAGE MAISON TECHNO

Arts visuels Festivals Livres Médias Musique Spectacles et Théâtre Télévision Vie de stars Doussiers

Actualité > Arts > Arts visuels > Aquil Virani célèbre la diversité des femmes

Publié le 21 juin 2018 à 11h32 | Mis à jour le 21 juin 2018 à 11h32

Aquil Virani célèbre la diversité des femmes

ÉRIC CLÉMENT
La Presse

Demain et samedi, au pavillon Morrice de l'Université McGill, l'artiste visuel Aquil Virani et Imago Theatre organiseront cinq rencontres avec le public pour célébrer 12 femmes inspirantes d'ici et d'ailleurs. Un rendez-vous avec la peinture et la diversité des femmes.

Bochra Manal est au Québec depuis neuf ans. Elle est née en Tunisie et a vécu une partie de sa jeunesse en France. Chercheuse et enseignante dans les domaines de l'identité, de l'immigration et de la radicalisation, elle est titulaire d'un doctorat sur l'ethnicité maghrébine à Montréal.

Actuellement, cette femme de 35 ans fait bénéficier la communauté de Montréal-Nord de son expertise en planification.

LES PLUS POPULAIRES : ARTS

Dernière heure	Dernier jour	Dernière semaine
(09h26) Affaires Robert Lapage: le milieu du théâtre accuse le coup		
(10h20) Les grosses toupées font les gros revenus, avec U2 en tête		
(11h01) Kev Adams: quand les succès s'enchaînent		
(13h01) À la recherche du livre de l'été idéal: Tous les plus populaires de la section Arts et Loisirs		

AUTRES CONTENUS POPULAIRES

Arts	Cinéma	Musique
(15h03) Courrier des lecteurs - Un véhicule qui ne semble pas accomplir sa fonction		
(09h00) Une Bentley volée par Saddam Hussein en vedette au Michigan		
(12h04) Honda Mean Mower V2 - un tracteur pour les paysannes encore plus pressées		
(12h04) Une Aston Martin volante digne de l'agent 007		
(12h42) Blanc d'essai - Subaru Ascend 2019: l'heure de la revanche ?		

DU MÊME AUTEUR

Kev Adams: quand les succès s'enchaînent

Neri Golden manifeste à

FOUNDATION INSPIRE About Grants Impact Investing Sharing Resources Changing Conversations

Aquil Virani

Public participation is an integral part of Aquil Virani's socially conscious art projects. His most recent collaboration with Montreal's Imago Theatre is a feminist portrait series called CelebrateHer, spotlighting 12 inspiring, publicly recognized women who discuss gender expectations, everyday activism, and the complexities of allyship.

Aquil Virani's CelebrateHer portrait series at Imago Theater in Montreal.

Mariam Magsi

Burqa, purdah, hijab—these are some of the veiling practices that Mariam Magsi explores through her photography. Magsi is fascinated by the coverings worn by Muslim women, its relationship to Islam, the socio-political environment where the





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Aquil Virani est un artiste engagé, fasciné par les questions sociales et la richesse de la diversité. Une diversité qu’il incarne lui-même, avec des origines française, indienne et ismaélienne.

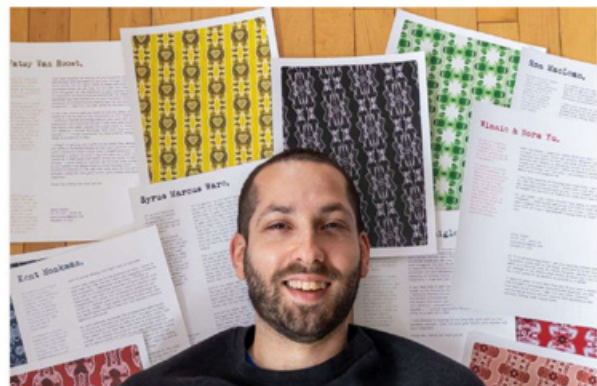
— ÉRIC CLÉMENT, “AQUIL VIRANI CÉLÈBRE LA DIVERSITÉ DES FEMMES,” LA PRESSE, 2018.

Artist writes 30 letters to mark his 30th birthday

Lynn Saxberg



Before it was possible to send birthday greetings with the click of a mouse, mailing a card to a loved one was a thoughtful thing to do.

[Sights & Sounds](#) [Festivals](#) [Food & Drink](#) [News & Ideas](#)

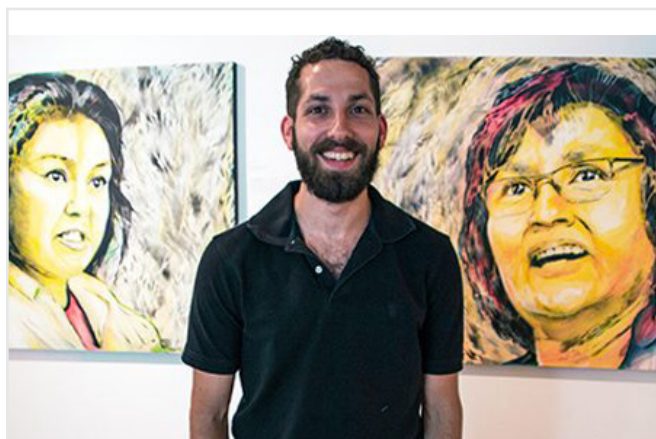
**Aquil Virani's 30 Letters
"Birthday Art Project"
encourages us to take a
moment for simple things**

By Kenneth Ingram on January 15, 2021

One of a few key messages that I gained from a conversation with Aquil Virani, a local artist who turns 30 years old today, is that the year 2021 presents opportunity. He's celebrating his birthday by writing 30 letters to be sent via post to 30 people who have inspired him. Printed in classic typewriter font "to avoid the email vibe," he explains, each letter also has a visual art piece on the reverse side that is inspired by the recipient. Some letters will be public. Others will remain private. But this "Birthday Art Project" (as he refers to it) hasn't been without challenges (more on those in the C&A below).

Stemming from a concept Aquil initiated in 2015 for his 24th birthday (when he created 24 pieces of artwork in 24 hours), he has continued to create annual birthday projects since. They manifest in many forms, including artwork derived from self-imposed time limits (100 works of art in a week for his 25th birthday), projects from A to Z that describe [inspiring women](#) (26th birthday), a 27-second mini-documentary, 28 thank yous, and 29 messages of healing and solidarity on the

January 15, 2021
Aquil Virani's 30 Letters "Birthday Art Project" encourages us to take a moment for simple things.





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**Aquil Virani's art is
full of unexpected and
quirky connections.
...There are stories
within stories.**

— KATHERINE GOMBAY, “WE ARE ALL ARTISTS ...
EVEN IF WE DON'T BELIEVE IT,” MCGILL REPORTER, 2012.

DRAWING CANADIAN IDENTITY

June 17, 2015

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Photo courtesy Aquil Virani

MONTREAL ARTIST AQUIL VIRANI CREATES A COLLABORATIVE ART PIECE ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CANADIAN USING HUNDREDS OF CROWDSOURCED SKETCHES

On Canada Day, July 1, Montreal artist and designer Aquil Virani will unveil his large-scale artwork incorporating more than 800 depictions of Canadian identity, submitted by Canadians coast to coast. For this collaborative project, called Canada's Self Portrait, Virani and project co-founder Rebecca Jones trekked from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, BC in the summer of 2014, collecting and collating from four provinces, Greenland and notable

CANVASSING THE MASSES



It all about mutual inspiration with Aquil Virani's latest collection.

PHOTO: ARIAN LEBE

Aquil Virani on Accessible Art Practice

• KATHERINE MCGOWAN

If you've ever felt intimidated by art, you're not alone. For Virani, art is just like you didn't understand it, he said.

"Being an artist is a normal attitude," he said. "If you feel like an artist, you are an artist. Period."

Combining drawing and the art world's history, Virani would not have been able to meet his latest work without the help of self-proclaimed "non-artists."

Presenting strangers with a folded piece of blank white paper (it's less intimidating that way) and then asking them to draw on it is something he's quite used to. He's been doing this for a long time, he said.

Whether it's a simple line drawing or a complex, abstract piece, Virani has taken that very idea and turned it into a project of his own.

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Fine Arts Marathon

Montreal Artist Embarks on a Restless Challenge: Creating 100 Artworks a Week

FRINGE ARTS Ocean DeRouche — Published January 11, 2016 | Updated January 12, 2016 at 4:57am



Montreal artist Aquil Virani participated in a live painting show for L'Oréal Canada where he used hair coloration as paint. COURTESY AQUIL VIRANI

Montreal-based artist Aquil Virani challenged himself to create 100 pieces of art in seven sleep-deprived days.

Some may call it ambitious, but for the multi-talented artist, it's simply a way to keep his passion burning and creativity flowing—and to celebrate his 25th birthday.

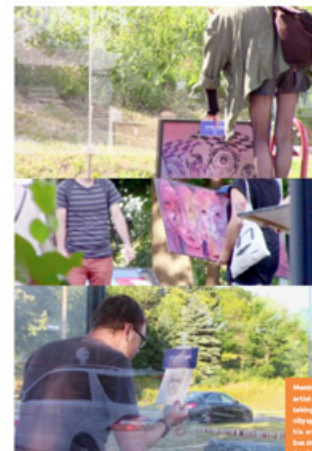
Snuggled in the Plateau, Virani sat in his studio apartment, strewn with canvases. Little fabric flags hung overhead. In the background, classical music filled the gaps between questions and answers.

Outside, a cold January night exhibited Virani's surrounded darkness, and warm, welcoming little spaces.

PUBLIC ART

Sending positivity through public art

Montreal artist Aquil Virani is leaving his artwork at bus stops to spread a little love around the city



JESSICA KINNABO
CO-ARTS EDITOR

Most artists just want people to enjoy their art, and Montreal-based visual artist Aquil Virani has a new way to do just that. Virani's latest venture, the Gateway Project, is his way of injecting positivity into Montrealers' lives. The project involves taking the various artworks he has left over from his many art shows and art marathons, and leaving them at bus stops for people to take home. The paintings vary in size and theme, but they are all there to inspire positivity.

Virani chose bus stops as the drop-off location because, while it is a practical place given the relative shelter from the weather, it also acts as a community hub. People who wait at bus stops come from all walks of life and are always going somewhere.

Virani said he simply leaves the artworks at the bus stop and walks away—he does not wait around in the location to see who picks up his piece. Virani (last name) dropping the artwork off and sometimes, while he was packing up his belongings, the camera caught people taking the art piece. However, he said this is never done intentionally. "I'm all with not knowing what happens after," he said.

While he said there is no real theme guiding his choice of which artwork to leave—in fact, the selection is quite random—the chosen artwork that he believes appears more

happens.

Each piece comes with a slip of paper with Virani's website, contact info and, most importantly, permission to take the artwork. Not only is this project about making someone's day, it is also about taking back community spaces, Virani said. He thinks a lot of people won't necessarily use community spaces, like parks, for fear of intruding on someone else. "I want this project to also remind everyone that community spaces are for you," Virani said. "It's not no one's space, it's everybody's space."

Virani said he wants to use this project not only as a positive method of giving away his old and sometimes need art pieces, but also as a way to bring art out of its traditional art gallery environment. "Art is for everyone. It's made to be enjoyed by everyone, not just the art world," he said.

In most of his art pieces, Virani said he aims to create art that not only looks pretty but also means something, both to him and the receiver. He likes to "make art that both engages the heart, the mind, and is socially aware," he said. Virani said the Gateway Project is an example of how fun, socially-experimental projects can make someone's day. He said he uses this project as a way to add positivity to the world, especially at a time when all the world cities are spreading such negative energy. He also said it helps him combat all the things on the news and in the world that sometimes "get him down."

To see more of Virani's work and a video of the Gateway Project, visit [aquilvirani.com](#)

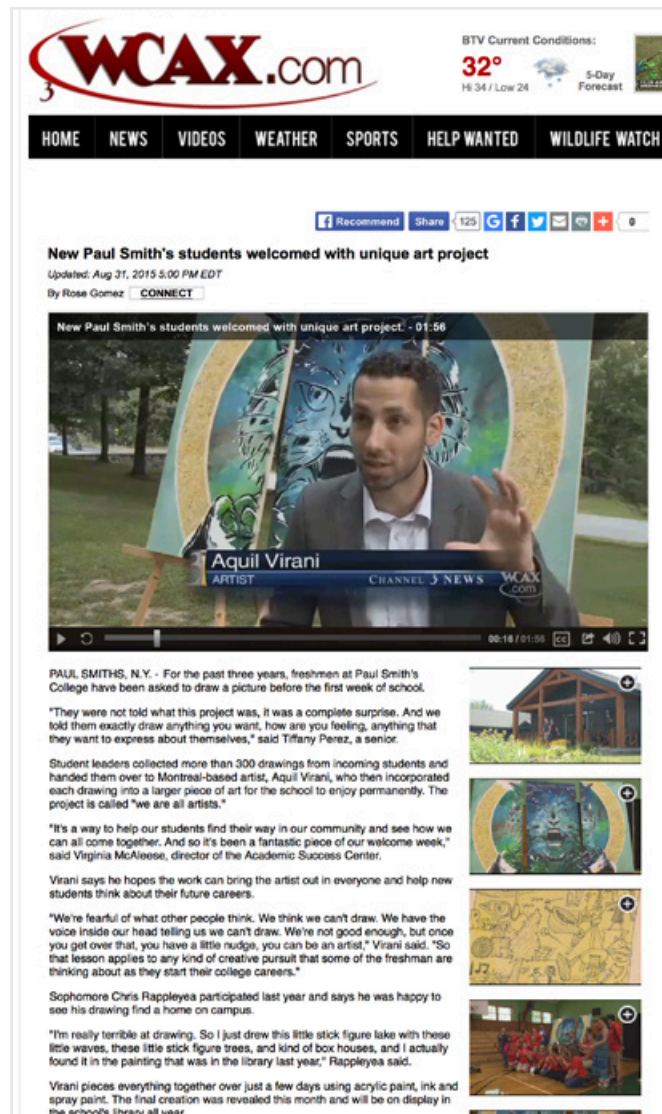
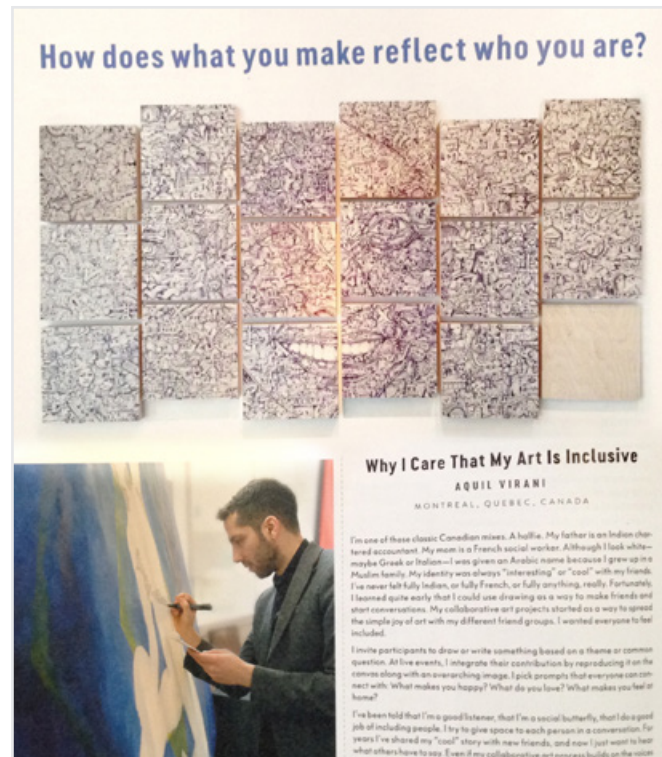
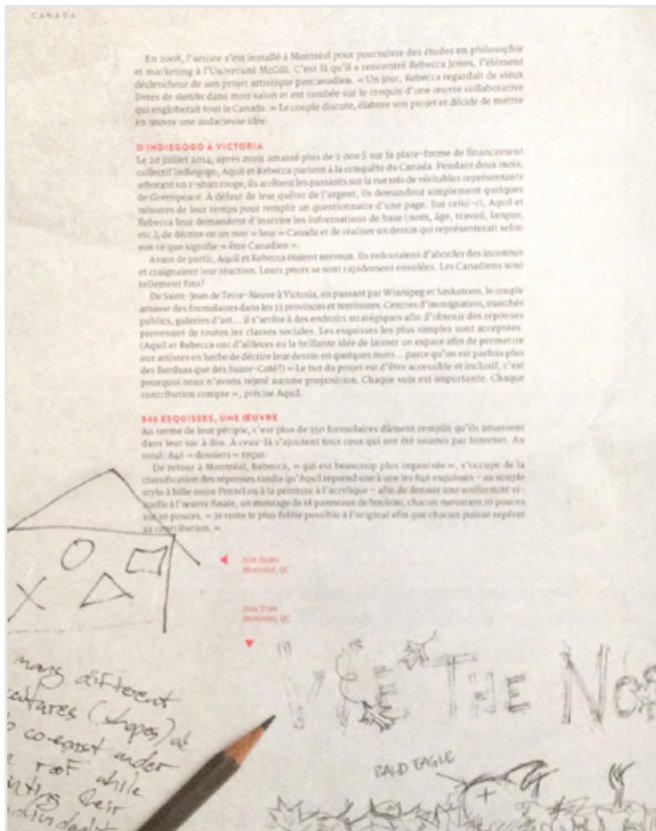




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**Virani is founder of the
“We Are All Artists”
project. He’s an advocate
for revealing the artist in
everyone and using art to
bring people together.**

— TODD MOE, “PAUL SMITHS COLLEGE FRESHMEN COLLABORATE
WITH MONTREAL ARTIST ON NEW ART,” NPR, 2017.





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Aquil Virani is from many places. [...] These many identities, influences and horizons sculpt the thought and work of this artist from the four corners of the world.

— OLIVIER DE COLOMBEL, "THE HERE AND NOW OF AQUIL VIRANI," L'AUORE BORÉALE YUKON, 2017.





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Ses projets sont tellement fascinants et ancrés sur la société d'aujourd'hui. Ils nous donnent l'opportunité d'améliorer notre regard sur les changements sociaux du Québec.

— CHRISTIAN VACHON, CHEF, GESTION DES COLLECTIONS,
CONSERVATEUR, ART DOCUMENTAIRE, MUSÉE MCCORD STEWART.

Sht tht wll fck wth yr mnd

Aquil Virani's perception-bending solo show marks a first for the Frigate Door Gallery

Christine Colucci
The McGill Daily

For the first time in its history, the Frigate Door Gallery at McGill is hosting a solo show featuring the work of visual artist Aquil Virani, 22, Philosophy and Humanities Studies, and a Daily member. Currently located in the Arts Lounge in the basement of Leacock, the Frigate Door Gallery is a student-run initiative that offers McGill artists the opportunity to exhibit and showcase their art in a public space. Helping to fill the gap left by McGill's lack of a Fine Arts department, Frigate Door promotes student art through regular opportunities for exhibitions and exhibitions.

In an email, members of the gallery's executive committee explained that, "The Frigate Door Gallery values the dedication and responsibility of the local artists who have worked with them in the past. When we were approached by Aquil Virani, who has been an active artist in the Frigate Door community for the last couple of years, we felt this would be a great way to show our gratitude to such a talented local artist. The gallery is a place where we can showcase the work of local artists, but we thought it would be a great idea."

Virani further explained that "Mindfuck" was an addition to their biennial show and that the solo show did not detract from the exposure of other artists. "If anything, having an event like this demonstrates what sort of artists we are able to showcase for anyone interested in the visual arts. We are open to any artist that wishes to exhibit to meet something innovative and Aquil happened to be the first." Virani explained, "Upon asking Virani about the exhibit's potential, he explained that, 'The Frigate Door Gallery is about supporting student artists to be an innovative medium. I am dedicated, and I have no problem being confident about my commitment to visual art.'"

Under previous Frigate Door shows, featuring a single artist enables a more cohesive theme and connection between the works. The Frigate Door coordinators explained, "It was really great to be able to host a show where the pieces worked so well together. This is one of the constant struggles we have with the FDC exhibitions - finding a common thread within the pieces in order to put together a cohesive show."

As the title of the show suggests, "Mindfuck" is meant to visually trick the viewer, to screw with their head. On first walking into the gallery, one could easily be confused by the way the pieces are put together. Virani's highly colorful and abstract pieces are an interpretive medium, before they have even been put on the wall. Virani's work is "a mixture of your mind right in the face" he describes how at first, "you're looking at a bunch of lines. Maybe an eye. As a step back, you realize that the design is an eye, or a mouth. The eyes are portrayed in a triangular fashion that is repetitive both horizontally and diagonally. If you just stare at it, it's almost like wallpaper. It's a mess. It worked out really well and I realized that there are certain lines of the eye and the mouth that make them work well together." His work plays with the assumption that one's brain makes upon initial viewing and seeks to foster confusion. After five days, one has seen on one level, and suddenly become another figure's neckline.

In order to promote viewer engagement, Virani offered an art experience to each piece, detailing his intentions and the



as to what the works mean. Virani's current show "Mindfuck" offers a fresh sense of confusion by making the art extremely accessible, but it's the most through his faces and flowing figures. Think, "What does this mean?" "Mind." "Is that what I think it is?" Despite the fact that it is Frigate Door's first solo show, "Mindfuck" gives the way for Frigate Door to highlight other talented artists outside of their usual framework.

Mindfuck runs until March 10 at the Frigate Door Gallery, in the Arts Lounge.

Local News

McGill students sing, dance and doodle in benefit Talent Drive

Peggy Curran • Montreal Gazette

Feb 07, 2011 • February 7, 2011 • 1 minute read



FEATURES

CULTURE

MINDFCUK

11 FEBRUARY 2011

Garrett Chagnon

One doesn't typically associate the high academic of a university like McGill with talented, driven artists. Knays and lab reports leave only so much room for creativity and, for many, they end up dampening it. There are, however, those student individuals who make the effort to follow their artistic ambitions despite their environment; Aquil Virani is one of them.



On Tuesday, Aquil's solo art show, MINDFCUK - the first of its kind at McGill - will be presented by the Frigate Door Gallery in the Arts Lounge (in the basement of Leacock). It features a large body of his work in several media, and focuses on visual trickery, especially the distortion of faces. Aquil and I sat down to chat about the past, present, and future of his art, what it means to be an artist, and Philosophy. He clearly has an untapped, appreciable passion for his art and the presence of artistry in everyone.



Leacock's To start with the easy stuff, what do you study at McGill?

Aquil: I am doing a double-major in philosophy and humanities, with a minor in marketing... I started in math and physics, but that wasn't for me.

When and how did your artistic pursuits start?

Well, I was always drawing as a kid. At an early age, maybe grade 3, I would draw pokémon cards by request for my friends. They'd bring me their cards, featuring characters like Charizard, and ask me to draw it for them, which was good drawing practice. I

really got into the visual art in grade 11. There was this one specific piece that I sat down and produced in about two hours, and I was really proud of it. Usually in high school art classes, you work at a really slow pace, finishing 3 or 4 pieces a year. But for this piece, I got really into making it and ended up really happy with it. To me, the start of pursuing art is begin with developing a trust in yourself, and a willingness to put yourself out there. You can ask yourself, "what if they don't like it? What if it's not good? What if it's not as good as my best piece?" But really, who cares? Getting over that worry, which that grade 11 piece helped me realize, can really allow you to create on a different level. If you are expressing something through your art, and you really like what you're doing, who cares?

So would you say that confidence is one of the essential skills of an artist?

I'd say it's more of a maturity thing, a confidence that comes from that maturity. The ability to put yourself out there, to be vulnerable by exposing your art, requires you to detach yourself from your creation in an evaluative sense. Even if people don't like your art, it doesn't mean they don't like you.

UPCOMING

Aquil Virani

Feb 25 @Cana del Pigeon

Torin

Feb 25 @7:30 Music

The Petty Rockers

Feb 27 @La Tulpe

Stones In His Pocket

Feb 3-27 @Contour Theatre

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Our home and creative land

Two McGill alumni spent their summer crossing the country as part of a collaborative art project exploring Canadian identity. "Our goal is to find out who we are and what defines us through authentic stories and expressions from the diverse body of people that live in this country," says Aquil Virani, who is collecting stories and sketches for the project with partner Rebecca Jones.

AUGUST 27, 2014

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By Elisabeth Faure



Two McGill alumni spent their summer crossing the country as part of a collaborative art project exploring Canadian identity. "Our goal is to find out who we are and what defines us through authentic stories and expressions from the diverse body of people that live in this country," says Aquil Virani, who is collecting stories and sketches for the project with partner Rebecca Jones. "We want to investigate further than the tales told by commercials and textbooks to dig deeper into our identity and celebrate what makes us unique."

McGillREPORTER

NEWS RESEARCH ARTS & CULTURE ATHLETICS KUDOS SUSTAINABILITY LE FRENCH SIDE

We are all artists ... even if we don't believe it

Aquil Virani's art is full of unexpected and quirky connection. Converging train tracks plunge into square cows. A milk carton morphs into a whale. That sits beside a church... with cat's footprints leading towards it. There are stories within stories. And though the connections and convolutions of the images that flow together are Virani's own, the original drawings which inspired them are all by members of the McGill community.

FEBRUARY 17, 2012

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Student's artwork draws on contributions from the McGill community

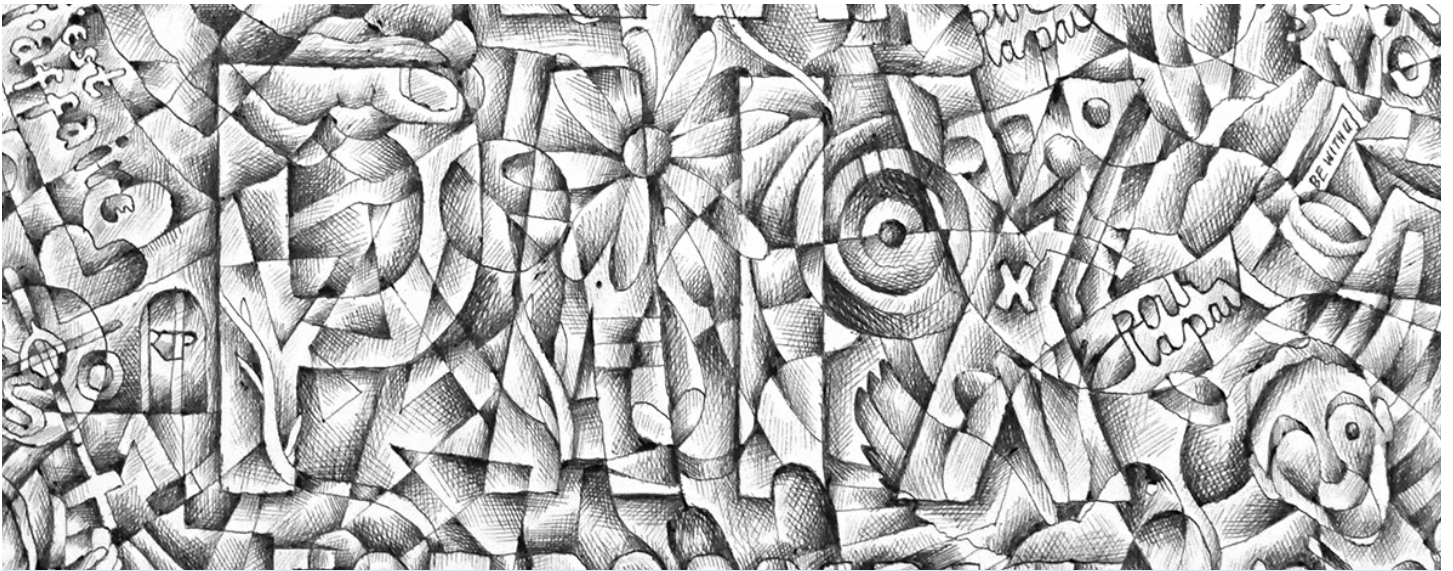
By Katherine Gombay

Aquil Virani's art is full of unexpected and quirky connection. Converging train tracks plunge into square cows. A milk carton morphs into a whale. That sits beside a church... with cat's footprints leading towards it. There are stories within stories. And though the connections and convolutions of the



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For Aquil Virani, all art is political. Even the decision to not use his art for political ends is a political decision,” he says.

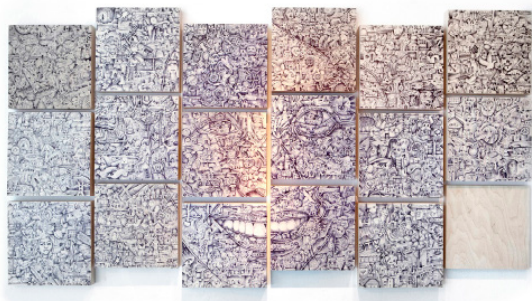
— CAROLINE MONTPETIT, “ART AS A TOOL FOR PEACE AT THE MMFA,” LE DEVOIR, 2018.



“

It would be hard to find someone more enthusiastic about the idea of involving the viewer in every step of the artistic process. The charismatic Virani is the people's artist.

— JESSICA PRUPAS, "COPYCAT,"
LEACOCK'S MAGAZINE, 2012.



MOSAÏQUE DE DESSINS

Avec ces mots et ces dessins, Aquil Virani a élaboré une installation artistique et sociale d'une grande richesse qui a nécessité 200 heures de travail. Il a redessiné au stylo à bille noir sur 17 petits panneaux en bois de bouleau tous les dessins que des Canadiens lui ont confiés.

On retrouve ainsi un amalgame de symboles, allant du castor à l'original en passant par le Canadien de Montréal, le bonhomme de neige, le flocon, les patins à glace, la feuille d'érable, les Rocheuses ou le Kraft Dinner ! L'artiste a ajouté quelques éléments personnels - par exemple une colombe de la paix - et a laissé percevoir au centre de l'oeuvre le visage d'une personne sans sexe ni âge représentant la diversité du Canada.

À ces 17 panneaux s'ajoute un 18^e présenté sans aucun dessin. Il évoque le Canada silencieux, celui qui ne s'est pas exprimé, et le Canada à venir, encore non défini.

« C'était important que toutes les voix canadiennes se retrouvent dans l'oeuvre, dit Aquil Virani. Que ces voix soient positives ou négatives, de gauche ou de droite, conservatrices ou libérales. Mais aussi que l'on exprime celles qui n'ont pas été entendues. »



Aquil Virani et Rebecca Jones disent avoir généralement reçu un bon accueil lors de leur traversée du Canada. « Avec nos t-shirts Canada's Self Portrait, on avait l'air officiel et parfois des gens pensaient qu'on allait leur demander de l'argent !, dit Rebecca Jones, qui a travaillé pour l'organisme Ensemble pour le respect de la diversité. Honnêtement, on n'a eu des problèmes qu'à Québec où l'accueil a été plus tempéré, surtout chez les gens plus âgés. Certains disaient être québécois et ne voulaient pas parler du Canada. Cela ne nous a pas empêchés d'inclure des fleurs de lys dans l'oeuvre et des allusions au nationalisme québécois. À Montréal, on a eu moins de problèmes. »

L'installation comprend une cinquantaine des formulaires que les personnes devaient remplir. Les documents parlent de liberté, d'égalité, de fraternité et du pouvoir qu'ont les Canadiens d'exprimer leur personnalité tout en respectant les différences.

« Les immigrants plus récents parlent de la sécurité qu'ils trouvent au Canada. Les Canadiens nés ici, nous tenons peut-être ça pour acquis », estime Aquil Virani.

L'artiste a aussi réalisé plusieurs peintures dans le cadre de ce projet. Avec ses couleurs éclatantes, *Warmth* exprime la compassion des Canadiens envers leurs compatriotes qui souffrent. Triptyque tout aussi coloré, *Nature* rappelle la magnificence des grands espaces du Canada.

Aquil Virani présente aussi quelques photos de son périple pancanadien, un documentaire de minutes sur le projet ainsi que des sérigraphies sur le thème du potentiel du Canada - un mot souvent mentionné dans les formulaires -, sur la montagne albertaine Three Sisters et sur la feuille d'érable.

« Avec ce projet, j'ai voulu explorer l'identité authentique des Canadiens, dit l'artiste. Pas celle des entreprises ou des gens connus, celle des gens simples de partout au pays. Ce ne sont que les opinions d'un peu plus de 800 personnes, donc cela ne reflète pas tout à fait la réalité, mais cela donne une bonne idée de l'identité canadienne. »

À la Galerie Mile-End (5345, avenue du Parc), aujourd'hui, de 10 h à 20 h, et demain, de



Accueil > Arts > Arts visuels > Esquisse de l'identité canadienne

Publié le 01 juillet 2015 à 10h28 | Mis à jour le 01 juillet 2015 à 10h29

Esquisse de l'identité canadienne



Chargée du projet Canada's Self Portrait, Rebecca Jones pose avec l'artiste Aquil Virani devant l'oeuvre *Warmth*, que ce dernier a réalisée pour exprimer la compassion des Canadiens envers leurs compatriotes les moins bien nantis.

PHOTO PATRICK SANFAÇON, LA PRESSE



ÉRIC CLÉMENT
La Presse

Aquil Virani est on ne peut plus canadien. Venu au monde à Vancouver d'un père musulman originaire de l'Inde et d'une mère bouddhiste née en France, l'artiste de 24 ans vit à Montréal depuis ses études en philosophie et marketing à l'Université McGill.



L'oeuvre principale de Canada's Self Portrait comprend 16 panneaux de bois de bouleau de 10" x 10" sur lesquels (à l'exception d'un seul) l'artiste Aquil Virani a reproduit les dessins que quelque 800 Canadiens ont créés pour symboliser leur pays.

PHOTO PATRICK SANFAÇON LA PRESSE

Fondamentalement artiste depuis son plus jeune âge, designer pour l'entreprise L'Oréal pour faire fructifier son talent et conférencier aux États-Unis de temps en temps, Aquil Virani est animé d'un irrésistible désir de communiquer avec les autres.

L'an dernier, il a traversé le Canada de Terre-Neuve à Victoria dans le but de s'imprégner de tous les aspects de l'identité canadienne. Avec Rebecca Jones, sa partenaire dans ce projet, il a récolté dans chaque province et chaque territoire les perceptions qu'ont les Canadiens de leur pays. Âgés de 3 à 86 ans, les

personnes qu'ils ont rencontrées ont exprimé leur conception du Canada à travers des mots et des dessins.

maPresse

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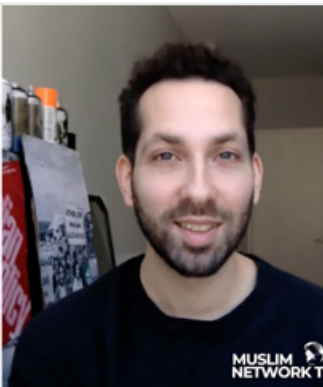
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He is self-taught as an artist with work that includes painting, graphic design, illustration and, before the pandemic, live art events. He's been earning awards for his art and showing in exhibits for a decade.

— LYNN SAXBERG, “STAMPS OF APPROVAL,”
OTTAWA CITIZEN, 2021.



Aquil Virani, Artist and Creative Director



MUSLIM NETWORK TV



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Celebrating the Stories of Ismaili Migration to Canada

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Unpacking Ismaili Identity through Visual Art

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L'artiste engagé Aquil Virani a reçu lundi le prix Artiste pour la paix. Ses préoccupations sociales sont au cœur de ses créations, comme en fait foi son approche participative.

— AGENCE QMI, "AQUIL VIRANI, ARTISTE POUR LA PAIX," TVA NOUVELLES, 2018.



LR : Vous venez récemment de publier votre projet *Ottawa Inshallah*. De quoi s'agit-il, au juste ?

AV : Avec le soutien de la Ville d'Ottawa et l'Institut Route de la soie, le projet *Ottawa Inshallah* rassemble des artistes créatif.ve.s musulman.e.s basé.e.s dans la capitale. À travers le recueil, ils.elles partagent leurs espoirs pour un avenir meilleur.

Le projet comprend 25 œuvres de 18 artistes musulman.e.s diverses qui proviennent des quatre coins de la planète. L'artiste algonquienne anichinabée Dara Wawatie-Chabot prend la parole dans l'introduction de l'anthologie.

Ottawa Inshallah, c'est une invitation à rêver. C'est premièrement une invitation pour



“

Virani said this was his intention: to portray the humanity of the six men, to help them be remembered for how they lived rather than just how they died.

— AINSLIE MACLELLAN, “PORTRAITS HONOUR QUEBEC MOSQUE SHOOTING VICTIMS,” CBC NEWS, 2022.

A6 | NEWS | CANADA

QUEBEC MOSQUE SHOOTING

Portraits honour victims 5 years on

Paintings of six men will be hung on the walls of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City

ANGELYN FRANCIS
EQUITY AND INEQUALITY REPORTER

“It’s so important to me that, if the families are ready, we show the faces ... We show a smiling man.”

When artist Aquil Virani asked Khaled Belkacemi’s family for their favourite photo of him, it was a simple image of Belkacemi at a conference. The university professor leaned forward wearing a tie and a name tag and smiled for the photo taken in October 2016, just a few months before he died.

Virani turned the serene image into one of six paintings of each of the men killed, as their families remember them.

Saturday marks five years since Belkacemi, Ibrahima Barry, Maman



COURTESY OF JEAN CHRISTOPHE YELLE

exandre Bissonnette remains the one of the deadliest mass shootings in Canadian history and evidence of Islamophobia and white nationalism that has continued in this country.

On the fourth anniversary in 2021, Jan. 29 was declared a day of remembrance and action on Islamophobia.

Just six months later, in June 2021, four members of the Afzaal family were killed when a driver hit the family of five who were out for a walk in London, Ont.

With acts of violence against its members continuing, the community says more needs to be done.

