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[See table of contents](#)

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## Life in the pandemic La vie en temps de pandémie

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When news of COVID-19 began to emerge, many Canadians felt a false sense of protection from the virus due to feelings of isolation from the east and placing complete trust in the ability of modern medicinal techniques. Thus, when cases began emerging in Canadian neighbourhoods, it was as if our reality had been completely altered and our preconceived notions were blatantly disproven. As a result, many Canadians, including myself, are struggling to cope with life in the pandemic, which I aimed to illustrate through this water colour painting.

The surrealist style of my painting represents our distorted reality as we struggle to accept and manage the pandemic and the resulting feelings of dissociation. Even though individuals are close in proximity, they appear to be isolated and trapped in their homes while anxiously peering outside in anticipation. Also, their distorted bodies convey feelings of dysmorphia as a result of feeling unlike themselves. The individuals' differing positions are representative of the several approaches used to cope with isolation.

Various ethnicities are represented to showcase multiculturalism and to display that the virus is nondiscriminatory. However, the effects of COVID-19 have been disproportionately detrimental to some minority populations. Belonging to an immigrant family, I am especially concerned about the devastating affects the pandemic may cause to vulnerable communities. Thus, some buildings are kept empty to represent neighbourhoods where the effects of the pandemic are significant but are often overlooked.

Lopsided buildings are included to represent how community institutions have faced permanent enduring damage during COVID-19, causing serious widespread repercussions. The inclusion of a collapsing hospital represents the stress on the health care system and workers. Additionally, some individuals are wearing masks to represent the healthcare workers in our community. I have also included illustrations to represent activities which have kept me occupied, such as gardening and baking, whilst also including figures who appear to be disengaged as my levels of productivity have varied

through the pandemic. Additionally, both the sun and moon are included to represent the enduring repetitive routine which I have come to accept.

Throughout the pandemic, I have struggled with feelings of despair and isolation which I aimed to illustrate through this painting. During this unprecedented time, it is especially important to be empathetic and create a sense of community by bonding through our collective experiences with COVID-19. To conclude, we should strive to increase our introspective awareness to bring joy into our lives while learning to accept the inevitable changes that the pandemic has caused.