

# Embroidered Stories



Expressive Arts with Arabic-speaking refugee women



**Access Alliance**  
Multicultural Health and Community Services



**Bell**  
Let's Talk



## Samera A

Wall hanging, 30" x 9" (Crochet and Embroidery)

I created a wall hanging with the name of the city Damascus in Arabic and a maple leaf. It represents the coming together of Damascus and Canada in my life. It shows my past and present. Damascus has seen so many bad events, so I selected white embroidery floss as a symbol of hope that life will be peaceful and start new. I crocheted small flowers on the edges to represent the meaning of life. I used both crochet and embroidery techniques because I love working with textiles. I studied sewing and embroidery in the eighth grade. Doing embroidery again brought back memories of doing it with my friends as a child. I hope that my life becomes prosperous, will grow and become better in Canada. The artwork has brought out what is inside me, to describe how I feel about my life. My energy is depicted and expressed through the art.



## Ibitsam Kh

Wall Hanging, 14" x 16"

This is a picture of my two daughters, which I will gift to them as a surprise. The art is self-spoken. I wanted to embroider this because I couldn't find something more beautiful than the picture of my daughters. Your children make you able to stand up on your feet in all ways to, in turn, be able to support them. My children are the light of life.



## Fatima El Oirrak

Pillow Cases (1 of 2), 10" x 10" (Cross Stitch)

My design is inspired by Islamic art, and the colours are inspired by the cultural ceramics found in the mosques and old homes back in Morocco. Similarly designed mosaic tiles are found on the walls and ceilings of the mosques and homes. This artwork represents my culture, it's part of my country and reminds me of the houses I lived in from my childhood. I have an interest in old things, which is where I draw my inspiration. I am proud of my work because I've made it with my hands. My artwork is a reminder of my childhood, my culture, and I feel like it is a gift I made for myself from back home.



## **Fatima El Oirrak**

Pillow Cases (2 of 2), 10" x 10" (Cross Stitch)

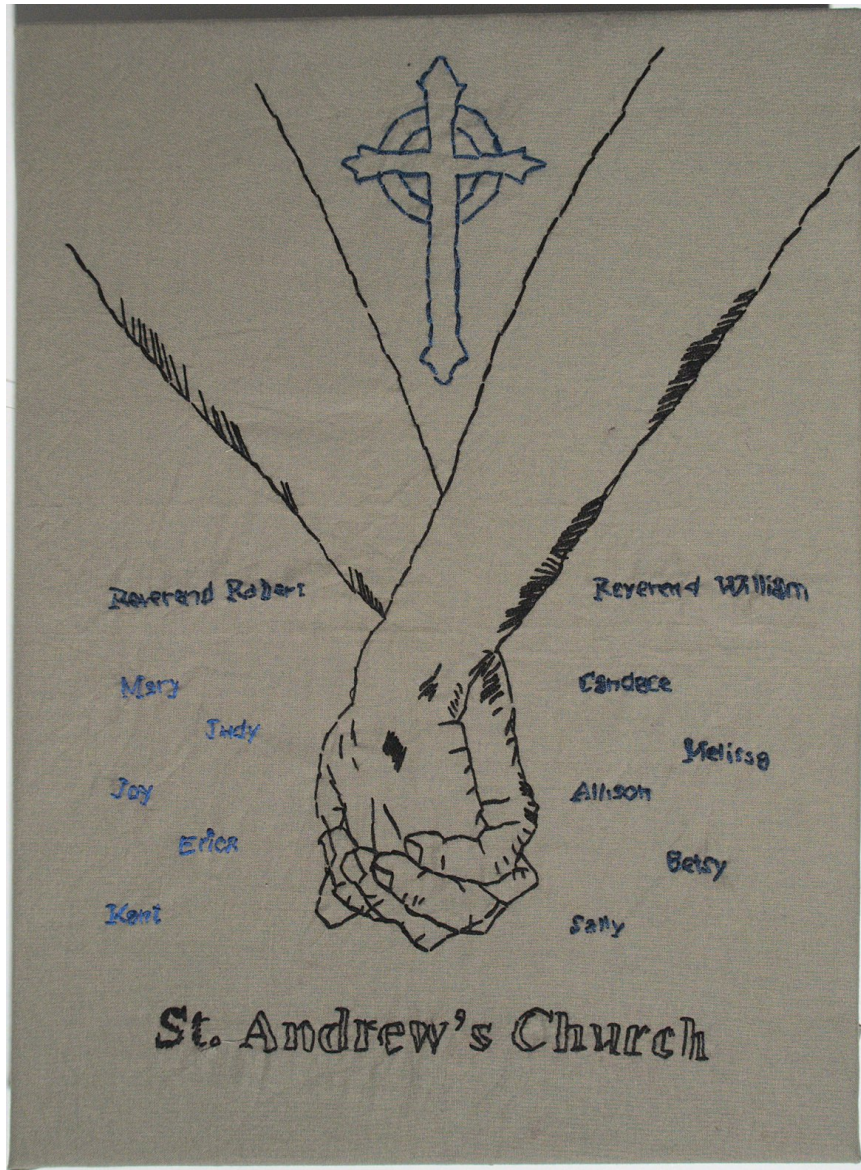
Fatima loves art and working with her hands. She was taught how to sew, crochet, and embroider by her mother as a young girl and has continued to learn and practice on her own as much as possible throughout her life. She wanted to learn cross stitch for many years now, and this was her first cross stitch project.



## Muna M

Table Runner 69" x 9"

I enjoyed doing the embroidery and chose some delightful colours in my work because everything in my life at that time of making the piece was difficult and dark. The purple represents spiritual connection. I enjoy energy work, and the colours I selected are connected to the colours of the chakras.



## Gulistan Abdo

Wall Hanging, 15" x 11"

I embroidered the whole church held in one's hands. The church sponsored my family to come to Canada. They came together, hand in hand, to help me come to Canada. I wanted to thank them by gifting them this embroidery artwork with the names of my sponsors and church. I will gift it to them with all of my heart so that they, in turn, can have a piece of my heart.

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Gulistan embroidered this to express her gratitude and thankfulness towards this group of people who are working together to help people in difficult situations.

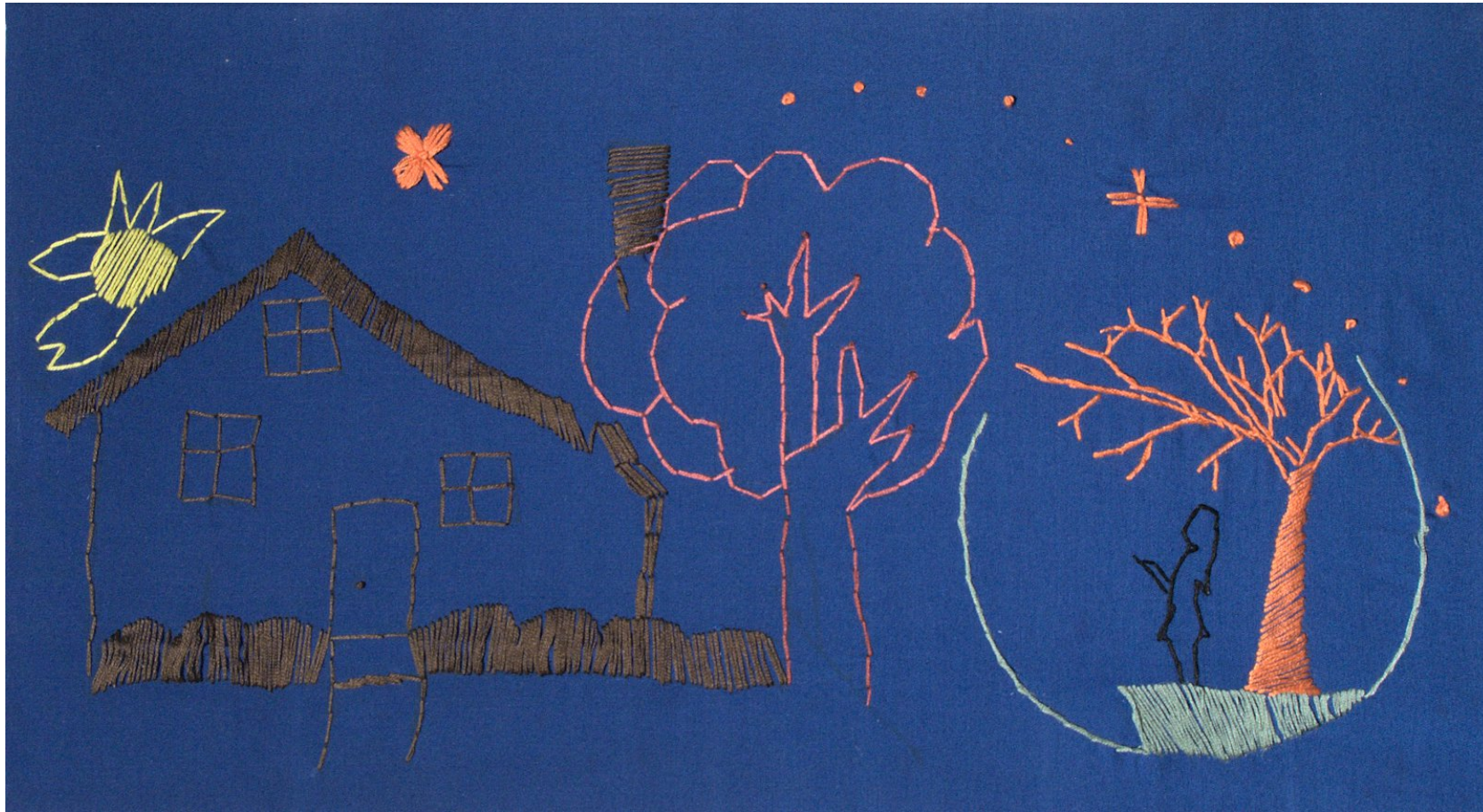


## **Gulistan Abdo**

Pillow Cases, 20" x 26"

It's my hobby to embroider and sew. I chose to embroider a flower because they are beautiful. As a child, I used to embroider a lot. But I lost the hobby when I lost my home. When we did embroidery in the group, it reminded me of the past and my childhood. The flowers I chose to embroider bring me hope in life, they are beautiful





## Mariam M

Wall Hanging, 11" x 20"

My artwork reminds me of the homes in Syria, the gatherings, the green space, and the peace of mind. We used to have our homes beside each other, our friends and relatives. There was a lot of peace of mind back then. I chose blue fabric because it represents the clarity of the sea and sky, and the orange embroidery brings me a sense of calmness.



## **Jinan AR**

Pillow Case, 16" x 16" (Embroidery and Bead Work)

My artwork is about friendship. Friendship is a form of giving love and this is what my friend taught me when she opened her arms to me and pulled me out from my internal wreckage



## Sahar AM

Pillow Case, 16" x 16"

The tree is a symbol of life and it represents the mother. The mother gives compassion and love, and helps her children face their difficulties. The tree is the source of life, as is a woman a source of life. Unlike Adam (as is described in religious doctrine), the woman is the origin and giver of life. The tree gives comfort to the soul and provides positive energy.

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Sahar chose to embroider an apple tree because of the red apple trees she sees around Canada. She didn't want the tree to be alone, because no trees are *really* alone, so she added flowers and plants to accompany it. She says: "no one wants loneliness".



## Roushin A

Wall Hanging, 15" x 12"

The tree represents a hope for life, the horse represents the man of my dreams, a man who has the qualities that I'm looking for. Not just any man, but a loving person who will care for my wellness and safety, and will care for my happiness when I'm sad. The sun represents the hope, the light, and the end of the bad things (a new start, an opening of a closed door). I was deprived from all of these things, which is why I wanted to represent them.

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Roushin says that a few weeks after she finished her artwork, all of her wishes that she was waiting for came true.

Roushin's older sister taught her how to embroider at the age of 15 when she started to make household items for her future home. But all of her work was left behind due to the war. She stopped doing embroidery when she left Syria, and these two pieces are the first ones she's done since leaving and coming to Canada.



## Roushin A

Pillow Case, 16" x 25"

The flag of Canada is a symbol of safety to me. The hands represent a symbol of loyalty to Canada and a thankfulness to Canada because Canada has saved us and rescued us from the war and freed us from the poor living situations in Turkey. I feel more welcomed in Canada and wanted this piece to express my feelings of love towards Canada.



## Rahaf

Tote Bag, 17" x 15"

A woman can be a role model, not only a man. Some people think women are weak, but they are not. In our culture, women's rights and freedoms still need to be fought for. The woman I embroidered is strong and beautiful, no matter what she looks like, no matter what her skin colour is.



## Fatma Hacomer

Pillow Case, 16" x 16"

The butterfly represents freedom and peace. I come from a place of war and a difficult marriage. After I came to Canada, I became a single mother. The butterfly represents the change that took place in Canada, which brought my freedom. I look at my coming to Canada as a successful step in my life. The colours of the butterfly (oranges and pinks) represent the colours of joy, and they were selected because they suit the butterfly. The beads were added to bring something different and pretty to the piece. The blue fabric adds to the theme of freedom and peace.

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This was Fatma's first experience with embroidery, and she says that she really enjoyed it. At the beginning she was hesitant in her work, but as she saw the piece growing she became more excited to finish it.



## Bassma Mohamed

Pillow Case, 16" x 16" (Embroidery and Acrylic Paint)

I mixed embroidery and acrylic paint to show what was possible and used different stitches to represent the different elements that exist in nature. I wanted to highlight the elements of nature and brought them out through the embroidery. The embroidered parts show what is in the foreground, and the paint shows what is in the background.

I love nature, as it's the most beautiful thing around. I find that my artwork typically features nature. This is the tree that I see every day in the garden. I like the way it looks in the sun and wanted to depict it in my embroidery to show how it looks in the summertime before the leaves change colour in the fall. The path invites you on a journey to continue exploring beauty. It's like you can walk into the painting and continue viewing the beauty. The flowers in the foreground display the different embroidery techniques and stitches. I focused on making sure there is a harmony or balance of colours in the artwork. The sunset in the background is beautiful and strong so that there is harmony between the background and the embroidery in the foreground, that way you can see the plants in the foreground.



## Bassma Mohamed

Wall Hanging, 20" x 15" (Embroidery and Acrylic Paint)

When I go for walks, I see this scene on my way to work. I see the tree, the wooden fence and the house. The family of this home has put in effort to maintain it. It is a beautiful house to look upon. When I see this house, it makes me hope to have an equally beautiful home with a beautiful garden, and it gives me a feeling of comfort.



## Bassma Mohamed

Wall Hanging, 14" x17" (Embroidery and Acrylic Paint)

This is a collection of flowers. I first focused on the idea of a flower by painting the flower in the background, and added the embroidery to show the different types of flowers. The flower is the base of beauty in nature and displays the array of colours in nature.

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Basma has been an artist her whole life. She has extensive art training and was an art teacher. She has done embroidery before, but always felt like the embroidery was missing something. This was the first time she mixed paint and embroidery, which to her, makes the art feel more complete. Since experimenting with embroidery and paint in this group, she has continued to create similar artwork.

For more information about Expressive Arts, please visit:

<https://accessalliance.ca/expressivearts>

Thank you to Bell Let's Talk for their support of this project!