

## Departure

By Pamela DeJong

This self-portrait represents my journey back to myself. The location is the International Departures lounge at the Gander Airport in Newfoundland. The lounge has changed very little since the 1960s and feels like a time capsule. In the painting I am waiting, but I am not sure which direction I will go.

I have always loved the visual arts. As a child I was never bored or lonely as long as I had a pencil to draw with and a piece of paper. Art was how I expressed myself and interpreted the world.

After graduating high school in 1978 I enrolled at the Alberta College of Art but dropped out after one year due to issues in my personal life.

Eventually I became a teacher, got married, and raised three children. During these years my family faced a number of crises: struggles with mental health issues and substance abuse, divorce and a frightening brush with cancer. I was busy coping with all this and lost touch with my authentic inner self. I struggled to find a way to express how I felt about my life.

Hoping to rekindle my creative side, I joined an ad hoc group of self-taught artists and we painted together for two years. I enjoyed working with this group but was often frustrated because I did not know how to proceed with my project and could not achieve the desired results.

It was at this point in my life that I took a road trip through the Maritimes and stopped at the airport in Gander to see a mural entitled "Flight and Its Allegories." The mural inspired me to pursue my creativity in a more intentional way.

In September 2016 I enrolled at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in the Fine Arts program.

From the moment I stepped into the classroom, the transformation back to my old creative self began. The FINA instructors at KPU are encouraging and supportive but also challenge students to go beyond the obvious and to look closely at what we see - not only with our eyes, but with our minds as well. They push us to achieve our potential by working harder than we ever thought possible.

At KPU I have begun to rediscover the person I was meant to be. This is the journey I was looking for and I will not lose my way again.