

## **Nineteen Years of Voices Through the Lens**

ANNAPOLIS ROYAL, Nova Scotia (August 28, 2025) – In 2006, Nat and Susan Tileston launched the “MY STORY” photo project (msppa.org) in collaboration with five young people from the “Karen Womens Youth Organization” on the Thai–Myanmar border. Their idea was to place the tools of photography directly in the hands of local people, enabling them to document their own lives and communities.

The “MY STORY” photo project teaches participants how to see like a photographer. Using accessible tools such as cell phones and entry-level cameras, students are introduced to basic photographic and video techniques. They are then given assignments that might include capturing daily life at home and work, friendships, feelings, or movement. Each session includes group critiques and concludes with participants working together to edit their images into a public exhibition.

To support these workshops, MSppa raised funds to purchase digital cameras and collaborated with community-based border organizations. Each workshop, typically lasting 7 to 10 days, culminates in an exhibition where photos are offered for sale. Half of the proceeds return to the photographer, while the other half supports the purchase of new cameras, ensuring that the project continues to grow.

Between them, Nat and Susan Tileston brought more than five decades of professional experience as photographers in New York City and Nova Scotia, much of it devoted to documenting dance and theatre. Their commitment to this project reflected both a desire to share their skills and to learn from other cultures. After Nat’s passing in 2019, Susan carried forward their shared vision, continuing to teach, to learn from her students, and to find joy in the exchange.

Since its inception, “MY STORY” has reached over 798 refugees and community members across Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, India, Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Each participant keeps their camera, preserving the ability to continue telling their story. The 2025 exhibition at ARTSPLACE Gallery marks the project’s 19th year. This year, MSppa expanded its reach to include elders from HelpAge Cambodia in Battambang and Hanoi, alongside youth and women at risk on the Thai–Myanmar border.

The need remains urgent. “With increased fighting on the Thai–Myanmar border at Mae Sot, SAW (Social Action for Women) is struggling to sustain their high school equivalency program for growing numbers of young refugees,” explains founder Susan Tileston. “This year’s participants included elders, women from safe houses, and youth escaping forced conscription in Myanmar.”

MSppa’s mandate is to give a voice to those who might not be heard, and we’re honoured to be able to showcase this work for the 19th year,” said Sophie Paskins, ARTSPLACE Gallery Director.

*MY STORY photo project #19, Images by Cambodian, Myanmar, Vietnamese refugees and elders opening reception, October 4, 12-2pm. Light refreshments served, all welcome. Exhibition continues through October 25.*

ARTSPLACE is a public Art Gallery that is operated by the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council, a registered charitable, community organization dedicated to encouraging and promoting the arts. Supported through the Province of Nova Scotia and the Canada Council for the Arts.

ARTSPLACE Gallery is located at 396 St. George Street in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia

For more information please contact:  
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<https://arcac.ca/>  
Facebook: ARTSPLACEGallery  
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DESIGN: PETER MANSOUR



**OPENING RECEPTION**  
OCT. 4, 12-2PM  
FREE • ALL INVITED  
DONATIONS WELCOMED

Photo credit: Aye Chan Myint Mo

**MY STORY PHOTO PROJECT #19**  
**Images by Cambodian, Myanmar, Vietnamese refugees and elders**  
**October 4 - 25, 2025**

**ARTSPPLACE** 396 St. George St. Annapolis Royal, NS B0S1A0

MY STORY photo project exhibition supported by: Social Action for Women, Mae Sot, Thailand and HelpAge.org



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