



March 1, 2025

# The Importance of a United Cultural Front: Strengthening Canadian Identity in the Face of Economic Challenges

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## Welcome / CEO or Founders' Introduction

### Dear Friends of ArtBridgeCanada

ArtBridgeCanada's nationwide initiative to strengthen our cultural sector seems timely given the challenging relationship developing between Canada and the US. This issue will cover our strategy to unite Canadians through arts and culture, presenting concrete actions for community engagement and sector sustainability.

Join us in shaping ArtBridgeCanada's future!

Our position paper is available as a PDF in:

English here - <https://bit.ly/3EltQMd>

French here - <https://bit.ly/40JyYkY>

*Brian Usher, Co-Founder, ArtBridgeCanada®*



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## The Challenges Ahead

Recent developments in Canadian-US relations, including the US imposition of steep tariffs on all Canadian goods, have tested our longstanding tradition of neighbourly cooperation. While our two countries have historically forged strong economic, social, and cultural bonds, these new economic measures threaten to undermine the values that Canadians hold dear.



The cultural sector contributes over \$53.1 billion annually to Canada's GDP and employs more than 650,000 Canadians. Today's economic challenges threaten this vibrant ecosystem, but they also present **an opportunity to reinforce our cultural sovereignty**.

We at **ArtBridgeCanada** believe that a resilient Canadian identity - rooted in a **shared sense of pride, creativity, and community** - is essential to withstand and rise above such challenges. Art and culture lie at the heart of this identity, serving as both a reflection of our collective experiences and a beacon of hope for our future.

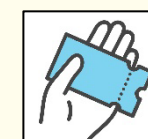
## The Power of Culture In Uncertain Times

1. **Fostering Unity:** The arts transcend politics and economics, reminding us of our shared humanity. By celebrating our diverse cultural heritage, we strengthen our social fabric and stand together with greater resolve.
2. **Inspiring Innovation and Adaptability:** From gallery walls to performance stages, creative expression showcases our capacity to adapt, evolve, and forge new pathways - even in the face of adversity.
3. **Preserving Our Heritage:** The richness of Canadian culture is built on the mosaic of our Indigenous roots and the contributions of immigrants from around the world. Protecting and amplifying these voices ensures that our stories endure and continue to shape our identity.



## Our Call to Action

1. **Support the Arts:** Attend local exhibitions, festivals, and performances. By purchasing tickets, artworks, or merchandise, you directly contribute to sustaining the creators who tell Canada's stories.
2. **Encourage Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between artists, businesses, and community groups. When we pool our resources and knowledge, we create a vibrant ecosystem that amplifies Canadian voices at home and abroad.
3. **Advocate for Policy and Funding:** Engage with local representatives and decision-makers. Let them know that the arts are not a luxury but a fundamental pillar of our national identity and a crucial driver of socio-economic resilience.
4. **Spread the Word:** Use social media, community forums, and personal networks to champion Canadian culture. Share the success stories of local artists and organizations, and encourage others to do the same.



## Moving Forward Together

By strengthening our collective cultural voice, we can navigate today's economic challenges with unity and confidence. Let's channel our creativity and passion into sustaining the rich tapestry of Canadian arts, ensuring it remains a source of pride, resilience, and inspiration for generations to come.



**Thank you** for standing with us in support of Canadian culture. Together, we will continue to celebrate our shared heritage, nurture new creative talents, and safeguard our identity - even when faced with external pressures.

# AI and Art:

## A Not-So-Serious Guide to a Pretty Serious Topic

by Joyce Effinger

Picture this: you're in your studio, paintbrush in hand, when suddenly your computer starts generating masterpieces faster than a caffeinated octopus with a printing press. Welcome to the brave new world of AI and art, where your laptop is trying to steal your job while simultaneously being really bad at drawing hands. But before you throw your palette at the nearest computer, let's talk about what's really going on.

### What's This AI Thing Anyway?

Think of AI as that eager art student who's binged every art history video on YouTube and looked at millions of artworks. They're really good at spotting patterns and mimicking styles, but they've never actually felt the sun on their face or dropped a wet canvas face down on the floor. They're like a really sophisticated parrot with a graphics card. Or someone who learned to cook without ever tasting food. Basically, a large language model is good old sentence complete from word processing, on steroids.

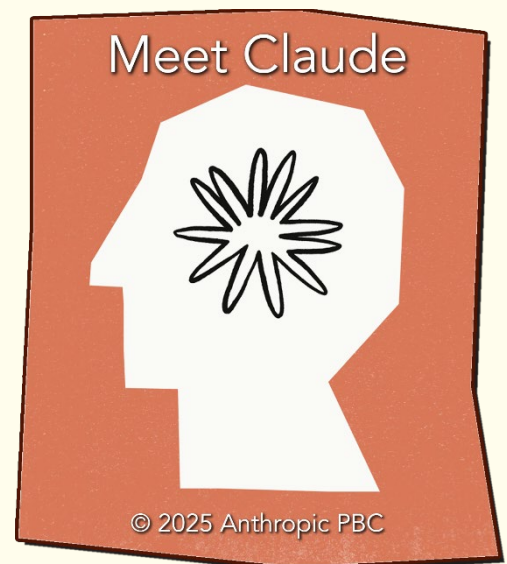
The first widely accessible AI was Eliza, a natural language processing program created by Joseph Weizenbuan at MIT in 1966. It could talk to humans, using pattern matching and script-based response, but it was not trained in the modern sense by force feeding it all the data you can steal, er, I mean acquire with carefully worded user agreements. If you asked Eliza if she was an artist, she might say "I merely reflect your own thoughts. Does that make me an artist?"

Today, AI art tools are basically having a conversation with all the art that's ever been digitized. They're saying, "Hey, I notice when humans want to draw a cat, they usually start with pointy ears and whiskers..." It's less magical and more mathematical than you might think. Though admittedly, sometimes for me, math is pretty magical.

### The Good Stuff (Yes, There Is Some)

Let's talk about the bright side (and not just because AI is really good at rendering lighting effects):

- **Infinite Sketching:** Need 90 different compositions for your next piece? AI can help you brainstorm faster than you can say "writer's block." It's like having an infinitely patient assistant who never needs coffee breaks.
- **Reference Generation:** Want to see what a bunch of yellow rubber ducks in a duck race meeting some real mallards over a bridge might look like? AI's got you covered. No more trying to photoshop together 12 different reference images. Yes, this picture was for the grandchild. Yes, Claude was critical of the picture.

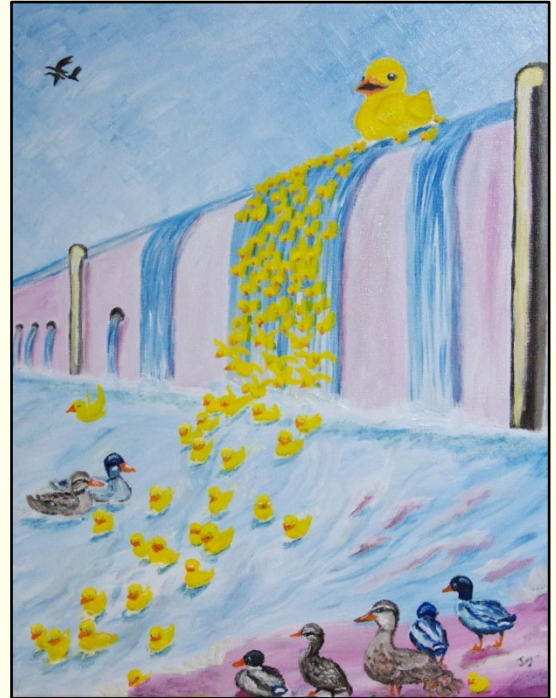


- **Technical Assistance:** Need help with perspective, color theory, or anatomical references? AI tools can be like having a knowledgeable tutor who's always available at 3 AM. Unless your internet goes down.
- **Timesaving on Commercial Work:** Those repetitive client revisions? AI might help you speed through the "can you make the logo bigger" phase of projects. Lets face it, AI has zero emotional attachment to the original design.
- **Criticism:** *AI, pretend you are an art critic for the Globe and Mail. I am going to ask you to analyze the following work for artistic merit and salability.* <upload> Okay, so I got told that my work might be suitable for children's books. For very young children. Perhaps pre-natal.

## The Not-So-Good Stuff (Keep Your Paintbrushes Close)

Now for the parts that might make you want to barricade yourself in a tech-free studio:

- **The Copyright Chaos:** AI has been trained on... well, everything. Including artworks whose creators never consented. It's like if someone taught a student by breaking into museums at night. Or your studio.
- **The Authenticity Question:** When everyone has access to AI tools, standing out becomes both harder and more important. It's like when photography was invented, and painters had to figure out what made their work special beyond pure representation.
- **The Learning Curve Conundrum:** Will art students still learn fundamental skills if they can generate anything instantly? It's like having a calculator before learning how to do math in your head. From what I have seen, this does not end well.
- **The Market Mess:** Some clients might think, "Why hire an artist when I can use AI?" (To which we say: for the same reason you'd hire a chef instead of buying a microwave.)



## How to Rumba with the Robot

So how do we adapt to this new reality? Cowering in the studio is not working for me so far:

1. **Learn the Tools:** Understanding AI is like learning any other medium. You wouldn't ignore acrylic paint just because it wasn't around in the Renaissance. Personally, my favourite lately is Claude 3 ( by Anthropic March 2024), even if he does not think much of some of my art.
2. **Focus on the Human:** AI can mimic styles, but it can't mimic your lived experience, your emotions, or your unique perspective. That's your superpower.
3. **Use It Wisely:** Think of AI as new paintbrush in the box. One that sometimes adds extra fingers and odd random lens flares.
4. **Stay Informed:** The technology is evolving faster than my excuses for why your artwork is not yet complete. (btw, AI generates great excuses!!). Keep up with the changes, but don't let them drive you crazy. Did you know for example that an AI has a best before



date? Chat-GPT for example finished its training in 2021, and only feels up to date as it accesses the web for some answers!

## The Bottom Line

AI in art is like having a new neighbor move into the artist community – one who works really fast, never sleeps, and sometimes copies your style. And plays in a band. A really loud, annoying band. We can either hide in our studios and pretend they don't exist, or we can figure out how to coexist and maybe even collaborate.

**Remember:** AI might be able to generate a million images in the time it takes you to sketch one, but it can't feel the joy of creation, the satisfaction of solving a creative problem, or the pride of personal growth. It can't tell you stories about that one time at band camp (er - art camp) , or share a laugh over a how coffee painting may have gotten started.

You, my fellow artist, are still the real deal. AI is just another plot twist in the ongoing story of art and technology – and let's be honest, we artists have always been pretty good at adapting to plot twists. Remember when the artistic community went nuts because someone marketed paint tubes... and “real artists grind their own pigments”

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go teach my Claude about some human values of tact. Its probably my prompt. Let's try.... *Pretend you are a supportive art teacher, who would like to help me improve my painting composition.. what changes might you suggest to the following oil painting? <upload>.*

**Joyce Effinger, ArtBridgeCanada Advisor**

(and Claude... yes... AI did help!)

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## Join Our Advisory Council: Help Shape Our Future

*As we kickstart ArtBridgeCanada, we're assembling a diverse Advisory Council of artists, educators, community leaders, philanthropists, and industry professionals. This Council will guide strategic decisions, help secure resources, and amplify our reach nationwide.*

### What We're Looking For:

- Passion for the arts and community development
- Professional or volunteer experience in relevant fields
- Networks that can help us expand our footprint

### How to Get Involved:

- Send a brief introduction and CV/resume to [dr.brian.usher@artbridgecanada.ca](mailto:dr.brian.usher@artbridgecanada.ca).
- Nominate others by sharing their profile and why you think they'd be a great fit.

## Artist of the Month

### Celebrating Creativity and Community with Lynda Norman

Art has the power to bring people together, spark inspiration, and transform communities. Few embody this spirit more than Lynda Norman, a Kelowna-based artist, musician, and arts advocate whose journey is as inspiring as her work.

From co-founding the Kelowna Arts Council to creating a thriving YouTube channel, Lynda has spent years fostering a vibrant creative scene, supporting fellow artists, and embracing her own artistic evolution. In this interview, she shares her passion for watercolours, her experiences building a welcoming artistic community, and the importance of collaboration, connection, and creativity.

Whether you're an artist yourself, a supporter of the arts, or simply someone who loves hearing about creative journeys, Lynda's story is a testament to the transformative power of artistic expression. Read on to discover how she balances her many roles, what inspires her work, and her vision for a more inclusive and engaged arts community - both in Kelowna and beyond.

### Lynda Norman: A Creative Force in Kelowna's Arts Community A Life Devoted to Art, Music, and Community

Interview by Debby Merkel,  
ArtBridgeCanada Advisor

**You've been deeply involved in Kelowna's arts community for many years. Can you share a little about that journey?**

Absolutely! My journey started with a strong belief that everyone deserves a space to express their creativity and be celebrated for it. That belief led me to co-found a non-profit called Artists for Creative Alliance in 2012, which later became the **Kelowna Arts Council** in 2015. For the past twelve years, I've served as Executive Director in a volunteer capacity, working alongside an incredible community of artists and creatives.

Through the Kelowna Arts Council, we've launched initiatives that bring artists, businesses, and organizations together, providing opportunities for creative expression through exhibitions, performances, and workshops. One of our most cherished projects was **OUR Coffeehouse**, which I ran bi-weekly for eight years - a welcoming space where artists could gather, perform, and inspire one another. Witnessing the transformative power of the arts has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my work.



### **How has your career evolved over the years?**

My path has been anything but linear! I started in administration, then transitioned into **career counseling**, where I supported women across British Columbia in becoming entrepreneurs. This eventually led to business development, publishing, and editing. I even ran my own magazine as a one-woman operation.

Through my work in the community, I saw the need for an organization that nurtured **grassroots creatives**, which led to founding the **Kelowna Arts Council**. These experiences have shaped my approach to my own art and music, blending administrative skills, marketing, storytelling, and community building into everything I create.



### **When did you fall in love with watercolour? Are you self-taught?**

I've always been drawn to the beauty of watercolours—their depth, softness, and fluidity. But I didn't start painting seriously until I founded the **Kelowna Arts Council**. One day, I picked up some old paints my kids had used in school, watched a few videos to learn about pigments and paper, and let my intuition take over. That was the beginning, and I haven't looked back since!

### **Has your artistic style changed over time?**

Definitely. In the beginning, I kept things simple—basic shapes, a limited color palette. But as I grew more comfortable, I started to trust my intuition, letting emotion and personal narrative shape my work. These days, my paintings are more expressive and dynamic, often influenced by the rhythm and spontaneity of music.

### **You juggle painting, teaching, performing music, attending painting groups, creating YouTube videos, and family commitments. How do you manage it all?**

It's all about balance! I use my phone calendar religiously, setting reminders and allocating blocks of time for everything. But I also leave space for spontaneity and rest. A personal rule I swear by? **No checking email after 5 PM!** That helps me stay present and avoid burnout.

### **Your YouTube channel has seen incredible growth in a short time. How did that happen?**

It's been an unexpected and thrilling journey! About ten months ago, I was introduced to **Lorenz Plourde from Process Art Discovery** through a mutual friend, Rogr Lee of ArtframeR. They were working on art chat videos, and Lorenz encouraged me to start my own channel—offering to handle all the video production.

My first solo watercolour video went up **eight months ago**, and now I have over **9,500 subscribers** (I call them my *Art Accomplices*). I love creating content, and the interaction with my audience keeps me motivated. It's amazing to see a real sense of **community and collaboration** growing through the platform.

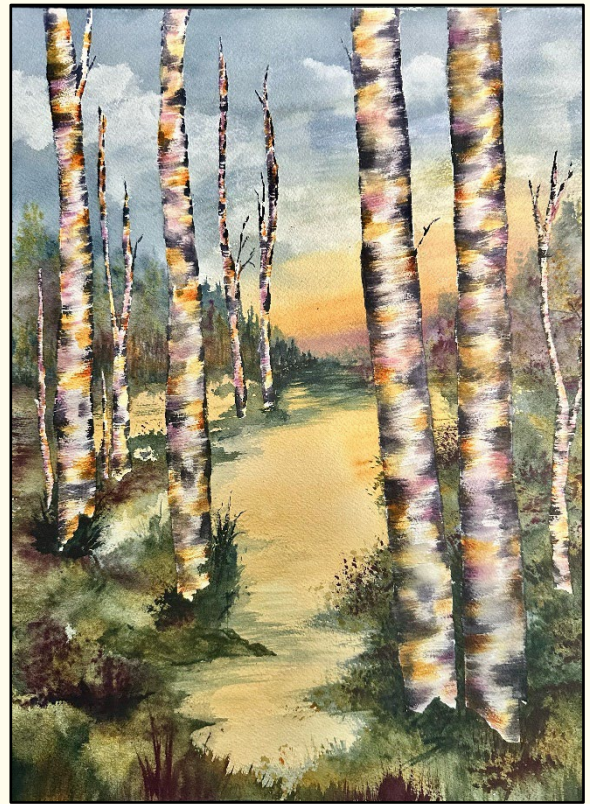


### How do you promote your work and art shows?

I use a mix of **social media, collaborations, and local outreach**. I share studio updates, behind-the-scenes content, and sneak peeks of new work online. Partnering with local businesses and other artists helps expand my reach. I also design posters and flyers for distribution in the community and online. The key is consistency and genuine engagement with my audience.

### How do you connect with potential buyers and sell your art?

I take a **multi-faceted approach**. Social media is a powerful tool, especially when I showcase my creative process and interact with followers. I also participate in **local art fairs and exhibitions**, where I can engage with potential buyers face-to-face. Plus, I maintain an **online store**, making it easy for collectors to browse and purchase my work.



### How do you stay inspired and keep your work fresh?

My biggest inspiration comes from being part of **community paint groups**. Engaging with fellow artists exposes me to new techniques, perspectives, and challenges that push my creativity forward. I also love themed exhibitions and challenges—they keep me exploring and experimenting with fresh ideas.



### Do you have a dream project?

Oh, I have so many! At the top of my list is **hosting watercolour retreats around the world** - bringing artists together in beautiful locations to paint, learn, and connect.

Another dream is to create a **multimedia art exhibition** called *Harmony in Color*, where live music, painting, dance, and spoken word come together in real-time performances. The idea is to transform sound into color and movement, giving audiences a deeply immersive artistic experience. Workshops would be a big part of it, allowing people to experiment with different creative forms and build a stronger sense of community through art.



## What's your vision for a thriving arts community in Kelowna - and across Canada?


I believe **everyone is born creative**, and we should celebrate that every day. A truly vibrant arts community is built on **collaboration, inclusivity, and accessibility**. It should reflect the diversity of its people, fostering **cross-disciplinary partnerships** between artists, businesses, and educational institutions.

Public art installations, community festivals, and open workshops should be commonplace, ensuring that art isn't just being created - it's being **experienced and shared by all**. When we make space for creativity, we enrich not only our own lives but the entire community.

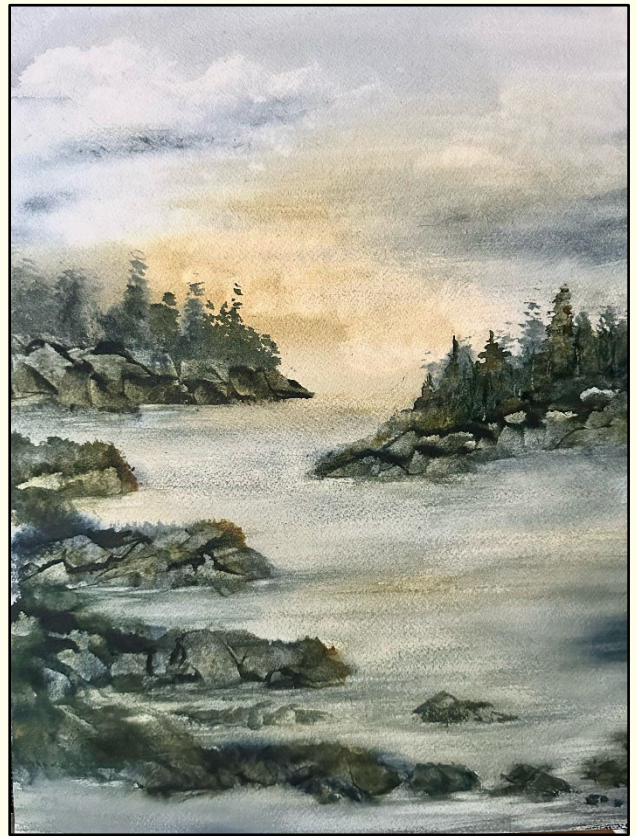
### Find Lynda Online:

 [Website](#)

 [Facebook](#)

 Instagram: [@LyndaNorman](#)

 YouTube: [@LyndaNorman](#)



Lynda Norman's journey is a testament to the power of creativity, community, and perseverance. Whether through painting, music, or fostering artistic connections, she continues to make a lasting impact on Kelowna's cultural landscape.

## Announcing Our Official Newsletter

*Stay connected with the heartbeat of ArtBridgeCanada through our monthly newsletter. Each edition will feature stories of emerging artists, updates on community-based art projects, and insider news on our advocacy efforts. It's also where we'll highlight new opportunities for partnership, volunteering, and donations.*

### Here's a sneak peak of what to expect:

- *Spotlight Artist of the Month*
- *Community Impact Stories*
- *Tips & Resources for Canadian Artists*
- *Behind-the-Scenes with Our Advisory Council*

***Be among the first to receive it - subscribe here!***

**SUBSCRIBE NOW**





## Your Support Builds the Bridge

*ArtBridgeCanada is a passion project with a big vision. As we grow from a start-up to a nationwide resource, we rely on the generosity of people who believe in the power of the arts to transform lives.*

### Ways to Support

1. **Donate** – Every contribution, big or small, helps us fund community projects and artist resources.
2. **Sponsor** – Partner with us to support specific programs or events, and gain recognition within the Canadian arts community.
3. **Volunteer** – Give your time, whether you're a skilled artist, event organizer, or someone who just loves the arts.

**DONATE/ CONTRIBUTE**

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### Thank You / Closing Note

*We appreciate your support and can't wait to collaborate with you to enrich Canada's artistic landscape. Stay tuned for more updates, and don't hesitate to reach out with questions, ideas, or just to say hello!*

### Contact Details

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