



The 2025

**Canadian
Art Inspiration**

**Student
Challenge**

**Art Examples
and Ideas to
Spark Student
Creativity**

The 2025 Canadian Art Inspiration Student Challenge

About the Canadian Art Inspiration Student Challenge

Open to students from Grade 7 through Grade 12, the Canadian Art Inspiration Student Challenge invites submissions of original student artworks and accompanying artist statements inspired by or responding to leaders in Canadian art history and major Canadian artworks. Applicants are encouraged to interpret this theme as broadly as they wish, and to submit works in any media.

[Apply online](#) before March 21, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. (EDT).

Awards will be announced in June of this year. Finalists' artworks will be showcased in an online exhibition and at Art Toronto 2025, and prizes will be awarded in different age groups (Grades 7 to 9; Grades 10 to 12), with \$500 for first prizes and \$250 for honourable mentions.

For more information
about our programming
& challenge, contact:

Hannah Dobbie
Programming Officer
hdobbie@aci-iac.ca

About the Art Canada Institute & Our Education Program

Launched in 2013, the Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive, multivocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, in both English and French, within Canada and internationally. The ACI works with more than fifty of Canada's leading art historians, curators, and visual culture experts. We are creating a central digital resource to tell the world about Canada's most important works of art: we function as [an online art museum](#), [a digital library](#), and an interactive [Canadian art encyclopedia](#). Our [teaching resources](#) are interdisciplinary, and all of our expert-authored guides follow national education recommendations and are available in both French and English.

Art Activity

Carl Beam: Art Dedicated to Change

as inspired by Carl Beam's *The North American Iceberg*



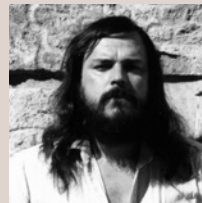
Carl Beam, *The North American Iceberg*, 1985

How Do You Raise Awareness?

Ojibwe artist Carl Beam was dedicated to raising national awareness about the effects of colonialism in Canada. From early in his career, Beam established himself as a unique creative voice, producing groundbreaking works—such as his most-well known piece, *The North American Iceberg*—that combined found objects with painting, collage, prose, and poetry. An advocate for greater opportunity and visibility for contemporary Indigenous artists, Beam's works were political statements that required the full participation of his viewers to understand their messages. Using Beam's art as inspiration, we invite students to create works about the issues that matter the most to them.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Carl Beam](#)

[Read more about Carl Beam](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Carl Beam
1943–2005

Place of birth:
M'Chigeeng First Nation
(West Bay), Ontario

Best known for:
Mixed media works
that confront colonial
violence and highlight
the resilience of
Indigenous Peoples

IMAGE: Carl Beam, *The North American Iceberg*, 1985, acrylic, photo-serigraph, and graphite on Plexiglas, 213.6 x 374.1 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1986 (29515). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC. © Estate of Carl and Ann Beam / CARCC Ottawa 2024.

Art Activity

Doris McCarthy: Imagining Places

as inspired by Doris McCarthy's *Iceberg Fantasy No. 9*



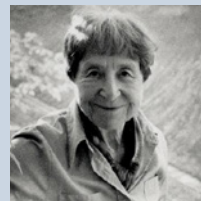
Doris McCarthy, *Iceberg Fantasy No. 9*, 1973

How Do You See the Land?

Landscape painter Doris McCarthy had an uncanny ability to capture the unique character of the places she visited—even the ones reinvented from memory. During her prolific career, McCarthy adopted a variety of techniques, sometimes working directly in nature, and other times, painting from photographs taken during her travels. Her experience of the Canadian Arctic was the basis for the fantastical scene pictured above, featuring stark white ice floes against a background of vibrant hues of blue, green, and purple. Inspired by McCarthy's evocative works, we encourage students to reflect on the places they've seen to create imaginative landscapes based on their memories.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Doris McCarthy](#)

[Read more about Doris McCarthy](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Doris McCarthy
1910–2010

Place of birth:
Calgary, Alberta

Best known for:
Landscape paintings
featuring a unique
blend of naturalistic
representation and
abstraction

Art Activity

Pitseolak Ashoona: Illustrating the Everyday

as inspired by Pitseolak Ashoona's *Summer Camp Scene*



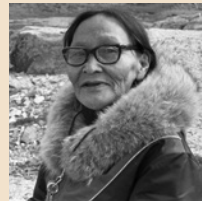
Pitseolak Ashoona, *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1974

How Do You Depict Your Life?

A trailblazing figure of modern Inuit art, Pitseolak Ashoona was known for her playful drawings that captured traditional ways of life in the Canadian Arctic. Born in the early twentieth century, Ashoona lived a semi-nomadic life until the late 1950s, when she settled in Kinngait (Cape Dorset). In this illustration, Ashoona depicts a scene she witnessed during the summers she spent in a hunting camp. Ashoona's composition highlights details such as the hanging *pitsik* (dried fish), and the sealskin tent in which women gather for idle conversation. For this activity, we invite students to follow in Ashoona's footsteps by honing their observational skills and turning creative attention to their everyday experiences.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Pitseolak Ashoona](#)

[Read more about Pitseolak Ashoona](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Pitseolak Ashoona
1904–1983

Place of birth:
Tujakjuak (Nottingham
Island), Nunavut

Best known for:
Colourful drawings of
daily life that created
a visual history of Inuit
intellectual, spiritual,
and material culture

IMAGE: Pitseolak Ashoona, *Summer Camp Scene*, c.1974, coloured felt-tip pen on paper, 50.6 x 65.4 cm, Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1989 (36414). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC. © Dorset Fine Arts.

Art Activity

Bertram Brooker: Finding Inspiration in Music

as inspired by Bertram Brooker's *Sounds Assembling*



Bertram Brooker, *Sounds Assembling*, 1928

What Does Your Favourite Song Look Like?

This work by Manitoba-based Bertram Brooker, one of the first painters to exhibit abstract art in Canada, is often considered to be his most accomplished creation. Finding intense enjoyment in music, Brooker sought to capture its ephemeral and magical qualities in his paintings. With this geometric, abstract composition, Brooker paints how he saw music, using bold forms and vivid colours to express a sense of movement and energy. In this activity, we invite students to choose a song they love and find ways to visualize the rhythms and melodies that inspire them.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Bertram Brooker](#)

[Read more about Bertram Brooker](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Bertram Brooker
1888–1955

Place of birth:
London, England
(later Portage la Prairie,
Manitoba)

Best known for:
Groundbreaking abstract
paintings inspired by
the affective qualities
of music and literature

Art Activity

Hannah Maynard: Pioneering Portraiture

as inspired by Hannah Maynard's *Hannah Maynard in a tableau-vivant composite photo*



Hannah Maynard, *Hannah Maynard in a tableau vivant composite photo*, c.1893–97

How Do You See Yourself?

One of Canada's earliest professional photographers, Hannah Maynard was known for her innovative use of experimental techniques. At a time when many women picked up the camera for leisure, Maynard broke the mould by establishing her own photography studio, positioning herself as a savvy businesswoman. Maynard showcased her creativity and technical skill with the camera in self-portraits, such as the one above, in which she used multiple exposures to portray her likeness in three different positions within the same scene. Maynard's visionary and inventive self-fashioning is the perfect reference for students to explore how they see themselves in relation to the world around them.

[Read more about Hannah Maynard](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Hannah Maynard
1834-1918

Place of birth:
Bude, Cornwall, England
(later Victoria,
British Columbia)

Best known for:
Whimsical photographs
(especially self-portraits)
created using cutting-
edge photo manipulation
techniques

IMAGE: Hannah Maynard, *Hannah Maynard in a tableau vivant composite photo*, c.1893–97, black and white collodion glass plate negative, 20 x 25 cm. Collection of BC Archives, Royal BC Museum, Victoria (F-02852). Courtesy of BC Archives, Royal BC Museum.

Art Activity

Takao Tanabe: Capturing Canada

as inspired by Takao Tanabe's *Inside Passage 1/04: Malacca Strait*



Takao Tanabe, *Inside Passage 1/04: Malacca Strait*, 2004

What Is Your Favourite Canadian Place?

One of the country's most accomplished artists, Takao Tanabe is best known for creating simplified and subtle paintings featuring some of the most iconic landscapes across Canada. In this moody image of the Pacific shore, Tanabe reveals his fondness for coastal scenes that are obscured by atmospheric details such as mist, clouds, and diffused light. Vistas such as this one connect the artist to his childhood in the tiny hamlet of Seal Cove, British Columbia. Inspired by Tanabe's intimate knowledge and love for the Pacific coast, we encourage students to create works that identify with the natural environments they are drawn to—or that feel like home.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Takao Tanabe](#)

[Read more about Takao Tanabe](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Takao Tanabe
b.1926

Place of birth:
Seal Cove,
British Columbia

Best known for:
Large scale and
atmospheric paintings
depicting Canadian
landscapes

Art Activity

Edith Clayton: Crafting Personal History

as inspired by Edith Clayton's *Market Basket*



Edith Clayton, *Market Basket*, 1975

What Do Your Family Traditions Look Like?

Edith Clayton was born in a predominantly African community near Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, where her mother taught her the art of splintwood basketmaking, a technique passed down through six generations in their family. An innovative creator, Clayton was only eight years old when she made her first basket, and she later became known for her distinct designs. Throughout her career, she advocated for continuing the splintwood tradition, teaching classes and writing a book about the process. Clayton's passion for the craft, and her interest in sharing cultural knowledge, offers powerful inspiration for students to explore their own family traditions.

[Read more about Edith Clayton](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Edith Clayton
1920–1989

Place of birth:
Cherry Brook,
Nova Scotia

Best known for:
Handwoven splintwood baskets combining African and British weaving techniques with Mi'kmaw dyeing practices

Art Activity

Iljuwas Bill Reid: Making Stories Real

as inspired by Iljuwas Bill Reid's *The Raven and the First Men*



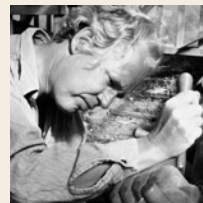
Iljuwas Bill Reid, *The Raven and the First Men*, 1980

What Are the Important Stories in Your Life?

Over the course of his career, Iljuwas Bill Reid embarked on a journey to reconnect with his Haida heritage. His study of the objects and tools that belonged to his great-great uncle, artist Daxhiigang (Charles Edenshaw), became an important way for him to learn more about his cultural lineage and the carving practices that were part of his family for generations. In *The Raven and the First Men*, Reid uses sculpture to tell Haida stories and myths. Full of wonder, humour, and power, the artist's work is compelling inspiration for students wishing to make art—sculptural or otherwise—that reflects a story from their own lives or cultures.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Iljuwas Bill Reid](#)

[Read more about Iljuwas Bill Reid](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Iljuwas Bill Reid
1920–1998

Place of birth:
Victoria, British Columbia

Best known for:
Intricately carved large-scale sculpture of the Northwest Coast Haida style

IMAGE: Iljuwas Bill Reid, *The Raven and the First Men*, 1980, yellow cedar, laminated and carved, 188 x 192 cm (height x diameter). Collection of the UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, Walter C. and Marianne Koerner Collection, 1980 (Nb1.481). Photo credit: Jessica Bushey. Courtesy of UBC Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver. © Bill Reid Estate.

Art Activity

Betty Goodwin: Objects of Significance

as inspired by Betty Goodwin's *Vest One*



Betty Goodwin, *Vest One*, 1969

What Is Your Most Prized Possession?

Montreal artist Betty Goodwin changed the medium of printmaking when, in 1968, she began putting pieces of clothing through a printing press. Her Vest series arose from this innovation and earned her critical acclaim. Goodwin used the vest as a symbol to remember her father, who was a tailor and died when she was very young. Through rich and unexpected compositions, Goodwin created a new way to communicate the personal significance of objects. Taking Goodwin's evocative prints as sources of inspiration, we encourage students to use their creativity to immortalize their own prized possessions.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Betty Goodwin](#)

[Read more about Betty Goodwin](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Betty Goodwin
1923-2008

Place of birth:
Montreal, Quebec

Best known for:
Innovative prints created
by putting found objects
through a printing press

IMAGE: Betty Goodwin, *Vest One*, August 1969, soft-ground etching, etching, drypoint, and roulette with oil pastel and graphite on wove paper, 70.7 x 56 cm (overall), 60 x 45.9 cm (plate). Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of Betty and Martin Goodwin, Montreal, 1999 (40300). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. © Betty Goodwin Estate. Photo credit: NGC.

Art Activity

Paraskeva Clark: Representing Labour

as inspired by Paraskeva Clark's *Parachute Riggers*



Paraskeva Clark, *Parachute Riggers*, 1947

What Does Work Look Like in Your Life?

Russian-born Paraskeva Clark was among the first Canadian painters to use her creative practice to address social issues. When many of her peers turned to landscape, Clark saw figurative painting as an effective way to examine the realities of her time. *Parachute Riggers* depicts labourers from the war effort, specifically a group of women creating parachutes. Clark's dynamic composition full of sharp angles captures the complexity and meticulous nature of this kind of labour. In considering how the artist used the figure to create meaning, the painting is a compelling springboard for students to reflect on the kinds of work they witness or experience in their own lives.

[Download a Teacher Resource Guide on Paraskeva Clark](#)

[Read more about Paraskeva Clark](#)



Get to Know the Artist:

Paraskeva Clark
1898–1986

Place of birth:
Saint Petersburg, Russia
(later Toronto, Ontario)

Best known for:
Modernist paintings that
address social issues with
a European sensibility