

BONNIE ANDERSON

A Life in Clay



The Story of
Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre
Kelowna, British Columbia

A DOCUMENTARY NARRATIVE
based on recorded interviews with
BONNIE ANDERSON



WRITTEN BY
LORENZ PLOURDE

PROCESS ART DISCOVERY
KELOWNA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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**Bonnie Anderson
Founder, Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre
Kelowna, British Columbia**

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This publication was created as a documentary record of the life, work, and teaching philosophy of Bonnie Anderson, founder of Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre in Kelowna, British Columbia.

The text is based on recorded interviews and video documentation produced by Lorenz Plourde for the Process Art Discovery project.

This book is intended as a historical and educational document, preserving Bonnie Anderson's contributions to the artistic community and the creative culture of pottery education.

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This publication is an independent documentary narrative based on recorded interviews with Bonnie Anderson and does not represent the current operations or ownership of Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre.

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Dedication

This documentary narrative is dedicated to the creative community that grew around Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre, and to the many students, artists, and friends who discovered the joy of clay through Bonnie Anderson's teaching.

Author's Introduction

This documentary narrative grew out of a series of recorded interviews filmed at Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre in Kelowna, British Columbia.

During those visits, Bonnie Anderson spoke openly about her love of clay, her experiences teaching pottery, and the creative community that had grown around her studio.

Bonnie Anderson passed away May 21st in 2025, but her influence on the pottery community of the Okanagan continues through the many artists and students who worked in her studio.

What began as a video project gradually revealed something more important: Bonnie's story represented a small but meaningful part of the cultural history of the Okanagan arts community.

Artists, teachers, and studio founders often spend their lives quietly building creative spaces where others can learn and grow. Yet the stories of these individuals are rarely recorded in a lasting way.

This project was created in the spirit of preserving those stories.

The words that appear throughout this narrative are drawn from Bonnie Anderson's recorded interviews and conversations about her life as an artist, teacher, and founder of Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre.

Rather than presenting a traditional biography, this book attempts to capture the spirit of Bonnie's philosophy about creativity, community, and the simple joy of working with clay.

It is intended as a documentary record — a way of preserving her voice and her ideas for future generations of artists and students who may never have had the opportunity to meet her in person.

Bonnie often spoke about the power of clay to bring people together.

In many ways, that belief lives on in the community she helped create.

This publication is offered as a small contribution to preserving that legacy.

Lorenz Plourde
Process Art Discovery
Kelowna, British Columbia

About Bonnie Anderson

Bonnie Anderson was a Canadian ceramic artist, painter, and educator whose work and teaching helped shape the creative culture of Kelowna, British Columbia for more than three decades.

Bonnie studied at the University of Calgary, where she completed a triple major in painting, printmaking, and ceramics. Her early training exposed her to a wide range of artistic media including watercolour, oil painting, printmaking techniques such as woodblock and lithography, and photographic processes. This multidisciplinary background would later influence both her artwork and her teaching philosophy.

Before moving to the Okanagan, Bonnie worked as a ceramic arts instructor for the City of Calgary from 1986 to 1990, helping introduce pottery to a wide range of students and community members.

In 1990, drawn by the natural beauty and artistic potential of the Okanagan Valley, Bonnie moved to Kelowna, British Columbia with a clear vision: to establish a vibrant ceramic arts centre where people of all ages and backgrounds could learn pottery and explore creativity.

That vision became Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre.

Over the following decades, Bonnie built the studio into one of the most recognizable pottery education spaces in the region. Located within the Rotary Centre for the Arts in Kelowna's Cultural District, the studio became a gathering place where children, youth, adults, and seniors could learn the craft of pottery.

While Bonnie taught many aspects of ceramics, she was particularly known for her work in Raku firing, an ancient Japanese-inspired pottery technique that produces dramatic surfaces through rapid firing and cooling processes. Her work often featured bold shapes and expressive forms, reflecting her admiration for artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

Many of Bonnie's clay sculptures and ceramic works explored figurative themes, particularly representations of women with humor and personality. Alongside her ceramics, she continued to paint throughout her life, working in watercolour, oil, gouache, and acrylic.

Her artwork and ceramic pieces have been collected internationally and exhibited throughout the region.

Beyond her personal artistic practice, Bonnie was deeply involved in the artistic community. She contributed to numerous organizations including the Federation of Canadian Artists, the Okanagan Potter's Association, and the Arts Council of the Central Okanagan, and she played an active role in events such as the Kelowna Clay Festival.

Through her teaching and community involvement, Bonnie introduced thousands of people to the creative possibilities of clay.

Her greatest legacy, however, may not be the pieces she created, but the creative community she helped build.

PART I

Discovering Creativity

The story of Bonnie Anderson's life in clay did not begin with pottery.

Like many artists, her journey into the creative world unfolded gradually, one discovery at a time.

Long before she became known as the founder of Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre in Kelowna, Bonnie was exploring different creative paths, often without realizing that those experiences were quietly preparing her for the work she would one day do.

In her early years, Bonnie's professional life took a direction that might surprise people who later knew her as a ceramic artist and teacher.

She began her working life as a **hairstylist**.

Hairstyling may seem far removed from pottery, but for Bonnie it was another form of creativity. The work required attention to shape, proportion, and personal expression—qualities that would later appear in her artistic practice.

Looking back, Bonnie often described her life as a sequence of creative discoveries, where each experience naturally led to another.

"I started out as a hairstylist when I was young," she once explained. "And then one creative thing led to another after another."

At the time she could not have known where that path would lead.

What she did know was that she enjoyed working with her hands and exploring artistic ideas.

Eventually that curiosity led her toward formal art education.

In 1982, Bonnie enrolled at the **University of Calgary**, where she pursued a degree in the visual arts. Her academic focus reflected her broad interests. Rather than concentrating on a single discipline, she immersed herself in several areas of study.

She ultimately **triple-majored in painting, printmaking, and ceramics**.

Originally, ceramics had not been the main focus of her studies. She had planned to concentrate primarily on painting and printmaking. But the university program required an additional field of study, and ceramics became the third discipline she selected.

That decision would change the course of her life.

The experience of studying art at the university level opened new possibilities for Bonnie. She was exposed to the technical aspects of visual art, as well as the philosophical and conceptual ideas that artists explore through their work.

Her academic thesis during those years examined themes of **eroticism in art**, reflecting her willingness to explore complex and challenging subjects through creative expression.

But beyond the academic requirements and theoretical discussions, the university environment offered something else that proved even more important: it introduced Bonnie to the world of artistic experimentation.

She explored different mediums, different processes, and different ways of thinking about creativity.

Among those mediums was clay.

Ceramics had initially been just one of several subjects in her program, but the material itself had a unique character that distinguished it from the other forms of art she was studying.

Clay responded directly to the hands that shaped it. It could be pushed, stretched, carved, or molded. It required patience and attention, but it also allowed for spontaneous experimentation.

Working with clay demanded focus.

And that focus had an unexpected effect.

Bonnie often described how pottery could absorb a person's attention so completely that everyday worries seemed to disappear.

"When you begin to work with clay," she explained, "your worries disappear. You have no cares. All you're doing is concentrating on the clay."

This simple observation would later become one of the guiding ideas behind the studio she eventually created.

But during her university years, Bonnie was still discovering what clay meant to her personally.

The process of learning ceramics introduced her to both the artistic and the scientific sides of pottery. Clay bodies, glazes, firing temperatures, and kiln atmospheres all played a role in determining how a piece would ultimately appear.

There was a surprising amount of chemistry and physics involved.

Glazes, for example, had to be carefully matched with the type of clay being used. If the glaze shrank too much during firing, it could crack or craze on the surface of the piece. If applied too heavily, it could run down the pot and fuse to the kiln shelf, potentially damaging both the pottery and the kiln itself.

Bonnie found these technical aspects fascinating.

There was a delicate balance between artistic intuition and scientific understanding. A potter needed both.

But even more than the technical knowledge, Bonnie discovered that clay offered something deeper.

It created a connection between the maker and the material.

Unlike painting or drawing, where the image is placed onto a surface, pottery involves shaping the surface itself. The form of the object grows directly out of the hands of the artist.

That process can be deeply satisfying.

And for Bonnie, it sparked a realization.

Clay was not just a medium for making objects.

It was a medium for building **community**.

Years later, when Bonnie spoke about the role of pottery in people's lives, she often mentioned the wide variety of individuals who came through her studio doors.

Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, lawyers, teachers, and people from many other professions found their way into pottery classes.

They came not only to learn a new skill, but also to escape the pressures of their daily lives.

“We live in a very stressful world,” Bonnie often said.

For many people, sitting at a pottery wheel and shaping clay provided a rare moment of calm.

It allowed them to slow down.

To focus.

To create something tangible.

And to share that experience with others.

During her university years, Bonnie could not yet see how these ideas would eventually shape her life's work.

But the seeds had already been planted.

She had discovered art.

She had discovered clay.

And most importantly, she had begun to understand that creativity could bring people together in ways that few other activities could.

That understanding would soon lead her toward an unexpected opportunity—one that would take her far from Calgary and eventually bring her to the Okanagan Valley.

And it was there, in Kelowna, that Bonnie Anderson's vision for a pottery studio would truly begin.

PART II

The Move West

By the time Bonnie Anderson completed her studies at the University of Calgary, she had gained a broad foundation in the visual arts. Painting, printmaking, and ceramics had all become part of her creative language. Yet like many artists emerging from university, she faced a practical question that has confronted generations before her:

How do you build a life around art?

The transition from academic study to real-world work is rarely simple. For Bonnie, the next chapter of her life began not in a studio, but behind the wheel of a school bus.

Her aunt owned a transportation company in Calgary called **Southland Transportation**. When Bonnie finished university, she found herself in need of steady work, and her aunt encouraged her to come help with the business.

At the time, Bonnie accepted the job partly out of necessity and partly out of curiosity about where life might lead next.

Driving a school bus may seem like an unlikely step in the story of an artist, yet for Bonnie it became part of a larger pattern that defined her life: she never believed that creative work had to follow a rigid or predictable path.

Life moved in unexpected directions.

Opportunities appeared in surprising places.

And sometimes the best ideas emerged while simply paying attention to what was happening around you.

During those years, Bonnie continued to stay connected to art whenever she could. The curiosity she had developed during her university studies had not disappeared. If anything, it had grown stronger.

Eventually she helped start a pottery studio at the **Village Square Leisure Centre in Calgary**, where people could come to learn and practice ceramics. The experience gave Bonnie her first real taste of what it meant to build a creative space for others.

It also showed her something important.

When people gathered around clay, something special happened.

Pottery was not only about making objects. It created conversation, laughter, collaboration, and shared discovery. Students encouraged each other. Beginners learned from more experienced potters. The studio became a place where people could relax and explore creativity without pressure.

Bonnie began to realize that her greatest satisfaction did not come solely from making her own work.

It came from **helping others discover creativity**.

That insight would shape everything that followed.

Not long after those experiences in Calgary, another possibility began to take shape—one that would eventually bring Bonnie to the Okanagan Valley.

Her aunt had decided to move west to **Kelowna, British Columbia**, and she encouraged Bonnie to visit.

Kelowna at that time was very different from the thriving cultural destination it would later become. The city was growing, but the organized arts community was still developing.

For someone interested in building a studio, it offered something both exciting and intimidating.

There were opportunities.

But there were also many unknowns.

During one of her visits, Bonnie's uncle showed her a small **mezzanine space above a garage on Enterprise Way**. The space was simple, practical, and not particularly large. But when Bonnie saw it, an idea immediately formed in her mind.

She looked at the mezzanine and imagined pottery wheels, shelves of clay, and people gathered together learning how to work with their hands.

To most people it might have looked like just another spare room.

To Bonnie, it looked like a **studio waiting to happen**.

She began to imagine what it would take to build something there. The idea was both thrilling and uncertain. Starting a pottery studio requires equipment, materials, kilns, and students — but it also requires courage, because no one can guarantee that people will come. But Bonnie had already learned something from her experiences in Calgary.

If you create a welcoming space for creativity, people will find their way to it.

Eventually she made the decision that would change her life.

She moved to Kelowna.

With the help of family and friends, Bonnie began setting up her first pottery studio in that small mezzanine space. Pottery wheels were installed. Clay was brought in. The room slowly transformed into a working studio.

What happened next surprised even Bonnie.

Students began to appear.

In fact, before she had fully established the studio, there were already **thirteen students signed up for classes**.

Word had spread quickly through the community.

People were curious.

They wanted to try pottery.

They wanted to learn something creative.

For Bonnie, this was both encouraging and slightly overwhelming.

Running a studio meant organizing classes, managing equipment, and helping beginners who had never touched clay before. It also meant solving practical challenges that arise when a growing number of people gather in a small space.

The mezzanine studio quickly became busy.

Very busy.

In fact, it became so active that after only **six months**, the building owners told Bonnie that the studio needed to move.

There were simply too many people coming and going.

The noise, the activity, and the constant stream of students had outgrown the space.

For some people, such a setback might have felt discouraging.

For Bonnie, it was actually confirmation that her idea was working.

People wanted pottery.

They wanted a place to learn.

And they were willing to seek it out.

So instead of giving up, Bonnie began searching for a new location.

She eventually found a space on **Sexsmith Road in Kelowna**, where the studio could continue to grow.

That move marked the true beginning of what would later become known as **Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre**.

The Sexsmith Road studio provided more room for classes and equipment. Over time, the number of students increased, and the studio began to develop a reputation within the local community.

People came to learn hand-building techniques.

Others learned to throw pots on the wheel.

Some explored glazing and decorating.

Many simply came to relax and enjoy the creative process.

What Bonnie was building was more than a classroom.

It was a **creative gathering place**.

For thirteen years the studio continued to grow and evolve at the Sexsmith Road location. During that time, Bonnie refined her approach to teaching and developed the philosophy that would guide her work for the rest of her life.

She believed that pottery should be accessible to everyone.

Beginners should feel welcome.

Advanced students should have space to grow.

And the studio itself should feel like a place where people could explore creativity without fear of making mistakes.

Clay, after all, is forgiving.

If a pot collapses, it can be reshaped.

If a glaze experiment fails, another attempt can be made.

Every piece teaches something.

Over the years, Bonnie watched as students returned again and again to the studio.

Some came once a week.

Others became deeply committed and spent many hours developing their skills.

Friendships formed.

Ideas were shared.

A creative community slowly took shape.

By the time more than a decade had passed, Bonnie had already helped hundreds of people discover pottery.

But another opportunity was about to appear—one that would transform the studio into something even larger.

In the late 1990s, the city of Kelowna began discussing the creation of a centralized cultural space where artists and arts organizations could gather.

The concept eventually became known as the **Rotary Centre for the Arts**.

The goal was to create a hub where different forms of creativity could exist under one roof.

For Bonnie, the idea sounded familiar.

She had always imagined pottery studios as community hubs.

Now the city was proposing exactly that.

And soon, Bonnie would be invited to become part of it.

PART III

Creating a Creative Community

By the time Bonnie Anderson's pottery studio had been operating for more than a decade on Sexsmith Road, something important had already taken root.

The studio had grown beyond its original purpose as a place to teach pottery classes.

It had become a **community**.

Students were not simply attending a class and leaving. Many returned again and again. Some stayed involved for years. A few eventually reached a level of skill where pottery became a serious personal pursuit.

What Bonnie had discovered through experience was that pottery created a natural environment for collaboration.

People learned from each other.

They shared techniques.

They exchanged ideas.

And perhaps most importantly, they supported each other through the learning process.

Clay has a way of humbling everyone who works with it. Even experienced potters occasionally see a carefully shaped piece collapse on the wheel. Glazes sometimes behave unpredictably. Kiln firings can produce surprises.

Because of this, pottery tends to encourage patience and good humor.

Mistakes become lessons rather than failures.

In Bonnie's studio, that attitude became part of the culture.

Students were encouraged to experiment, to try new ideas, and to accept that every piece—even unsuccessful ones—contributed to the learning process.

Over time, Bonnie refined the structure of her studio to support different levels of experience.

Beginners could enroll in introductory classes where they learned the basics of working with clay. They practiced simple forms, learned how to wedge clay properly, and began experimenting with glazes.

More experienced students could move into intermediate classes where they developed greater control over the wheel and more complex forms.

And eventually, the most dedicated potters could become **club members**.

Club membership represented a special stage in the studio's ecosystem.

Instead of attending structured classes, club members were given the freedom to work independently in the studio. Each member had a personal cubby space where clay, tools, and works in progress could be stored.

They also received keys to the studio.

This meant they could come and go whenever they wished, working on their pottery at times that suited their schedules.

For many artists, that level of freedom was invaluable.

The studio became almost like a second home.

At its peak, Bonnie's studio supported **approximately thirty-eight or thirty-nine club members**, many of whom spent a great deal of time there creating pottery, sharing ideas, and refining their craft.

Yet even with this growing group of experienced potters, Bonnie never lost sight of her original goal.

The studio remained open to beginners.

In fact, welcoming beginners was one of the most important parts of the studio's mission.

Every new student represented a chance to introduce someone to the joy of working with clay.

Bonnie believed strongly that creativity should never feel intimidating.

When someone walked into the studio for the first time, they were greeted with encouragement rather than expectations.

No one needed to be an artist already.

All they needed was curiosity.

And that philosophy attracted people from an astonishing variety of backgrounds.

Over the years, Bonnie observed that pottery classes drew participants from nearly every profession imaginable.

Doctors and nurses came to relax after demanding workdays.

Pharmacists, lawyers, teachers, and business professionals all discovered that shaping clay could provide a welcome break from the pressures of daily life.

Many arrived feeling uncertain about their artistic abilities.

But once they placed their hands in the clay and began to focus on the wheel, something changed.

The worries of the outside world began to fade.

Working with clay required concentration.

The spinning wheel demanded attention.

The shape of the vessel gradually emerged through the potter's hands.

And in that process, the mind quieted.

Bonnie often described this effect in simple terms.

“When you begin to work with clay,” she said, “your worries disappear. All you're doing is concentrating on the clay.”

For many students, this became the most meaningful aspect of the experience.

Pottery was not only about creating objects.

It was about reconnecting with creativity.

It was about finding a moment of calm in a busy world.

Because of this, Bonnie often referred to pottery classes as **therapeutic**.

She believed deeply that working with clay helped people rediscover a sense of balance.

The studio environment reinforced that feeling.

Instead of competition, there was cooperation.

Students helped one another lift heavy pieces.

More experienced potters shared advice with beginners.

Instructors offered guidance while encouraging personal experimentation.

And gradually, the studio developed a warm, welcoming atmosphere.

Over the years, thousands of students passed through Bonnie’s classes.

Some attended only briefly, satisfied with the experience of trying something new.

Others returned year after year.

In fact, Bonnie sometimes encountered people who had taken her classes decades earlier.

They would walk into the studio, look around, and say something like:

“I took your pottery class back in 1990.”

Those moments were deeply meaningful to Bonnie.

They confirmed that the studio had made a lasting impression.

Even if students had moved on to other careers or hobbies, the memory of working with clay remained part of their lives.

Occasionally, former students returned not only to visit but to share their own creative journeys.

Some had gone on to establish studios of their own.

Others had incorporated pottery into their personal artistic practice.

For Bonnie, seeing students grow and succeed was one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching.

She often joked that some of her former students had become her **competition** by opening their own studios.

But she meant this with pride.

Helping others succeed was always part of her vision.

While the studio flourished at its Sexsmith Road location, another opportunity was quietly developing in Kelowna.

Local arts organizations had begun discussing the creation of a centralized facility where different artistic disciplines could share space and resources.

The project eventually became known as the **Rotary Centre for the Arts**.

The idea behind the Rotary Centre was to create a hub for cultural activity—a place where musicians, painters, sculptors, performers, and educators could all contribute to a vibrant artistic community.

For Bonnie, this concept aligned perfectly with the philosophy she had already developed in her studio.

Art thrives when people gather together.

Creativity grows when artists share ideas.

When the Rotary Centre began inviting artists and organizations to apply for space in the new building, Bonnie was encouraged to submit an application.

At first, she hesitated.

Moving a pottery studio is no small undertaking.

Kilns must be relocated.

Pottery wheels must be transported.

Shelving, clay storage, and glazing areas must all be carefully reconstructed.

But the opportunity to place her studio at the heart of Kelowna's cultural district was too promising to ignore.

After submitting her application, Bonnie and her studio were **vetted and approved** for inclusion in the new arts centre.

The move would mark the beginning of a new chapter for Potters Addict.

Once established at the Rotary Centre for the Arts, the studio would become an integral part of Kelowna's creative landscape.

It would welcome school groups, community organizations, beginners, advanced potters, and countless curious visitors who wandered into the building looking for artistic inspiration.

The studio that had begun years earlier in a small mezzanine above a garage was about to become something much larger.

And through it all, Bonnie Anderson remained focused on the same simple goal she had held from the beginning:

To create a place where people could come together, work with clay, and discover the joy of creativity.

PART IV

Clay and the Human Spirit

As the years passed and Potters Addict became firmly established within Kelowna's arts community, Bonnie Anderson found herself reflecting more and more on a question that many artists eventually ask:

Why does art matter?

For Bonnie, the answer had less to do with galleries or exhibitions and more to do with everyday life.

She had watched hundreds—eventually thousands—of students walk through the doors of her studio. They came from every profession and background imaginable. Some were young students curious about pottery. Others were adults who had never considered themselves artistic at all.

Many arrived carrying the weight of their daily responsibilities.

Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, lawyers, teachers, and business owners all appeared in her classes at one time or another. Some came because they had always been curious about pottery. Others simply needed a place where they could relax.

And almost all of them shared one common experience.

The moment they began working with clay, something shifted.

Bonnie described the transformation in simple, direct language:

“When you begin to work with clay, your worries disappear. You have no cares. All you're doing is concentrating on your clay.”

It was not something she had invented or planned.

It was something she observed.

Over and over again, she saw people arrive at the studio carrying stress from the outside world. And then, within minutes of placing their hands on the wheel or beginning to shape a piece of clay, their focus changed.

Their breathing slowed.

Their attention moved away from deadlines, responsibilities, and worries.

They began concentrating on the simple physical act of shaping clay.

The spinning wheel required steady hands.

The form of the vessel required patience.

And the process demanded presence.

Clay did not allow a distracted mind.

If a potter lost concentration, the piece would wobble or collapse. But when the potter remained focused, the clay responded beautifully.

For many students, this experience felt almost meditative.

Bonnie often referred to pottery as a **therapeutic activity**, not in a clinical sense, but in the way it naturally encouraged people to slow down and reconnect with themselves.

In a world that often moves quickly and demands constant attention, clay offered something rare.

It required patience.

It required care.

And it rewarded attention.

Students sometimes discovered that their best pottery work happened when they stopped worrying about perfection and simply allowed themselves to enjoy the process.

This realization became one of the central philosophies of Bonnie's teaching.

She did not encourage students to rush toward mastery.

Instead, she encouraged them to explore.

To try new techniques.

To accept mistakes as part of the learning process.

And above all, to enjoy the act of making something with their hands.

Clay, she believed, had a unique ability to teach patience.

Unlike some art forms where results appear quickly, pottery involves multiple stages. A piece must first be shaped. Then it must dry slowly before its first firing in the kiln. After that, glazes are applied, and the piece is fired again at high temperatures to transform the glaze into glass.

Each stage requires time.

Each stage requires care.

Students quickly learn that pottery cannot be rushed.

And in learning that lesson, they often discover something else.

They begin to appreciate the rhythm of the creative process itself.

Bonnie also enjoyed explaining the technical aspects of pottery to her students.

Behind every finished piece lies a fascinating combination of art and science.

Clay bodies behave differently depending on their composition.

Glazes must be carefully matched to the clay to avoid cracking or crazing during firing.

Too much glaze can run down the surface of a pot and fuse to the kiln shelf, damaging both the piece and the kiln.

And firing temperatures must be precisely controlled to achieve the desired results.

Bonnie loved sharing these details because they helped students understand that pottery was not only an artistic practice but also a scientific one.

Glazes, she explained, were essentially mixtures of minerals that melted into glass when exposed to high heat.

Inside the kiln, temperatures could reach well over a thousand degrees Celsius.

At those temperatures, the clay itself underwent a transformation.

What began as soft, earthy material gradually hardened into ceramic.

The process felt almost magical.

Students would place fragile clay pieces into the kiln and, hours later, remove strong, finished vessels that could last for generations.

For Bonnie, this transformation represented something larger.

It symbolized the journey of creativity itself.

An idea begins as something fragile and uncertain.

Through patience, experimentation, and time, it becomes something solid and meaningful.

Teaching these lessons became one of Bonnie's greatest joys.

She understood that not every student would become a professional potter.

In fact, most would not.

But that was never the goal.

The real goal was to introduce people to creativity.

To remind them that they were capable of making something beautiful.

And to give them a place where they could explore that possibility without pressure.

Over time, the studio became a gathering place not only for learning pottery but also for forming friendships.

People talked while they worked.

They shared stories about their lives.

They celebrated each other's successes when a piece turned out particularly well.

And they laughed together when the clay refused to cooperate.

Bonnie often said that pottery studios were among the most welcoming places in the world.

Everyone understood that learning pottery required humility.

Everyone had struggled with their first wobbly bowls and collapsed cylinders.

And because of that shared experience, potters tended to encourage rather than criticize.

This spirit of generosity shaped the culture of Potters Addict.

More experienced members helped beginners.

Instructors offered guidance without imposing strict rules.

And the studio gradually developed a sense of belonging that many students came to cherish.

Some students remained involved for years.

They became club members, worked independently in the studio, and continued refining their craft long after their first classes had ended.

Others returned occasionally, simply to reconnect with the joy of working with clay.

And sometimes, students who had taken classes decades earlier returned just to say hello.

They would walk into the studio and say something like:

“I took your pottery class twenty years ago.”

For Bonnie, these visits were deeply meaningful.

They confirmed that the studio had created lasting memories.

Even if students had moved on to other interests, the experience of working with clay had remained with them.

This lasting connection between people and creativity was the true measure of the studio’s success.

Pottery, after all, is not only about making objects.

It is about shaping experiences.

And through her teaching, Bonnie Anderson had helped shape the creative journeys of thousands of people.

The studio she built had become more than a place where pottery was taught.

It had become a place where creativity was discovered, shared, and celebrated.

And through that process, Bonnie herself had become something more than a potter.

She had become a teacher, a mentor, and a quiet but powerful force in Kelowna’s artistic community.

PART V

A Life in Clay

Legacy, Reflection, and the Studio That Continues

When people think about pottery, they often think about the finished object.

A bowl.

A mug.

A sculpture.

A vase sitting quietly on a shelf.

But anyone who has spent time in a pottery studio understands that the object is only the final moment in a much longer story.

There is the clay itself.

There are the hands that shape it.

There is the patience required while the piece dries.

There is the firing of the kiln.

And there is the quiet satisfaction of lifting a finished piece and realizing that something simple and earthy has become something lasting.

For Bonnie Anderson, pottery was never only about the finished piece.

It was about the process.

It was about discovery.

And most of all, it was about the people who gathered around the process.

Throughout the years that Potters Addict operated in Kelowna, Bonnie built more than a pottery studio.

She built a creative home for hundreds of people.

Some arrived simply looking for a class.

Others came searching for a new creative outlet.

And many discovered that clay had a way of drawing them back again and again.

The studio became a place where people could slow down.

A place where creativity was encouraged.

A place where mistakes were accepted as part of learning.

And a place where friendships formed naturally over shared worktables and spinning pottery wheels.

In many ways, the story of Bonnie Anderson is not only the story of one artist.

It is the story of a **community built through creativity**.

Students learned from teachers.

Teachers learned from students.

Members supported each other.

And gradually the studio developed the warm, welcoming atmosphere that Bonnie had always hoped to create.

Those who visited the studio often remarked on this atmosphere.

It did not feel like a formal classroom.

It felt more like a gathering place.

People talked while they worked.

They helped each other lift heavy clay pieces.

They admired each other's work.

And occasionally they laughed together when a pot collapsed on the wheel.

These small moments became the real heart of the studio.

They were the moments that students remembered years later.

They were the moments that made Potters Addict feel less like a business and more like a creative family.

Bonnie understood that building this kind of environment required patience and trust.

Creative communities do not appear overnight.

They develop slowly, shaped by the attitudes and generosity of the people involved.

Over time, Bonnie's approach to teaching helped nurture exactly that kind of culture.

Students were encouraged to experiment.

They were encouraged to ask questions.

And they were encouraged to help one another whenever possible.

Many of the studio's long-time members eventually became mentors themselves.

A beginner struggling to center clay on the wheel might suddenly find an experienced potter standing beside them offering a helpful suggestion.

A student uncertain about glazing techniques might receive advice from someone who had spent years experimenting with different finishes.

This sharing of knowledge created a sense of continuity.

The studio was always evolving, yet the spirit of cooperation remained constant.

Bonnie often reflected on how surprising it was that pottery could bring together such a wide variety of people.

Doctors worked beside retirees.

University students learned alongside professionals from demanding careers.

People who might never have crossed paths elsewhere found themselves sitting side by side at pottery wheels, focused on shaping the same material.

Clay had a way of dissolving social boundaries.

When everyone is covered in clay dust and concentrating on a spinning wheel, titles and professions become less important.

What matters is the shared experience of making something.

And in that shared experience, people often discovered unexpected friendships.

This sense of community was perhaps Bonnie's greatest accomplishment.

Long after individual pottery pieces had been sold or given away, the relationships formed within the studio continued.

Some students remained involved with the studio for decades.

Others carried their love of pottery into new studios or new creative pursuits.

Still others simply held onto the memory of the experience.

A few would occasionally return to visit the studio years later.

They would walk through the door and say something like:

"I took a pottery class here years ago."

And Bonnie would often remember them.

Or if she didn't remember the individual student, she would remember the feeling.

The sense that creativity had touched someone's life in a meaningful way.

That was always enough.

In time, the studio itself became woven into the cultural fabric of Kelowna.

Located in the Rotary Centre for the Arts, Potters Addict stood alongside other creative organizations, contributing to a vibrant artistic district in the city.

Visitors to the centre often discovered the pottery studio by accident.

They might wander down the hallway and notice shelves filled with clay pieces drying before firing.

Or they might hear the quiet hum of pottery wheels turning.

Curiosity would lead them inside.

And once inside, many found themselves fascinated by the process.

Pottery is deeply tactile.

It invites observation.

Watching someone shape clay on a wheel is almost hypnotic.

The transformation from soft clay to elegant vessel happens slowly, guided by steady hands.

For visitors unfamiliar with pottery, this experience often sparked a new curiosity about the art form.

Some of those visitors eventually became students themselves.

In this way, the studio continued to grow, welcoming new participants while maintaining the traditions that Bonnie had established.

Of course, like all stories, the story of Bonnie Anderson's pottery studio eventually reached a point of transition.

No creative community remains unchanged forever.

Artists retire.

Students move away.

New generations arrive.

But the spirit that Bonnie helped cultivate continues to influence the studio and the people who pass through it.

Even after her passing, the impact of her work remains visible in many ways.

It lives in the pieces created by her students.

It lives in the friendships that formed in the studio.

And it lives in the philosophy she shared so freely with others.

That philosophy was simple.

Creativity belongs to everyone.

You do not need to be a professional artist.

You do not need years of training.

All you need is curiosity and the willingness to try.

Clay, perhaps more than any other art material, reminds us of this truth.

It begins as something humble.

Just earth and water.

But when shaped with care and fired in the kiln, it becomes something durable and beautiful.

In many ways, the creative journey of a person is similar.

Ideas begin small.

Experiments lead to discoveries.

And over time, the act of making things shapes the maker as much as the material.

Bonnie Anderson understood this deeply.

Her life demonstrated that creativity is not reserved for a select few.

It is a natural part of being human.

When people gather to create, they form communities.

When they share their knowledge, those communities grow stronger.

And when they pass that knowledge forward, creativity continues long after the original teacher is gone.

Today, anyone who walks into a pottery studio—whether in Kelowna or anywhere else in the world—participates in a tradition that stretches back thousands of years.

Pottery is one of humanity's oldest crafts.

For centuries, people have shaped clay vessels for everyday life.

Bowls for food.

Jugs for water.

Plates for shared meals.

Each piece carries the imprint of the hands that made it.

And in that way, pottery connects us not only to the present but also to the past.

Bonnie Anderson's work stands as part of that long tradition.

Through her teaching, she introduced countless people to the joy of shaping clay.

Through her studio, she created a space where creativity and community could flourish.

And through the relationships she built, she left behind a legacy that continues to inspire.

When the wheels turn in the studio.

When clay is centered and lifted into form.

When a student proudly holds their first finished pot.

A small part of Bonnie's spirit remains present in that moment.

Because creativity, once shared, never truly disappears.

It simply continues—
shaped by new hands,
guided by new ideas,
and passed forward to the next generation of makers.

And in that quiet continuation, the spirit of Bonnie Anderson's studio lives on.

Sources and Acknowledgements

This documentary narrative was created using interview recordings filmed at Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre in Kelowna, British Columbia.

The story of Bonnie Anderson's life and work is drawn primarily from her own words in those recorded conversations, along with publicly available biographical information and artist statements published during her lifetime.

Additional reference material includes public biographies and archival information from the Federation of Canadian Artists, the Arts Council of the Central Okanagan, and Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre.

Special thanks to the many students, artists, and community members who helped make Potters Addict a vibrant creative space for more than three decades.

Documentary Narrative

Written by

Lorenz Plourde

Based on interviews with

Bonnie Anderson

Video documentation and interviews produced for

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Kelowna, British Columbia

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Credits

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Preservation Project

This publication forms part of the **Process Art Discovery documentation project**, which records the stories, techniques, and creative philosophies of artists and art educators in the Okanagan region.



PART OF THE PROCESS ART DISCOVERY ARTIST DOCUMENTATION SERIES

BONNIE ANDERSON – A LIFE IN CLAY

For more than three decades, Bonnie Anderson helped shape the creative spirit of Kelowna's pottery community.

As the founder of **Potters Addict Ceramic Art Centre**, Bonnie introduced thousands of students to the art of working with clay. Her studio became a gathering place where people of all ages could discover creativity, learn new skills, and experience the quiet therapeutic power of pottery.

Trained at the University of Calgary with a triple major in painting, printmaking, and ceramics, Bonnie brought a wide range of artistic knowledge to her teaching. She was particularly known for her expressive **Raku ceramics**, her adventurous spirit in exploring different mediums, and her ability to inspire students to discover their own creative voice.

This documentary narrative is based on recorded interviews with Bonnie Anderson and reflects on her life as an artist, teacher, and founder of one of Kelowna's most beloved pottery studios.

More than a biography, it is a story about creativity, community, and the enduring power of clay to bring people together.



Process Art Discovery
Kelowna, British Columbia

*Documenting artists, studios,
and creative communities.*



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