

Linda Ould

Walking with Linda

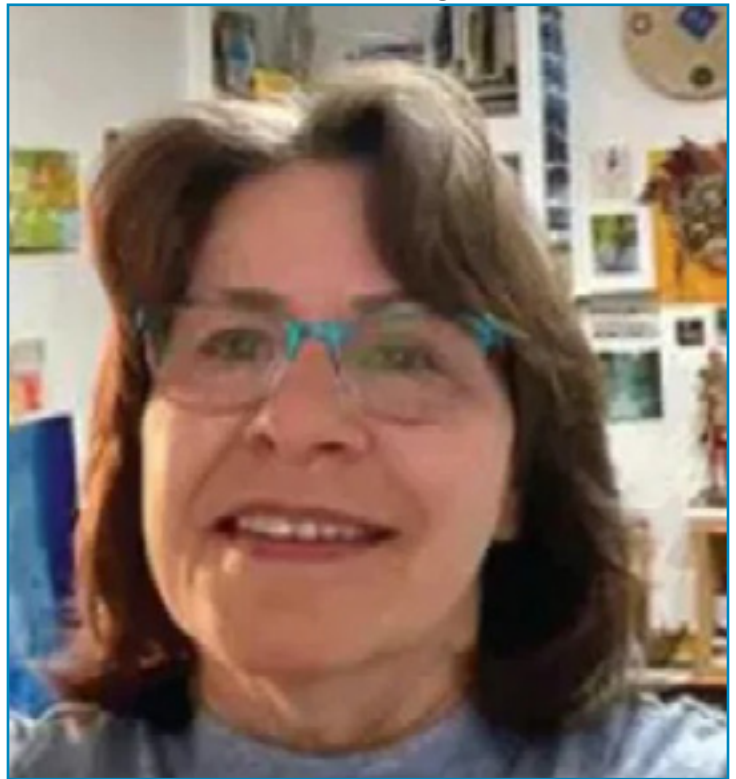
Linda Ould is an Edmonton-based multi-disciplinary Métis artist who specializes in acrylic painting and crafting. Her formal art education was through the University of Alberta Extension where she took courses in etching, watercolour, painting, drawing, and sculpture. Linda reconnected with her cultural heritage and received her Métis status in 2022. She is married and has two daughters who are artists and recognized as Métis.

In First Nation culture, nature is especially important, and in most of Linda's work, nature provides an outlet for her creativity. Her art stands for freedom and is synonymous with her spirit. Creativity also serves as a problem solver where her feelings can find resolution to get her through uncertain times. She shares her culture through the creative process. Linda develops her art by frequenting art galleries, reading art books and poetry, and socializing with other artists. She also writes poetry. Going for walks around her neighbourhood and hikes around the river valley are vital, and walking has therapeutic and meditative effects that helps her relax. During Linda's walks, she often thanks nature, making her feel closer to it. She likes drawing birds, feathers, and plants. While observing nature, Linda jots down ideas in her sketchbook for art projects and for her poems.

Wearing a beautiful pendant that she had made, made me realize during our interview the experience Linda has with crafts. She makes her own art tools, such as paintbrushes made from deer hair or pine needles. These tools allow her to develop her own style and put her unique energy into the piece as well as the texture that she wants. For example, in a painting called Ice Age she added cheese cloth for texture. She designed a book about tea with tea leaves on the cover, and she made another

one about coffee using coffee grounds. Linda adds texture intuitively, and it creates unique effects that defines her as an artist.

Throughout her career, Linda has taken part in many art shows. Her first group show was at Latitude 53 in 1984. It was based on masks. Ten years later in 1994, Linda would have her first solo show at the Indigo Print and Paper on Jasper Avenue, which was also based on masks. Being a skilled crafter, the masks were very intricate, and they included bits of nature such as weeds. She got the idea when she volunteered at her daughter's elementary school's art class, and the students expressed an interest in making masks. Shows at



the Ellis Studio and at different Edmonton cafés forged networks with other artists and friends. Linda stressed the importance and value for an artist to join an art community. She credits Harcourt House Art Centre for giving her opportunities to be inspired by other artists, to share ideas, and to be around like-minded people, in part through life drawing sessions. Although she finds the male body interesting, she prefers drawing women because their bodies are more familiar and have more curves.

Linda explores many types of art and media. Gel printing with her own stencils provides uncertainty

and surprise with each layer as she explores colours, and texture. With ink and wax works, Linda draws a blind contour drawing in wax first, then she applies ink overtop to reveal the wax image previously drawn. Abstract paintings offer the freedom to make whatever shape, colour and line she wants, and Linda finds challenge in the endless possibilities. Colour and lines convey her emotions. Thicker lines, usually made in charcoal, represent darker moods, while smaller swirly lines represent peace and happiness.

According to Linda, the most stressful parts of her career is choosing which works to include in art shows, as well as wondering how the public and other artists might perceive it. Linda is not represented by an art gallery; she sells her artwork if someone inquires. In the future, she plans to work on sculpture, an art form she first tried at the U of A Extension. We can expect to see many more fascinating works from this Edmonton Métis artist.

Based on an interview by Isaac Belland in 2022

“It is important for artists to join a community.”

One painting that was significant was her Buffalo painting. She started the piece, but then ran out of ideas, so she left it alone for three years. Then one day while she was listening to the radio, she heard a song called The Bird and the Buffalo which inspired her to finish it. She used sage at the bottom to add texture. Another important piece is her half hawk and half self-portrait painting that shows the interconnectedness she has with her spirit animal.

