

Artistic Steel

A Division of Great Barriers Inc.
Edmonton, AB

www.artisticsteel.com

Artistic Steel's advice to new exporters is: *"Have a plan. Know the markets in the US and how they may differ from the Canadian market. Research if your product will fit a niche that is not currently addressed by other competitors."*

What does Artistic Steel do? Artistic Steel was founded 10 years ago by Andy Hawirko, a member of the Métis community from Lac La Biche in northern Alberta. Primarily a furniture manufacturer, Artistic Steel does custom metal fabrications, re-upholstery and upholstery of soft seating, including lounge chairs and sofas.

With 30 employees, they service western Canada, Ontario and the US. Artistic Steel supplies a number of other Aboriginal businesses, particularly those in the gaming, hotel and hospitality sectors.

What is Artistic Steel's experience in exporting? Initially exporting to one of its Canadian customers that had expanded into the US, Artistic Steel is now exploring new markets in the US, particularly the Aboriginal and hospitality sectors.

In exploring its export market, Artistic Steel has learned that trade shows are very competitive and companies have to be well prepared with price lists, a shipping policy, appropriate packaging, etc. Detailed, specific promotional materials are a necessity. It is important to use a solid, respected sales representative or distribution channel. Don't be afraid to change your sales representative if they don't work out. Do not initially tie yourself into a long-term commitment until you have tested their capabilities.

