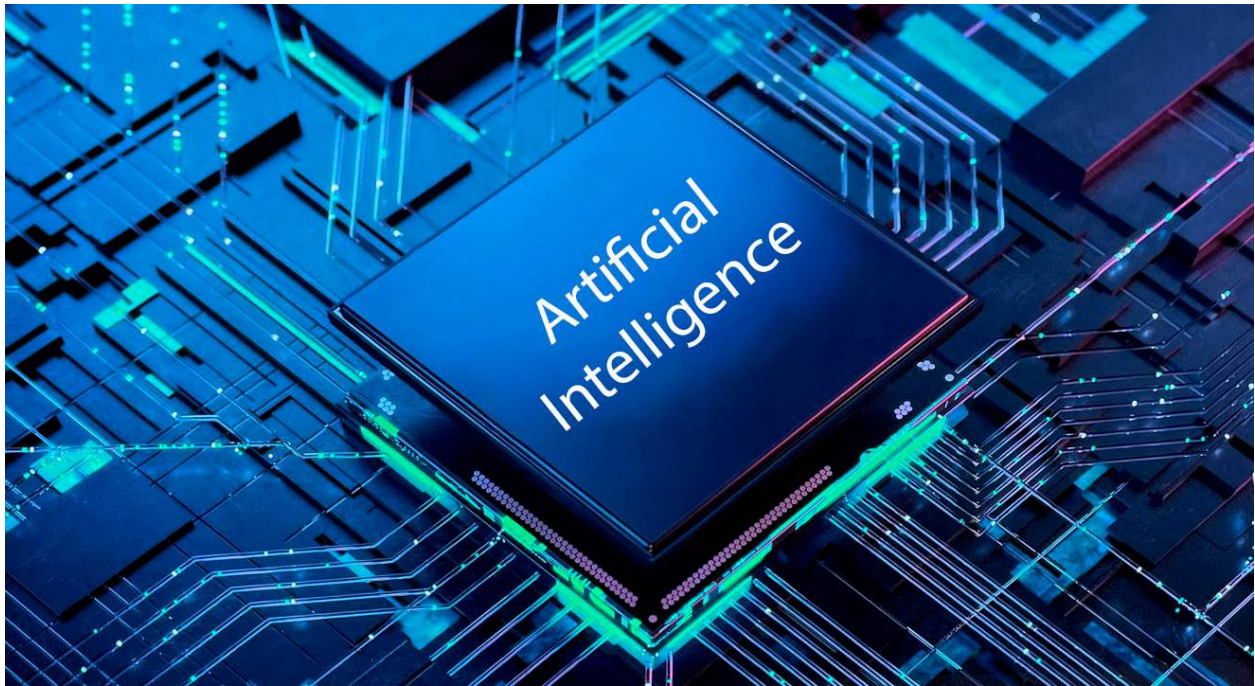


CAPA Photography Competitions: New AI Authentication Standards



Executive Summary

The Canadian Association of Photographic Art (CAPA) is implementing new Artificial Image Verification standards to address the challenges AI tools present in photography competitions.

Commencing September 16, 2025, we are introducing new AI Authentication Standards, with implementation commencing on January 1, 2026. This 108-day time frame provides time for photographers to review the provided details and make adjustments to their photo processing workflows.

The Challenge: AI in Photography Competitions

AI-powered photo editing has revolutionized photography, but it has also created confusion in competitive photography. While some AI tools enhance existing image elements appropriately, other AI tools are prohibited because they generate synthetic content that wasn't originally captured by the photographer.

Important Distinction: These new standards apply specifically to photographs that have been modified using AI enhancement tools, **not to entirely AI-generated images created from text prompts**. Fully AI-generated images (those created entirely from text prompts without an original photograph) are prohibited from CAPA competitions.

Currently, the photography community faces several problems:

- No unified guidelines on acceptable AI tools for competitions;
- Inconsistent enforcement across different competitions;
- AI detection technology that can't keep pace with advancing AI capabilities;
- Growing uncertainty among photographers about which AI tools are competition-safe.

Our Solution: Content Credentials (C2PA Standards)

CAPA is adopting the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA) standards to provide reliable competition image verification. C2PA is an international consortium that develops open, royalty-free technical standards for tracking digital content authenticity.

At present, there are 5,000 committed firms supporting the C2PA standard such as:

Adobe	AI Labs	Amazon
American Society of media Photographers		
Associated Press	Association of Photographers (UK)	
BBC	Canon	CBC
Getty Images	Globe and Mail	Google
Intel	Leica	LinedIn
Meta	Microsoft	Nikon
Open AI	Sony	Reuters
Stern		

How Content Credentials Work

Content Credentials embed a signed metadata manifest written into the metadata file during the export process, and records the following provenance details:

- Original creator and capture details;
- Camera or creation/editing software used;
- Complete editing history with timestamps;
- Any AI tools used during post-processing;

- Full chain of custody from creation to submission.

Secure metadata is embedded within the image file and can be authenticated using the verification tool available at contentcredentials.org/verify. The Content Credentials platform can detect any unauthorized modifications to this metadata.

Implementation Guidelines by Software

We have created seven (7) documents which outlines what AI tools are acceptable and those not permitted. Documents also include the specific means which the images must be saved or exported to ensure the retention of the image's metadata.

To support the new **AI Authentication Standard** and Content Credentials requirement, we've created five AI Pitfalls – Protecting Your Competition Eligibility guidelines for photographers entering our competition. These guidelines clarify which AI features are acceptable in submissions and which are not:

- Adobe Photoshop – ([English](#)) ([French](#))
- Lightroom Desktop – ([English](#)) ([French](#))
- Lightroom Classic - ([English](#)) ([French](#))
- Lightroom Mobile - ([English](#)) ([French](#))
- Luminar Neo – ([English](#)) ([French](#))
- ON1 Photo RAW – ([English](#)) ([French](#))
- Topaz Labs – ([English](#)) ([French](#))

Verification Process

All photographers and camera clubs can evaluate their images to determine if they have been registered as a C2PA image and if the image contains AI-generative features.

The following steps outline how image can be verified using the contentcredential.org/verify website.

Step 1: Visit contentcredentials.org/verify

Step 2: Upload or drag-and-drop your image

Step 3: Review the complete authenticity report

The verification system accepts these file formats: AVI, DNG, HEIC, HEIF, JPEG, PNG, SVG, TIFF, WebP

The following is an example of what this application analysis will produce.



Figure 1 – Screen capture of Content Credential website's analysis of an image which contains at least one element which has been AI-generated.

What Verification Shows

- Original source and creation timestamp
- Software and equipment used
- Complete modification history
- AI tool usage (if any)
- Tamper detection alerts

On the contentcredentials.org/verify resulting window, a registered C2PA image will contain the Content Credential pin which will appear in the upper left hand corner of the image.

The following is an example of Content Credential pin.



Figure 2 – Example of the Content Credential pin.

AI Detection and Verification Protocols

CAPA uses the Hive AI Detection website, which is an AI classifier tool, to identify images that may have been generated by AI.

Camera club representatives who suspect an image may be fully AI-generated can submit it to the Director of Competition for analysis. The image will be processed through Hive AI Detection, and results will be returned to the requesting representative.

All potential winning entries undergo comprehensive verification and authentication processes through both Content Credentials analysis and AI detection screening. Any image that fails these verification steps will be disqualified from the competition.

Benefits of C2PA for the Photography Community

For Individual Photographers

- **Trust and Authentication:** Verifies that your images meet competition standards before submission, preventing disqualification due to unacceptable AI-generative use.
- **Copyright Protection:** The embedded creator information and timestamps strengthen copyright claims and ensures proper attribution.
- **Professional Recognition:** Platforms such as LinkedIn recognize Content Credentials, enhancing professional credibility.

For Camera Clubs

- **Simplified Verification:** Check image authenticity through the Content Credentials website before submission to external competitions (specialized AI detection expertise is not required).

Note: Currently limited to images processed in Photoshop and Lightroom.

For Competition Organizers

- **Transparent Verification:** Organizers are able to access complete image history including capture details, editing timeline, and AI tool usage.
- **Efficient Processing:** Automated authenticity checking reduces manual review time while ensuring compliance with competition rules.
- **Tamper Detection:** Built-in security features identify unauthorized metadata modifications and content manipulation attempts.

Implementation Timeline

Phase 1: Announcement - September 16, 2025

- Release detailed Content Credential standards and implementation guidelines
- Provide "Seven Pitfalls" protection guides to help photographers avoid common eligibility issues
- Encourage members to seek clarification from the Director of Competitions
- Publish updated Competition Editing Criteria in preparation for 2026 implementation

Phase 2: Full Implementation - January 1, 2026

Adobe-Specific Requirement (Effective January 1, 2026):

Photographers editing images in Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom **are encouraged** to activate the Content Credentials function.

Why This Is Required: Adobe's Firefly AI features do not automatically record AI-generative tool usage in standard metadata unless Content Credentials are activated. Without Content Credentials, it is impossible to verify whether prohibited AI-generative tools were used, compromising competition integrity.

All Other Post Processing Applications:

Must save or export images with full metadata containing camera and editing history, which allows for verification without additional content credentials requirement.

Getting Started

1. **Review Guidelines:** Download the appropriate guide for your editing software from the CAPA website;
2. **Update Workflow:** Implement Content Credential activation or metadata preservation protocols;
3. **Test Verification:** Use contentcredentials.org/verify to check your processed images;

'Beta-testing' of Updated Content Credentials

On September 2, 2025, [Adobe announced new beta features](#) for its Content Credential standards, aimed at enhancing digital trust, transparency, and creator control in generative AI and complex media workflows.

Key new features included the beta testing are as follows:

- The verified creator attribution feature allows creators to embed their authenticated professional credentials from LinkedIn, Behance, Instagram, and X into their digital works, creating a direct link between their verified identity and their creative output.
- The beta version lets you add Content Credentials to up to 50 JPG or PNG images at once. Future updates will support larger file sizes and additional formats like video and audio.
- Creators can now set preferences about whether their content gets used to train AI models. This new feature helps protect their choices and may align with upcoming international regulations around AI training opt-outs.
(<https://contentauthenticity.adobe.com/>)
- These credentials work like a permanent digital fingerprint that stays with your content no matter what happens to it - whether someone edits it, takes screenshots, or shares it around. This creates a complete history showing how your content has changed hands and been modified over time.
- Built-in browser tools let anyone check how content has been edited over time and see what credentials were used to create it.
- New watermarking and encryption tools are in development to better protect digital images, using both invisible background markers and visible authenticity signals to verify their origin.
- The latest C2PA technical updates introduce improved manifest formatting, enhanced workflow management, timestamping features, and expanded metadata capabilities.

These updates are aimed at making content provenance more robust and user-friendly for creative professionals, news organizations, and photographic communities.

Closing Comments

CAPA's new AI Authentication Standards will help preserve the integrity of our competitions by providing clear guidelines on acceptable AI tool usage while maintaining the distinction between captured photography and synthetic content.

As Content Credential standards and post-processing applications are upgraded, we will communicate these changes to our members, in a timely manner. The implementation of these new standard workflows will significantly impact many photographers, and we seek your acceptance of these standards for your benefit and that of CAPA.

If you have any questions or concerns in this matter, please do not hesitate in emailing the writer at competitions@capacanada.ca

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