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612.284.2815 (voice mail)

2751 Hennepin Avenue South / Ste. 231

Minneapolis, MN 55408

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Northern Spark 2019 Artist Projects and Partners

Community partners collaborate to create *We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal, & Regeneration* for artist projects to explore



(Minneapolis, MN) April 18, 2019 — Northern Lights.mn and community partners collaborate to create the ninth annual [Northern Spark](#), the free arts festival illuminating public spaces in the Twin Cities Friday, June 14 and Saturday, June 15—starting at dusk (9 pm) and ending at 2 am.

Community members and partners from the American Indian Cultural Corridor in Minneapolis, The Commons in downtown Minneapolis, and the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul worked with Northern Lights.mn to develop the locations for this year's festival, program event activities, and hire apprentices from the communities to work with Northern Spark staff. With the Northern Lights.mn Program Council these collaborators created the theme [We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal, & Regeneration](#) and selected artists.

"In recent years we've learned how important it is to bring people outside of our organization together to make core decisions about the festival — who, where, and

what. It can be messier in collaboration, but in the end it gets us to a richer cultural event.” — Sarah Peters, Co-Director of Northern Lights.mn

Partners and Project Highlights by Neighborhood



Manifest'o concept by Jonathan Thunder

AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CORRIDOR (AICC)—MINNEAPOLIS

Through the federal relocation period of the 1950s and 60s where the federal government encouraged thousands of American Indian people to leave their reservations and move to cities, Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis became an important gathering place for Indian people. To this day, the area around the AICC is the densest concentration of urban American Indian people in the country and features shops, restaurants, galleries, Native organizations and Tribal offices.

This important history has led to many historic firsts; including the development of the first urban American Indian health clinic, the first American Indian preference housing project, and the location of one of the oldest American Indian Centers in the country. In addition, Franklin Avenue is the birthplace of the American Indian Movement, a national protest movement founded in the 1970s for American Indian civil rights.

The Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) was founded in 2007 to address the growing challenges and opportunities facing the urban Indigenous community. NACDI is committed to transforming the American Indian community to effectively respond to 21st-century opportunities. NACDI works to promote innovative community development strategies that strengthen the overall sustainability and well-being of American Indian people and communities.

"The Twin Cities Native Community has been involved in Northern Spark from the beginning. Featuring the American Indian Cultural Corridor this year is a great opportunity to showcase our region's incredible Indigenous talent." — Robert Lilligren, NACDI President & CEO and White Earth Nation citizen

Select AICC Artist Highlights

WEave: HERE

Artists: Rosy Simas and Heid E. Erdrich

Co-Presented Northern Lights.mn and Ordway Center for Performing Arts

At 11 pm each festival night, lead artist and choreographer Rosy Simas (Seneca) directs performers in sculptural costumes, highlighted by projection, as they move through the crowd in a procession along Franklin Avenue. The hour-long moving performance ends at an installation curated by Heid E. Erdrich (Ojibwe) and Jonathan Thunder (Ojibwe). There, participants are invited to engage movement through shadow play and to join community art-making activities related to a willow hoop hung with cloth flags that represent the many Native Nations with ties to the neighborhood. For Simas, this Northern Spark performance is an iteration of her on-going project *Weave*, drawn from the interwoven and interdependent nature of our world.

Manifest'o

Artist: Jonathan Thunder

Presented by Northern Lights.mn

Manifest'o features three separate yet interrelated animated vignettes based on Ojibwe stories about connection to the land, sky and water. These connections live today through the stories and teaching that are actively being handed down from generation to generation. Thunder brings the spirit of these vignettes to the American Indian Cultural Corridor in a large scale projection that will illuminate the corner of 14th and Franklin. The three individual stories included are *Mishu Bizhiw* Awakens, Gold Finch Counts the Leaves, and Supernaut Becomes the Water Lily. Thunder states about *Manifest'o*, "It's important that people understand that these

vignettes are my interpretation of stories I have heard throughout my journey as an Indigenous artist working within my community. They are a reflection of what I've learned through the stories that inspired me to create these animations. They also represent a resilient culture and community whose timeless voice can be heard today in the concrete landscape of 2019.”

[View all AICC projects.](#)



Northern Spark in the Rondo Neighborhood, 2017.

RONDO NEIGHBORHOOD — SAINT PAUL

Rondo is a historically African American community in St. Paul that was decimated by Highway 94 being driven through the center of it beginning in the 1950s. Hundreds of homeowners and small businesses were displaced through eminent domain and did not even receive equitable compensation, and the community has been impacted ever since. Only in the most recent years has the neighborhood started to look like it once did. Artists will acknowledge the history of Rondo while communicating their vision for the future. Despite the impact of the highway on the community, the spirit of Rondo remains and is embodied in a variety of ways.

Learn more about the Rondo Neighborhood partnerships for Northern Spark [here](#).

Celebrating its 90th anniversary, **Hallie Q. Brown Community Center**, Inc. is an African American, nonprofit social service agency open to all. The Center serves as the historical gathering place for the African American community and provides programming in early childhood education, youth enrichment, seniors, basic needs (food shelf and clothing closet) and multiservice hub with partners.

“As the heart of the historic Rondo Community, it is fitting to have Northern Spark here at our Center as we celebrate our 90 years of service. Hallie Q. was one of major focal points of community engagement, everyone gathered here and all manner of activity came from here. Northern Spark will embody that as a major event here in the home of Rondo.” – Jonathan Palmer, Executive Director

Aurora St. Anthony Community Development Corporation (ASANDC) and partners launched the Rondo Arts Cultural Business District in 2013. They host a variety of social, economic, housing, and commercial development programs for residents of all ages. *“ASANDC is driven not only by a vision for our future, but by an ongoing process of healing from our past. And it is why we ensure that those who have joined us since - not only understand what was lost, but know to sustain what has not been lost: THE SPIRIT OF THE COMMUNITY,”* --Nieeta Presley, Executive Director.

The mission of **Model Cities**, founded in the late 1960s, is to provide social and economic prosperity by providing access to opportunities that stabilize and develop families and communities.

Housed within Hallie Q. Brown since 1976, **Penumbra Theater** creates artistically excellent and socially responsible drama that illuminates the human condition through prisms of the African American experience.

Select Rondo Artist Highlights

Resounding Strength — Resilient Song

Artists: Baba Jesse & Resounding Rhythms

Presented by Northern Lights.mn

Join an interactive-audience drum circle! "We Are Here," helps invigorate centuries-old sacred traditions that are alive and vibrant. International and indigenous cultures welcome you to embody the Rondo neighborhood. Feel the beat, rhythm and movement of the djembe drum. Experience a refreshing through the drum call. Allow your feet to dance and head to sway, as your arms are free to move as subtle or wild as your spirit embraces the exchange of air to lungs and

breath to heartbeat. Within the drum of your heart sense what regenerates ~ idea, thought, feeling of renewal. This is song, community, life ~ universal in Rondo.

Illuminate and Regenerate Rondo: Spreading Peace in our Streets

Artists: Solar Peace Collective

Presented by Northern Lights.mn

Together we will flood Rondo with solar personal peace poles with messages of peace. You're invited to make a small personal illuminating solar peace pole to take home to your community. The illuminating solar peace poles use regenerative solar energy during the daytime and store the energy to light up and illuminate at night. Relax and connect in a storytelling area and talk about what peace means to us. Witness St. Paul Almanac's Solar Rock and read some Poetry in the Park in the Dark. This project incorporates intergenerational leadership and development.

[View all Rondo projects.](#)



Radical Playground concept courtesy Candida Gonzalez and Mary Anne Quiroz

THE COMMONS — DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS

The Commons is a 4.2-acre public green space in downtown Minneapolis. Spanning two city blocks, the park is an active space for the public to relax and play. The Commons offers a robust lineup of free public programming including a weekly

farmers market, music performances, film screenings, poetry readings, fitness classes and children’s activities. It is also often a venue for large special events including Northern Spark in 2017 and 2018 and the X Games music concerts during July 2017. The Commons is the site host for the Creative City Challenge, a program of the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy of the City of Minneapolis presented in collaboration with Northern Lights.mn and Green Minneapolis.

The Commons is also the site of the opening reception for the [2019 Americans for the Arts Annual Convention](#) taking place in the Twin Cities June 13-16. The reception for conference attendees and an artist market for all is presented by Americans for the Arts in partnership with Northern Lights.mn, the Office of Arts, Cultural and the Creative Economy, City of Minneapolis; Springboard for the Arts; and the Minneapolis Foundation.

“Americans for the Arts is the largest annual gathering of arts nonprofits in the US. Minneapolis is thrilled to showcase the creativity that arises from the racial, cultural and geographic richness of our neighborhoods to a national audience.” — Gulgun Kayim, Director of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, City of Minneapolis

The Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, City of Minneapolis leverages the Creative Sector towards social and economic growth in the City of Minneapolis. The office is responsible for the development of the city’s arts and cultural planning and policies, creative economy research, creative workforce support, cross-sector collaborations and the integration of arts-based strategies into city departments. ACCE is a presenting sponsor for all the artist projects in The Commons for Northern Spark.

Green Minneapolis is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 multi-project conservancy established to advance the vitality of downtown Minneapolis through parks, greening and program activation. Green Minneapolis’ mission is to work with public, private and philanthropic partners to develop, operate and actively program parks and green spaces throughout downtown Minneapolis.

Select Commons Artist Highlights

***Radical Playground* — 2019 Creative City Challenge Winner**

Artists: Candida Gonzalez and Mary Anne Quiroz

Presented by Northern Lights.mn; Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy and Green Minneapolis

The participatory art installation *Radical Playground* is this year’s winner of the Creative City Challenge. Participants will be invited to “heal through play” with whimsical interactive *alebrije*: animal sculptures inspired by dream creatures from

the Caribbean, Mexico, the Pacific Islands and the indigenous cultures of Minnesota. The artists intend *Radical Playground* to invite Indigenous communities and communities of color to a space where they feel free to gather, to play, to heal. They want their project to bring a feeling of play, of free joy, of giving people's bodies a break from stress and worry.

Poetry People/People Poetry

Artist: Kelley Leaf

Presented by Northern Lights.mn

In simplicity we can find clarity and joy. People will be able to choose words on cards (large cardboard flats) and create sentences with them, similar to magnetic poetry. They can lay the cards out on the green space, or hold them with friends, or strangers, and are invited to photograph their sentences or phrases. Words to choose from will reflect the themes of homes, community, and laughter. Sentences will be recorded on a large paper mural so that we can see what we create together.

View all 2019 artist projects at northernspark.org/artists.

Dates and Times

In 2019, Northern Spark will take place over two nights, the third weekend in June:

- Friday, June 14, from 9 pm to 2 am
- Saturday, June 15, from 9 pm to 2 am

Programming and art will be the same each night unless noted.

Northern Spark at The Commons will also be the site of the opening reception for the 2019 Americans for the Arts Annual Convention, taking place in the Twin Cities June 13-16, presented by Americans for the Arts in partnership with the City of Minneapolis Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy; Springboard for the Arts; and the Minneapolis Foundation.

More information is available at 2019.northernspark.org.

Participating Venues

All My Relations Arts

Franklin Library

Hallie Q. Brown Community Center

Rondo Community Outreach Library
The Commons

2018-2019 Program Council Members

Alex Buffalohead, Sara Endalew, Pa Na Lor, Zahra Muse, SEE MORE PERSPECTIVE, Mary Anne Quiroz, Aki Shibata and Donald Thomas Jr. [More information about the Program Council.](#)

Northern Spark Background

Since 2011 thousands of Minnesotans and visitors have enjoyed Northern Spark, an annual arts festival illuminating public spaces in Minneapolis and St. Paul. In early June, tens of thousands of people gather to explore giant video projections, play in temporary installations in the streets, and enjoy experimental performances in green spaces. Late into the night the city surprises you: friendly crowds, glowing groups of cyclists, an unexpected path through the urban landscape, the magic of sunrise after a night of amazing art and experiences.

Northern Spark began as a dusk-to-dawn event. In 2018 we introduced a new model for attendees to experience the artful magic of Northern Spark for two nights in a row until 2 am.

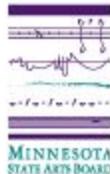
Memorable projects from past Northern Spark festivals include Chris Larson's *Celebration/Love/Loss*, Jim Campbell's *Scattered Light*, Luke Savisky's *Ex-MN*, Pramila Vasudevan's *Census*, and countless other projects from artists such as: Ananya Dance Theater, Marina Zurkow, HOTTEA, and Million Artist Movement.

Northern Spark is produced by Northern Lights.mn, a Twin Cities non-profit arts organization whose work ranges from large-scale public art platforms like Northern Spark to Art(ists) On the Verge, a yearlong mentorship program for 5 emerging artists working with digital culture. We support artists in the creation and presentation of art in the public sphere, such as at St. Paul's Union Depot (Amateur Intelligence Radio), "choir karaoke" at the Minnesota State Fair (Giant Sing Along) and Illuminate South Loop, a mini outdoor festival of nine interactive projects in Bloomington, MN's South Loop in the days leading up to the 2018 Super Bowl. Through projects such as Aquanesia, a location-based environmental mystery game, and large scale festivals themed around social issues, our work helps audiences explore expanded possibilities for civic engagement through art.

Sponsors and Supporters



**ARTS, CULTURE AND
THE CREATIVE ECONOMY**
City Coordinator



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support and Arts Access grants, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.



MEDIA CONTACT

Amy Danielson, 612.245.2020 amy@northern.lights.mn

2019.northernspark.org

[Photo Highlights](#)

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