

Igniting Rural Communities



Symposium for Performing Arts in Rural Communities

Thursday, April 24 – Sunday, April 27, 2014
Fleming College – Haliburton School of the Arts
Haliburton, Ontario

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Deadline for Submissions: Friday, August 30, 2013

Rationale

Rural communities are often overlooked when examining the diverse richness of the performing arts in Canada and what the business of performing arts can do to reinvigorate community and encourage economic development. The Symposium for Performing Arts in Rural Communities (SPARC) will bring together rural creators, producers, presenters and amateurs to initiate a dialogue about how to develop and sustain the performing arts in rural communities. SPARC believes that we are all learners and we all have knowledge to share. SPARC will ignite dynamic exchange among participants through interactive workshops, seminars, panels and research or community soundbytes and presentations that showcase local venues and celebrate the synergy of community that creates culture and culture that creates community.

The first of its kind in Canada, the symposium will focus on the business of performing arts in a rural setting, and feature three streams of exploration – creation, production and presentation – across four disciplines of the performing arts – Dance, Theatre, Music and Media Arts. Organized by collaborating partners the Arts Council~Haliburton Highlands, Conjurers of County Town, Highlands Summer Festival, Dusk Dances Haliburton, Forest Festival, Haliburton County Folk Society, Highlands Media Arts and Those Other Movies, and with financial support from Haliburton County Development Corporation and the Cultural Strategic Investment Fund, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Symposium for Performing Arts in Rural Communities (SPARC) will be held in the Haliburton Highlands on April 24-27, 2014.

Why Now?

Those who create, produce or present the performing arts in rural settings face unique opportunities and challenges. Accessibility to resources, travel distances, availability of public transportation, access to corporate and philanthropic funding, access to grants, options for venues, professional support for the performing arts and the business model are often different in rural communities than in urban centres. At the same time the rural nature of a community can nurture and support creativity in ways that are not available to urban centres. The limited availability of resources (human, capital and otherwise) can be a catalyst for rural communities to find ways to collaborate, share resources and knowledge and invent creative methods to implement big ideas with limited finances. Tourism is an important aspect of many rural economies and the performing arts also play a significant role in attracting tourists to rural areas. Creativity is the economy of the 21st Century.

SPARC Purpose, Objectives & Goal

The purpose of the symposium is to provide a forum for rural performing arts creators, producers, presenters and animateurs to spark inspiration, exchange knowledge, learn new skills, network and develop partnerships.

The objectives of the symposium are to advance discussions about how we can create and nurture supportive networks, and increase the profile of rural performing arts, and to:

- Offer professional development opportunities that address the specific interests and needs of rural creators, producers and presenters.
- Provide opportunities for the exchange of information among peers.
- Discuss strategies to attract new audiences.
- Explore innovative approaches that ensure sustainability.
- Present creative approaches to implement cultural tourism.
- Articulate the connection between rural performing arts and the health and vitality of rural communities.
- Explore best strategies for using the shared knowledge – to inform public perception, policy and economic development,
- Create the foundation for an ongoing network of performing arts creators, producers and presenters in rural Ontario.

The goal of the symposium is to recognize the unique opportunities and challenges faced by those who create, produce or present the performing arts in rural settings.

Speakers and participants are invited to spend four days in the beautiful Haliburton Highlands sharing their knowledge and expertise as we discuss key issues such as:

Question 1: What is the economic and social role of the performing arts in rural communities?

Question 2: How do you engage your community in creating, producing and presenting the performing arts?

Question 3: How do you celebrate and share place-based culture more broadly?

Audience & Symposium Arc

This is an opportunity for rural creators, producers, presenters and amateurs from the performing art disciplines – dance, theatre, music and media arts – to come together with your regional, provincial and national counterparts, along with community members, funders, policy makers, researchers and elected municipal, provincial and federal representatives and staff.

We are open to serendipity and the confluence of gathered brilliance but expect that the event will generally trace a trajectory of exploring the power of culture rooted in place, examining how culture creates community in various ways and capturing the synergy of working networks near and far.

SPARC Invites Proposals that showcase excellence, that present innovative information and/or provide insight into the business of performing arts within these broad categories:

- Creative approaches to engagement and investment in cultural tourism: e.g. how did you position your project to attract resources and support, engage with funding sources about the fit or lack thereof between your respective realities, position performing arts as a local business in relation to other cultural activities, local and distant? In relation to the economic base in your community?
- Rural adaptive capacity building: e.g. how did you adapt your business to changing times, build and/or sustain a healthy organization, build capacity for successful succession, influence local policy and funding?
- Community engagement - with an emphasis on practical tools and techniques: e.g. how did you nurture local creativity in the performing arts, develop local production skills, attract and retain volunteers, broaden your audience, refresh your traditional audience, develop new venues, forge new partnerships or strengthen existing ones, improve the profile of performing arts in your community, celebrate your successes beyond your local world, share what you've learned?
- Youth: e.g. how have you engaged youth as creators, producers or presenters, balance identifying and nurturing talent into excellence with universal access, use performing arts to increase pro-social activity, manage peer mentoring when youth leave the community after high school, partner with youth-serving systems like the school, address the issue of transportation, paying youth who create, produce or present - is it / how is it different than paying adults, paying professionals, paying people from away?
- Education and training: e.g. What sectors of the population do you seek to educate or train as creators, producers, presenters or consumers, what strategies have you found work/don't work with each role and population? How do you prioritize when choice is necessary? How do you articulate your intent and mandate to the community? To funders? How do you think about differentials in paying instructors/trainers? In charging learners? How do you address geographic dispersal of learners?
- Strategic planning and partnerships: e.g. What networks that currently exist work for you? What are the essential partnerships within the rural community that create and sustain the spectrum of performing arts? What are enhancing partnerships? What are essential / enhancing partnerships between rural communities? How do they differ from urban networks? What is / should be the relationship between rural and urban networks? Between rural and regional

networks? Between performing arts and other arts? What is the economic argument for creating and supporting a rural network of performing arts? How should it be sustained? What value would a network have for you? i.e. what investment would you make in it?

Proposals will be accepted for the following types of sessions:

Seminars: are designed to impart new knowledge or new skills to the audience and may use a combination of lecture, visual aids, interaction with participants, and exercises to enhance learning experience.

Timing: 90 minutes total including a minimum of 15 minutes audience participation.

Workshops: are similar to seminars but provide a much greater degree of audience participation, interaction and hands-on exercises where participants learn and practice the knowledge and skills that are the focus of the workshop.

Timing: 90 minutes total including a minimum of 45 minutes audience participation.

Panels: involve between three and six people who share information and analysis on an issue or topic and respond to audience questions. A moderator (who may be one of the panelists) guides the panel and audience through the process and facilitates the discussion.

Timing: 90 minutes total including a minimum of 30 minutes audience participation.

Research Sound Bytes: present findings and recommendations from thematically related academic or community based research studies. Research sound bytes will feature up to three presentations and will be selected by the SPARC Program Committee.

Timing: 20 minute presentation plus 10 minute audience question period per presenter with no more than three related topics in each themed session (90 minute total session).

Community Sound Bytes: present approaches, tools and strategies from thematically related programs or services. These may include specialized programs, educational initiatives, promotion campaigns or demonstration projects. Community sound bytes will feature up to two presentations and will be selected by the SPARC Program Committee.

Timing: 30 minute presentation plus 15 minute audience question period per presenter with no more than two related topics in each themed session (90 minute total session).

All submissions will be reviewed and selected by the SPARC Program Committee and it reserves the right to suggest a change in format.

We welcome proposals from rural creators, producers, presenters and animateurs in the dance, theatre, music and media arts disciplines, whether volunteers, professionals or organizations. Presentations that combine roles and disciplines are welcome!

Presentations that incorporate theatrical, musical, dance or media arts performance and/or unusual formats are encouraged, but should be presented within the chosen formats outlined above.

Innovative presentation techniques might include, for example:

- An accompanying visual montage, sound/music or movement/dance performance
- Inventive use of technologies
- An “in character” presentation, as a fictional dramatization
- An interview format.

Submissions must include:

- Name, position, organization, address, phone, fax and email
- Title of the session
- Session description (maximum 500 words) which can be used in the symposium program if your proposal is accepted (this may be edited for style and clarity by SPARC)
- Brief biographical sketch of lead speaker (maximum 100 words)
- The full names of any co-presenters who will be attending the symposium (not co-authors on papers), their email contact information and brief biographical sketch (maximum 100 words)
- The session format proposed (seminar, workshop, panel, research or community sound byte)
- A sentence explaining how the proposed topic relates to the issue(s) for discussion
- Three participant learning objectives for the proposed session
- Audio visual equipment needed (speakers are asked to bring their own laptops)
- A plan for involving the audience in the type of presentation chosen.

Selection Process

The SPARC Program Committee will select submissions using the following criteria:

- Clear, specific, and informative content which supports the symposium’s purpose, objectives and goal.
- Content that is current and practical, and makes a contribution to the goal of recognizing and addressing the unique opportunities and challenges faced by those who create, produce or present the performing arts in rural settings, the work that is taking place and the need to profile rural performing arts.
- Presentation methods that are engaging and interactive.

Attending the Symposium

Confirmed speakers are expected to register to attend the full symposium to enrich networking and will be eligible to apply to the Access Fund.

Questions?

Call Rachel Gillooly, SPARC Project Coordinator, T 705.454.8107 or

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or visit www.sparcperformingarts.com