

# SPARC Network Summit Package

November 14 to 16, 2014 – Haliburton, Ontario

## Contents

- History of SPARC ..... 2
- Proposed Vision, Objective and Guiding Principles..... 3
- Network Summit ..... 4
  - Key Questions the Summit Seeks to Answer ..... 4
  - Summit Schedule ..... 5
  - Meet Your Co-Facilitators ..... 6
- A Brief History of (Rural) Performing Arts in Canada..... 7
- Overview of Existing Networks in the Performing Arts..... 10
  - Additional Network Information for SPARC Summit ..... 11
  - Four Organizational Models for Networks ..... 12
- Results of SPARC Surveys ..... 13
- Platforms ..... 16
  - SPARC Social Media ..... 17
- Directions to the Network Summit..... 18
- Welcome to the Haliburton Highlands..... 18

**ACTION ITEM:**  
*Review this package prior to arriving at the summit. This is the extent of preparatory materials. The only other item we ask you to do prior to arriving is to respond to a short online survey about skills and expertise you may be able to contribute to a new rural performing arts network.*

## History of SPARC

In 2009, over 20 representatives of groups involved with the production, presentation, and creation of performing arts in the Haliburton Highlands met to explore how performing arts groups might more effectively work together for their mutual benefit.

In March 2010, this group coalesced as Highlands Performing Arts (HPA) and did some work to develop a logo, branding and a website [[www.highlandsp performingarts.ca](http://www.highlandsp performingarts.ca) ] to highlight performing arts in the Haliburton Highlands - Dance, Music, Theatre, Film and Media Arts.

In October 2011, the Arts Council-Haliburton Highlands hosted a meeting with HPA, a regional program officer from Canadian Heritage, and the executive director of CCI Ontario Presenters Network to discuss ways to support the performing arts in rural areas. The meeting proved successful, and all were impressed with the amount of collaboration and cooperation in play among the performing arts sectors in Haliburton County. Those involved felt that HPA was well positioned to consider developing an event at which other rural performing arts creators, producers and presenters could get together and explore their challenges, best practices, and opportunities in depth. The idea was to develop the skeleton of a network for continued performing arts communication and collaboration. A working committee was struck and met to further develop the ideas. The vision evolved into a 4-day Symposium held in Haliburton County in April 2014 that brought together rural creators, producers, and presenters from Central Ontario, Eastern Ontario, and even further afield in order to share experience and expertise on how to grow and sustain the performing arts in rural settings.

This working group formed officially under the auspices of the Haliburton County Community Co-operative as the Symposium for the Rural Performing Arts Working Group.

Collaborating partners were the Arts Council-Haliburton Highlands, Conjurers of County Town, Highlands Summer Festival, Dusk Dances Haliburton, Forest Festival, Haliburton County Folk Society, Sticks and Stones Media Productions, Those Other Movies, and Fleming College - Haliburton School of the Arts.

At the 2014 SPARC Symposium in April 2014, MPP Laurie Scott announced funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for \$105,400 for SPARC. This funding allowed SPARC to support over 15 Youth from across Ontario to attend and participate in the Youth Caucus at the Symposium. It also gave SPARC the opportunity to explore the formation of a Rural Performing Arts Network by providing financial support for a one-year network coordinator position and a Network Summit.

Following the successful SPARC symposium, a Network Steering Committee was formed to explore and implement the formation of a rural performing arts network. SPARC changed from "Symposium for the Performing Arts in Rural Communities" to "Supporting Performing Arts in Rural Communities". Elisha Barlow was hired by the Network Steering Committee as Network Coordinator. The Network Summit, November 14th - 16th 2014, will allow creators, producers and presenters in the performing arts (music, theatre, media arts, dance, storytelling, spoken word, and so on) to impact the development of, and inform the SPARC Network and its activities.

## Proposed Vision, Objective and Guiding Principles

### **Vision:**

To bring together rural creators, producers, presenters and animateurs to sustain and grow the performing arts in rural communities.

### **Objectives:**

To create a vibrant network for performing arts in rural communities that has a positive impact, is accessible, requires low management and is a vital resource. To sustain an on-going process of identifying key challenges, innovations and opportunities that impact the performing arts in rural and remote communities. To bring together rural communities, regional and national, to interact, share and collaborate, and promote community health and wellbeing.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- ✓ Inclusive
- ✓ Grassroots
- ✓ Sustainable
- ✓ Transparent
- ✓ Innovative
- ✓ Collaborative

## Network Summit

### Key Questions the Summit Seeks to Answer

The summit facilitators will lead participants through a series of working sessions designed to answer important questions about what SPARC as a network might do, how it might operate, who it might be for, how we can activate the network and secure engaged participation.

Please consider these questions in preparation for the summit, drawing from your own experiences and know-how as well as information and web links supplied in this package.

1. Specifically, what limitations or challenges keep you from doing more/better/greater things in your art / in your community / through art in your community?
2. How are you currently using / engaging with other existing performing arts networks?
3. What do you need/want that is not provided to you by those networks today?
4. How can we ensure that SPARC as a network focussed on rural performing arts is of great value to its users?
5. How would you define “membership” in SPARC? How easy or hard to join should it be? What are qualifications a “member” should have? How do you see SPARC: as member-based or an open network?
6. Who pays for operating SPARC network? Financial models can range widely including membership, fee for service, participation-based, public funding, and other creative options.
7. What are your reactions to the way networks today are organized and the major organizational models we can consider? (See pages 10 to 12 in this package)

## Summit Schedule

### Friday, November 14, 2014

- 4:00 pm Registration and Check-in
  
- 6:00 pm Network Social: Light Dinner Buffet (Cash Bar available.)  
**SWAP and SHARE:** Bring an item that represents your work or your community as a giveaway to exchange with other participants.

### Saturday, November 15, 2014

- 7:30 am Breakfast
- 8:30 am Registration
  
- 9:00 am Welcome and Introductions
- 9:30 am Working session on core activities of a network based on your own experiences of success and challenges and SPARC survey results
  
- 10:45 am Break
  
- 11:00 am Working session on unique value of a rural performing arts network, based on exploring what exists already, what is missing
  
- 12:00 pm Introduction of types of networks and organizational models
- 12:15 pm Lunch/working lunch to contemplate types and models
  
- 1:30 pm Working session to evaluate different types of networks and organizational models
  
- 2:30 pm Break
  
- 2:55 pm Working session on connecting the network - online platforms and face-to-face / direct connections
  
- 3:45 pm Review of proposed SPARC vision, mandate and guiding principles
  
- 4:40 pm Adjourn
- 5:00 pm Informal gatherings pre-dinner
- 6:00 pm Dinner

### Sunday, November 16th 2014

- 8:00 am Breakfast
- 9:30 am Plenary: Bringing it all together
- 11:30 am Next steps and closing
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Departures

## Meet Your Co-Facilitators

**Inga Petri**, CMRP, is the President of Strategic Moves. Her work thrives on the crossroads of research, strategy and marketing/audience development. With more than 20 years' experience in diverse sectors - from the performing arts, museums and arts services organization to international trade promotion organizations, national membership associations and technology companies - clients benefit from an uncommon breadth of experience and expertise. Applying creative, collaborative approaches, she consistently rallies teams around common objectives and inspires action, leveraging her experience on both the client and agency sides of marketing practice.

Most recently, Inga completed the *Value of Presenting: A Study of Performing Arts Presentation in Canada*, conducting extensive research into the value, benefits and impact of performing arts presentation. Throughout and following this study - commissioned by CAPACOA on behalf of the presenting field - she has led more than 50 workshops and presentations across Canada with over 2,000 participants from the presenting and performing arts field providing a unique perspective on the opportunities for and challenges faced by the performing arts sector.

She presents at national and regional conferences in the performing arts, research and marketing communities and regularly gives talks on evolving marketing practice and actionable research to a variety of professional meetings and in post-secondary institutions.

**Jim Blake** is a member of the SPARC Network Steering Committee. He is also a storyteller, community animator, curator of the Haliburton Sculpture Forest, consultant for the Haliburton County Development Corporation and part-time faculty member at the Haliburton School of The Arts where he teaches courses on business for artists.

He is an active member of the arts community in the Haliburton Highlands, wearing many hats and making a large contribution to the vitality of the community. Jim serves as the president of the Haliburton County Community Co-operative which provides support for a wide range of community initiatives in the areas of the arts, heritage, active living and community based research. In 1999 he co-founded of the U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research and continues to serve on its management committee. Under the auspices of the Co-op, Jim also co-founded Dusk Dances Haliburton and the Communities in Action Committee.

## A Brief History of (Rural) Performing Arts in Canada

(Quoted from: *The Value of Presenting: A Study of Performing Arts Presentation in Canada*, ©2013, Inga Petri, Strategic Moves/CAPACOA (Canadian Arts Presenting Association))

The performing arts in Canada have much deeper roots than one might expect. Long before European explorers came to Canada, aboriginal peoples had a rich, artistic life including music, dance, theatre and storytelling. These deep artistic traditions have been part of this land for millennia. Nonetheless, development of theatre and performing arts in Canada has been shaped mostly by European rather than indigenous traditions.

The first documented theatrical performance in North America took place in Samuel de Champlain's settlement of Port Royal (near today's Annapolis Royal, NS), in 1606. It told the story of sailors travelling to the New World and their encounter with Neptune, god of the sea. It was a theatrical performance by sailors, encouraged by the governing body for the health and well-being of the people.

In colonial times, plays were performed by troops in taverns and public buildings. Concerts, modeled on London society's musical evening soirees, were presented in homes of newly arrived politicians and businessmen in the early 1800s. Dance arrived in the late 1800s via European and American touring companies.

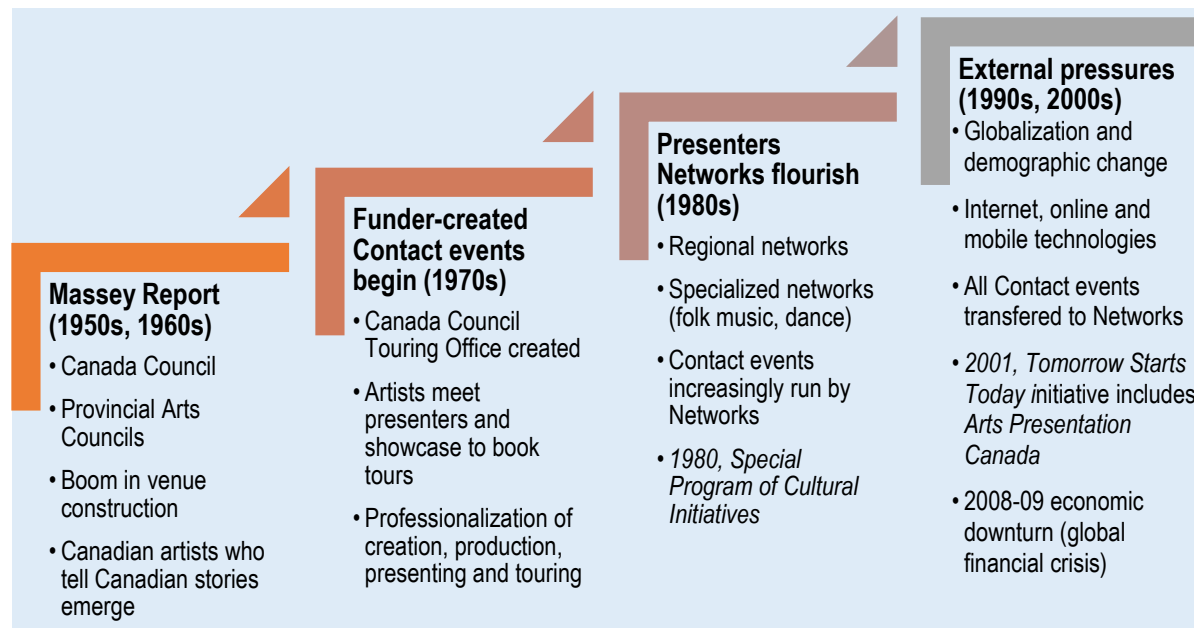
With rising industrialization, growing populations and accessibility of Canada's west, theatres began to appear across Canada. The then-famous Pantages vaudeville and movie theatre empire extended into Canada, building venues for up to 2,000 people who flocked to theatrical, musical, dance and vaudeville performances. Most of these featured touring companies and artists, although arts institutions, performance ensembles and musical clubs were growing in cities across the country, all of which fostered the development and promotion of Canadian talent.

The 1920s and '30s saw the rise of community concert associations, the travelling Chautauqua festivals and Little Theatres bringing multi-faceted performances to communities of all sizes. Dance took a leap forward in the 1950s thanks to the immigration of prominent ballet teachers.

The *Massey-Levesque Report on the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* in 1951 led to the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957. With greater government support, and Canada's Centennial celebrations, new theatres were planned or built in many cities across Canada throughout the 1960s and beyond.

Regional presenting networks began to appear as early as 1968 in Saskatchewan. The Ontario Arts Council created Ontario Contact in 1971, the first Contact event in Canada, in order to support and coordinate touring activity by bringing artists and presenters together. The Canada Council's Touring Office, established in 1973, further enhanced Council's role to support performance and make the performing arts accessible to all Canadians. The Touring Office created Contact East in 1975; the same year the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils held its first Contact Showcase. These initiatives were crucial to increasing the number of Canadian artists touring across Canada and complemented efforts to increase international touring by Canadian companies.

The 1970s were, relatively speaking, a heyday for Canada's performing arts. Theatre saw the emergence of a distinct Canadian voice. Canadian orchestras were numerous and very active. Modern dance troupes took flight. All disciplines enjoyed an expansive era, with an explosion of niche or specialized art forms and appeal to every audience taste.



Several aboriginal theatre and performance companies were founded during the 1980s that continue to operate today, including Native Earth Performing Arts (1982), De-ba-jeh-muh-jig Theatre (1984) and Ondinnok (1985). Concurrently, there has been a rise of aboriginal arts service organizations, training opportunities and spaces where new works can be created. Today, while there has been a marked increase in the number and voices of aboriginal artists and performance creation companies, there is a sense of a persistent lack of professional spaces for aboriginal works.

In 1980, the federal government created the *Special Program of Cultural Initiatives*, a two-year program with a budget of \$29.4 million managed by the Department of Communications. One component, *Special Events of a National Character or Significance* (\$7.6 million), ultimately left a large legacy. Initially designed to fund one-time activities, it attracted applications from organizations across Canada to stage special festivals and events. The program soon discovered that these events returned for annual funding. The current wealth of arts and cultural festivals can be attributed in part to this program. Indeed, festivals have become a major contributor to Canada's cultural, social and economic life: from nurturing new work in dance to fostering the international cachet of major tourism attractions like Montreal Jazz Festival, to bringing together diverse communities in a common cultural space. The program was renamed *Cultural Initiatives Program* in 1982 and was renewed until 2001, when it was integrated into the *Arts Presentation Canada* program (later renamed *Canada Arts Presentation Fund*), as part of the *Tomorrow Starts Today* initiative.

The 1980s and '90s were characterized by persistent financial problems, and many companies folded or down-sized. These pressures led, however, to an overall improvement in marketing, fundraising and management capacities, and necessarily very high performance standards. In



1996, the *Remettre l'art au monde* policy in Quebec affirmed the role of the performing arts presenter. Since then, presenters have taken a major role in the development of, and access to, performing arts. Better definition of their multi-faceted functions, in turn, supported further policy breakthroughs.

In 2001, the *Tomorrow Starts Today* suite of programs was created with encouragement from CAPACOA and RIDEAU, the largest presenting network in Quebec. It continues to represent a major policy statement in support of presenting in Canada; for the first time, it shifted ongoing federal funding to presenting activities, rather than only being focused on individual events. *Tomorrow Starts Today* included two critical programs for presenters:

- *Canada Arts Presentation Fund* (formerly *Arts Presentation Canada*), designed to provide Canadians access to artistic experiences; it was the first national program that supported multi-disciplinary series presenters. The initial program allocation was \$72 million over three years. (Program renewed and made permanent in the 2014 Federal budget.)
- *Canada Cultural Spaces Fund* (formerly *Cultural Spaces Canada*), contributes to the construction and renovation of arts facilities and the acquisition and renewal of equipment. Its allocation was \$80 million over three years. (Program renewed and made permanent in the 2014 Federal budget.)

As a result of funding from the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, community-based professional venues have been built outside of urban centres thereby increasing access for Canadians.

The professionalization of the presenting field began to accelerate across the country. In 2007, presenting organizations in Quebec set out their priorities and further illuminated and affirmed the role of performing arts presentation through the *Forum national sur la diffusion des arts de la scène*, organized by RIDEAU and its partners. In the same year, the Cultural Human Resources Council in collaboration with the presenting sector published a comprehensive profile of the wide-ranging artistic, marketing and managerial competencies of presenters.

Management of Contact events was progressively transferred from public funding agencies to the presenting networks across Canada. With the focus of networks on either specific geographies or art forms, these events have become an effective tool in convening presenters, marketing touring artists and coordinating bookings. Moreover, during the early 2000s, Canada's francophone minorities outside of Quebec have been organizing networks and Contact events that serve a broader cultural spectrum including the performing arts.

Today, Canada's performing arts landscape spans from traditional forms like theatre, to contemporary dance and music genres to circus arts. Interdisciplinary creation has been part and parcel of performing arts since earliest times and continues to evolve alongside with artistic expression, technical capabilities, audiences and the funding environment. Gradually, different performance traditions that reflect the diversity of Canada's immigrant and aboriginal populations are gaining recognition in the mainstream of Canada's cultural life.

Now, *The Value of Presenting: A Study of Performing Arts Presentation in Canada* - together with its comprehensive research documentation - seeks to provide the underpinnings in terms of context and information to build toward a common vision for performing arts presentation for the next generation.

## Overview of Existing Networks in the Performing Arts

(Quoted from: *The Value of Presenting: A Study of Performing Arts Presentation in Canada*, ©2013, Inga Petri, Strategic Moves/CAPACOA (Canadian Arts Presenting Association))

Over the last 40 years about 40 presenting networks have been founded. Presenting networks provide presenters with a marketplace to do business - often through Contact events - and with professional development opportunities and tools. They offer specialized services such as block booking, which improves the touring conditions for artists and increases the cost-efficiency of touring activities, thereby enabling presenters to deliver more benefits to more communities.

They play an important role in championing the presenting sector to its partners in the touring sector and public funders.

This table shows the founding dates of some of Canada's regional and specialized presenting networks and references early Contact events.

	Presenting Network	Founded	"Contact" Events
OSAC	Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils	1968	1975 OSAC Showcase
BCTC	British Columbia Touring Council	1976	1976 Pacific Contact
	Debut Atlantic	1979	
RIDEAU	Réseau indépendant des diffuseurs d'événements artistiques unis	1984	RIDEAU was formed from predecessor Réseau Accès (1978). 1988 Bourse RIDEAU
CAPACOA	Canadian Arts Presenting Association (National Arts Service Organization)	1985	1988 Annual Conference
FMO	Folk Music Ontario	1986	1986 Annual Conference
MAN	Manitoba Arts Network	1988	
	Ontario Presents (formerly CCI - Ontario Presenting Network)	1988	1971 Ontario Contact started by Ontario Arts Council; in 2001 transferred to Ontario Presents
ATAA	Arts Touring Alliance of Alberta	1993	1978 Alberta Showcase
CAFF	Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals	1994	
	Prairie Debut	1995	
	Réseau Ontario	1997	1979 Contact ontariois, in 2001 transferred to Réseau Ontario
	La danse sur les routes	1997	1999 Parcours Danse
	Les Voyagements	1997	
WRAD	Western Roots Artistic Directors	1999	Informal meetings since the 1970s
APA	Atlantic Presenters Association	2001	1975 Contact East started by Canada Council; in 2001 transferred to APA
CanDance	Canadian Network of Dance Presenters	2001	Network meetings since 1985
RADARTS	Réseau atlantique de diffusion des arts de la scène	2001	La FrancoFête en Acadie since 1996
	Jazz Festivals Canada	2003	Convened in 1999

	Presenting Network	Founded	“Contact” Events
PCC	Performance Creation Canada	2004	Informal network
RGE	Réseau des Grands Espaces	2007	2005 Contact Ouest
N3	N3 Network (Northern Presenters)	2011	Convened in 2011

## Additional Network Information for SPARC Summit

### National networks/arts service organizations in and related to performing arts

- CAPACOA - Canadian Arts Presenting Association - a network of networks that serves the performing arts eco-system across Canada through research, communications, professional development, annual conference, advocacy
  - Presenters Toolkit (<http://www.presenterstoolkit.ca/>) is a repository of information and events
- Jazz Festivals Canada
- Orchestras Canada
- Performance Creation Canada (informal)
- CINARS
- CITT - Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology
- Creative City Network of Canada (Municipal cultural planners)

A large number of other arts organizations exist that give voice and representation to various artists groups from Storytellers of Canada to Professional Opera Companies of Canada to Songwriters Association of Canada. Media Arts Network of Ontario and Black Artists Network of Nova Scotia are a couple of the many groups seeking to champion specific groups artistic expression and dissemination.

### Typical Network Services include

- Contact events (curated showcases)
- Block booking for tours
- Professional development and mentoring
- Communications
- Advocacy
- Some like OASC and Manitoba Arts Network include visual arts community

### Network structure and staffing

Most of these networks are not-for-profit organizations, or designated national arts service organizations governed by a board of directors and operating with between 1 and 4 staff. They are lean and are increasingly collaborating to amplify their effectiveness.

### Membership-based Networks

These networks are membership-based. An annual fee secures membership and access to the network services. Non-members either have no access or they pay more, e.g. registration fees for showcase events, professional development.

As they are presenting networks, membership is open to presenting organizations, including in community-based, volunteer presenting organizations in rural and remote communities across Canada.

## Four Organizational Models for Networks

1. Collaborative partnerships operating networks, events or activities. These networks do not exist as a legal separate entity; they are not incorporated and do not have their own board of directors, but rather they are an engaged network membership and a stewardship group that includes a partner who acts as fiduciary, perhaps another that provides office space or infrastructure, perhaps another that provides other expertise. All partners in the network take responsibility and collaborate on a common goal. Staff exists to activate the network and partners realize the work.

→ [Culture Days](#)

→ [Ontario Nonprofit Network](#)

2. Not-for-profit organizations with their own governance structure/board of directors
- [Arts Health Network Canada](#) - a network focused on advocacy and promotion with an online community of individuals in community arts, research, creative arts therapies, health care, academia and other related fields.

→ [Arts Network for Children and Youth \(ANCY\)](#) - a national network of organizations, adults and youth who are invested in the future and well-being of the children and youth arts sector.

→ [Creative Cities Network of Canada](#) - a national network of municipalities (voting members) as well as any individual or organization involved in local cultural development (non-voting member) - initially set up as a virtual network out of the City of Vancouver and now a charitable not-for-profit organization.

3. Program within an existing organization

→ [Doors Open Ontario](#) is embedded as a program of the Ontario Heritage Trust. Cities opt in to participate for a fee to use branding. Doors Open has become a global movement.

→ [Jane's Walk](#) - coordinated by a charitable project that operates on the Tides Canada Platform.

4. Virtual Networks

Today there are several virtual networks that serve as platforms to connect people in various ways. There is no organization per se. Simply people coming together around common interests and topics. LinkedIn Groups and Facebook group pages (they can be public or private) are the best known examples at the moment.

## Results of SPARC Surveys

### SPARC Symposium Survey

On the final day of the SPARC Symposium, held in Haliburton April 24-27 2014, a group survey was led by SPARC committee member Jim Blake.

The survey asked 5 questions:

- *Are you currently in Networks?*
- *Are you interested in a Network for the Rural Performing Arts?*
- *Do you have any suggestions for the Network, ways of doing?*
- *Are you interested in being involved in a SPARC Network?*
- *Are you interested in helping to create the SPARC Network?*

From the survey, SPARC received 67 responses. All participants but one said they were in networks, and most listed several they are connected to. Just under half of the respondents, said a definite “yes” to a need for a network for rural performing arts. A very small group said “yes with reservations” (noting concerns about funding and using up resources without producing results) and only one said “no”, citing that they felt existing networks provided appropriate support that many people were not aware of. It should be noted that while many respondents did not explicitly say yes to a network, they instead wrote down services/areas of interest they felt could be addressed by the network.

In response to requests for ways of doing, respondents focused on suggestions for services and actions they felt were needed. The need for new ideas, innovations and solutions was most cited by respondents, followed by connecting and sharing resources and information.

Funding was mentioned frequently with most requesting a current master database of funding available and support for seeking funding. Support, as a concept rather than in a specific context, was frequently mentioned.

Assistance with collaboration and a comprehensive contact database were suggested by several respondents. Regional networks were also mentioned by several respondents as possibilities.

From there, SPARC received many other suggestions for characteristics that SPARC should have. Some respondents asked for a network that was responsive and flexible. The inclusion of new media and heritage were mentioned. A national focus and leadership were two suggested qualities for the network.

Communications methods are important, specifically noted were creating an online forum and a list serve. Also mentioned was the need to support youth and mentoring. Events such as the SPARC Symposium, as well as regional events, were cited. Services such as promotion, block booking, event listings, a venue database and a guide to venue management and best practices were some of the suggestions.

Sector, capacity and audience growth as well as community engagement were also areas of concern. Several respondents said that discussions about challenges were important. One respondent felt membership in the network should be cheap or free, and several had concerns about how the network would be funded.

When asked if they would be interested in participating in the SPARC Network, 52 responded yes, 2 responded no. When asked if they would be interested in helping develop the SPARC Network, 27 said yes - 3 indicated they would be interested in starting a regional network in their area. 11 respondents said no citing current commitments or a perceived lack of skill to contribute. Of the 67 respondents, to-date 9 submitted a registration for the SPARC Network Summit.

### **SPARC Online Network Survey**

SPARC created an online survey that was promoted via social media and online newsletter. The Survey was open during August and early September 2014). 19 individuals responded. The Survey was comprised of 10 questions -echoing the Symposium survey and asking for more personal reflections and greater detail.

In response to the creation of a network for the rural performing arts, 17 respondents gave a definite yes to a need for a network and 2 said it depends (did not specify). All but 3 reported they were involved with networks.

When asked to list how they participated with their networks, respondents overwhelmingly chose email (87.5%), then social media and in-person (both 62.5%). Conferences and telephone were used by half the respondents. Online forums, being a network representative and video chat were the least common methods of interaction.

As SPARC was in the process of creating an online forum, we asked respondents how likely it was that they would participate in an online forum. Just over half of the respondents said they would, a third said it depended on the forum balancing the interaction by being engaging yet not time intensive. A small portion said they would not use an online forum.

When asked about gaps in current networks and services, responses were quite varied and rarely focused on the same item.

Some called for better cross sharing of information and dates. It was felt that performing arts organizations need to start comparing calendars to stop competing for audiences. It was noted that local umbrella groups for arts organizations were needed to facilitate calendar coordination. In addition, a need for a central online forum for calls, sharing of info, peer and professional training was noted - especially due to the high number of volunteer-based organisations in rural communities.

One respondent identified as an arts service organization and noted that often they hear that people don't know about them or their services. It was noted that smaller communities need to find ways to quickly identify the right resources, tools, partnerships and funding opportunities for them. It was commented that there are resources available, but with small organizations there are usually many competing demands for time. Having time to "step back, strategize, and search for resources or band together with the right partners to approach funders or the city together, at the right time, on the right initiative" was called a luxury.

It was also observed that there is a disconnect between current networks' administration and their membership. "Networking" does not come naturally for all members and not all members are the same. Each have different expertise they can bring. More established members should be encouraged to mentor new members. It was felt that a network needs to ensure that each of its members' voices, contributions and needs are heard and recognized equally while embracing and encouraging diversity. It was commented that this often doesn't happen. It was noted that the SPARC Network may be an opportunity to take a broader eco-system approach in network development.

It was also felt that current services are limited in access. Not enough opportunities (training sessions, presentations, conferences) take place in Northern Ontario. A lot of expense, time and effort can go towards attending functions in other locations, usually Southern Ontario and Toronto. As well, often events are not planned with consideration for those travelling far distances (i.e. events need to be a few days to be worth the effort). It was remarked that being remote, even in a large city on the other side of the province, makes getting involved with networks hard as they do not have alternate methods to facilitate engagement.

Current services were felt by some to be stagnant, that new content was difficult to find. A lack of tangible action and implementation was also perceived.

Next in the survey, SPARC provided a list of 9 potential services and asked respondents to rank them. These 9 services were those mentioned most frequently in the results of the SPARC Symposium survey. Ranking in order of priority:

1. Connecting with others in the performing arts in-person
2. Connecting with others in the performing arts online
3. Resource sharing
4. Advocacy on behalf of rural performing arts
5. Collaboration across communities
6. Professional Development & Training
7. Contact database
8. Promotion
9. SPARC Symposium

It should be noted that the SPARC Symposium also falls under the highest rated service as it provides a space to connect in person.

SPARC asked respondents to list the top challenges and advantages to their performing arts medium due to their rural location. The most common challenges mentioned were marketing, space/venue issues, issues around audiences (small, ticket prices and distance issues), funding (paying artists a concern, lack of funding, cost of ticket prices), travel (weather, costs, distance) and the cost of bringing outside acts/small pool of local talent.

The most common advantages to their performing arts medium due to your rural location cited were community, lack of competition, loyal audiences, dedicated volunteers, creativity, space/venue, less travel and nature.

When compared to the challenges listed, it should be noted that audiences, space/venues and travel were mentioned as both advantages and challenges.

## Platforms

Platform: a space (virtual or physical) that allows the network to connect, share, promote.

- **Listserve:** a mass email list, allows users to send one email to entire subscribe list

Example: [Electric Embers Email List Service, Northlands Storytellers Network](#)

- **Forums:** an online place where ideas and views on a particular issue can be exchanged

Example: [SPARC Forum](#)

- **Social Networks:** Facebook, MySPACE
- **Custom Websites:** members-only access sites can include exclusive resources, forums, members profiles, access to specialized Listservs etc. These are often customized.

Examples: [Shape My City](#)

Shape My City connects people across Toronto to share, discuss and create the future of this city. Users are encouraged to help build the network by promoting an initiative of their own or explore a topic to discover the people and projects that share visions.

- members have public profile
- promote groups, projects, and events
- provides visual mapping of projects and organizations
- connect & share with other users

[Be a Localist/BALLE\(Business Alliance for Local Living Economies\)](#)

A US Network for local economy leaders and funders to connect, build their capacity, and innovate.

- members-only peer discussion groups and tools for sharing resources and ideas
- facilitated conversations with other leaders, innovators, experts and funders
- access to past webinar recordings
- featured on Localist map and website
- access to supporting graphics and visuals

- **Online Platforms:** existing online templates/services available for free or a cost.

Examples: [SHAREABLE](#) used by the [Sharing Cities Network](#)

The Sharing Cities Network connects local sharing activists in cities around the world for fun, mutual support, and movement building. The Sharing Cities Network has launched the 2nd annual global #MapJam to



build community and bring activists together in cities around the world to connect the dots and map grassroots sharing projects, cooperatives, community resources, and the commons.

- uses Shareable Platform to map network members
- network members have public profiles: ex. [Elora, ON](#)
- also has an Open Facebook Group

[SLACK](#) : a team communication platform

- invite-only group
- create channels of conversation around projects, groups, ideas
- file sharing
- advanced searches of all open conversations
- conversations can be shared as a team
- searchable, centralized archives

[BuddyPress](#) : a wordpress-compatible plug-in of networking components that could be added to the current SPARC website.

- user profiles
- activity streams
- user groups
- private messaging

- **In-person Events**

Example: [SPARC Symposium](#)

- Face to face networking
- knowledge exchange
- professional development

- **One-on-one communications**

- Phone
- Email

## SPARC Social Media

[Find us on Facebook!](#)

[Follow us on Twitter!](#)

[Join our Forum](#) and post your thoughts.

Hashtags: #SPARC #Network #performingarts #rural #community

## Directions to the Network Summit

The SPARC Network Summit takes place from Nov 14<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> at the lovely Bonnie View Inn in Haliburton.

The Bonnie View Inn is located at 2713 Kashagawigamog Lake Rd/County #18.

[Click here for its location on Google Maps.](#)

If you need specific Driving Directions from your location, please contact [Elisha@sparcperformingarts.com](mailto:Elisha@sparcperformingarts.com) /705-455-7617.

## Welcome to the Haliburton Highlands

SPARC is thrilled to welcome you to the beautiful Haliburton Highlands!

If you are looking for before or after activities during your stay, visit the official Tourism website for Haliburton County - [ExperienceHaliburton.com](http://ExperienceHaliburton.com).

SPARC's partner, the [Haliburton County Folk Society](#), will be presenting Harry Manx in concert on Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm. This event is not part of the SPARC Network Summit, but you are welcome to make your own arrangements to attend.

Need something from Town? The Bonnie View Inn is just 10 minutes outside of [Haliburton Village](#).

Using social media during your stay? Be sure to use hashtag #myhaliburtonhighlands

**THANKS!**