Northern Spark 2011–2019

We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal & Regeneration
Northern Spark is a late-night arts festival in Minnesota—a free, multidisciplinary, multi-venue, multiple partner, nighttime event. In early June, tens of thousands of people gather throughout the Twin Cities to explore the city’s great cultural institutions and neighborhoods, play in temporary installations in the streets, and enjoy experimental performances in green spaces and under bridges.

Over the past nine years Northern Spark has become an eagerly anticipated event that contributes powerfully to the image of the Twin Cities as an active, vibrant, diverse community; a place that attracts and retains young talent; a region that loves participatory outdoor and cultural activities.

In 2019 Northern Spark continued as a “new two-nights until 2 am” event and engaged three Twin Cities neighborhoods: Downtown East and the American Indian Cultural Corridor in Minneapolis and historic Rondo in St. Paul. The theme We Are Here: Resilience, Renewal & Regeneration, was born from conversations with local residents and Neighborhood Partners and woven together by the 2018-2019 Northern Lights Program Council. We Are Here invited artists to claim space and power through their stories of resilience, renewal and regeneration.

Equity, Inclusion and Community
The 2017 festival signaled a shift in how Northern Lights.mn organizes Northern Spark. That year, we introduced a Program Council of artists of color who championed the cultural neighborhoods where the 2017 festival took place and juried the largest open call for that year.

To reflect our commitment to increasing the diversity of artists, partners and audience in our programming, we have made the Program Council an ongoing effort in our work. This rotating group works with Northern Lights.mn to address racial inequities present within our organization and to select artists for participation in Northern Spark.

We also continue to engage community-rooted organizations in the formation of neighborhood nodes for the festival, as a way of increasing racial equity and participation in Northern Lights.mn programming. As we continue these relationships over the next ten years, we look forward to building a model for both a curated and community-created festival.
The mission of Northern Lights.mn is to support artists in the creation and presentation of art in the public sphere, focusing on innovative uses of technology to imagine new interactions between audience, artwork and place and explore expanded possibilities for civic engagement.

http://northern.lights.mn
## Northern Spark 2011–2019
### By the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist Projects</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venues</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>324,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists</td>
<td>2,393</td>
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<td>Organizational Partners</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors</td>
<td>231</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Impressions</td>
<td>12.8 million</td>
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<td>Website visits</td>
<td>629,925</td>
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<td>Unique website visitors</td>
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<td>1,580,802</td>
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<td>4,124,510</td>
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<td>Printed maps</td>
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## In 2019

<table>
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<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Artists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendees</td>
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<td>Website views</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media impressions</td>
<td>5,840,300</td>
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### Attendee Demographics

#### With which group(s) do you self identify?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011-2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please Specify</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</table>

#### Your age . . . ?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>2011-2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;17</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>18–24</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–32</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>33–40</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>41–47</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>48–54</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;55</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Have you attended Northern Spark before?

- 36% Yes
- 64% No

#### Are you planning to attend Northern Spark next year?

- 87% Yes
- 10% I don’t know
- 4% No

#### 2019 survey: what festival locations did you attend?

- **American Indian Cultural Corridor**
  - This is my first visit: 28%
  - This is my neighborhood: 31%

- **The Commons**
  - This is my first visit: 49%
  - This is my neighborhood: 28%

- **Hallie Q. Brown Center / Rondo**
  - This is my first visit: 38%
  - This is my neighborhood: 25%

- **Rondo Community Library**
  - This is my first visit: 62%
  - This is my neighborhood: 25%
I love the festival atmosphere; all the people and kids out walking in the streets!
Just seeing people I never met before come up and do something they never did before and listening to how we all came together to make one sound. It gave me hope and made me feel good that we were there to be a conduit for something positive. On this weekend nothing bad happened in Rondo. It was all good and people from all different places went home with a different view of people from other backgrounds. I guarantee it.”
Northern Spark is constant connection.
I love the way this event connects people in playful, interactive ways."
Northern Spark is probably the best opportunity to share our collective art forms to an expansive & diverse audience. Usually we perform in venues of separated ethnicities but NS gives us the great opportunity to share collectively in one space so to speak. Art is the voice that speaks the same language although it is expressed or portrayed differently. This two-night event transforms & transcends us as a people.”
The energy is ecstatic!
Everyone has SO much energy.
Although I am not Dakota and/or Ojibwe, as a member of the Native community it was amazing to see us reflected even more prominently on Franklin Ave.”
The 2018-2019 Program Council worked with Northern Lights.mn staff to help make Northern Spark 2019 reflect the communities where it took place. They wove the festival theme together from community and Neighborhood Partner feedback, and designed, promoted and juried the open call for artists for each festival area. The Council's work over 18 months is leading Northern Lights.mn towards more equitable, community-engaged practices.
I most like Northern Spark because it encourages us to interact with each other and our surroundings in an entirely different way than what we're used to. Fresh perspective is so necessary for us to reimagine a world that is more fair, sustainable and enjoyable for us all. By showcasing our community’s creative resourcefulness, Northern Spark helps to solidify my connection with the city I love most.” —festival goer, Matt Bartholomew
I like how diverse the crowd is at Northern Spark. It's a really nice display of the city.
I liked this year’s focus on how climate change affects various global populations, especially those with diaspora communities in Minnesota.”
[Northern Spark is . . . ] A free open art installation event in your neighborhood! An amazing, inclusive, culturally diverse night of fun!”
We have a lot of power to change things with our choices. Climate change is not just a concern of the middle-class white population. Culture and environmental protection are one and the same. Northern Spark made me more aware of the intersections between climate change and race.
Climate change is not an incomprehensible and sublime force, but a material, knowable, and fightable phenomenon. Art can help transition one’s understanding of it from the former to the latter.”
“[Northern Spark is . . . ] An excellent reminder of the beautiful culture and people this community has to offer.”
I thought having a theme knit the night together beautifully, and I loved experiencing many different projects and moments as variations on a theme that, taken together, helped me think more deeply about it. Northern Spark this year provoked far and away more reflecting and connecting than it has in past years for me. I also think that there is significant potential for art to powerfully impact the way that people think about climate change, and that this year’s festival was a beautiful example of that.”
Northern Spark is a weirdo contemporary arts event that goes all night. It’s free and its an incomparable cultural event, one that is unique globally just to MPLS. The festival has exposed me and the community to arts that are not only fun and participatory, but also engaging people who would not normally be open to progressive contemporary arts theories and practices. Plus, they had a howling wolf!”
Each year it becomes more and more obvious that Northern Spark is essential in our social, cultural life. It’s renewing connections, building pathways, opening spaces and revitalizing our collective self. And the magic happens only through, and out of tremendous work, energy and time devoted to it by everyone involved.”
—Piotr Szyhalski, Northern Spark artist, 2014
I have memories of wild melding of all the performances under the Hennepin Ave bridge, which was so magical, and without the rain that grouping would not have happened. I’m in awe of the storms, the audiences who were so eager and the artists who made it work in whatever manner necessary.”
—Soozin Hirschmugl, Northern Spark artist, 2014
MakeSh!t, Public Acts of Drawing  Minneapolis Convention Center Plaza, 2014

Amanda Lovelee, Christopher Field, Kyle Waites, and Sarah West, Balancing Ground  Minneapolis Convention Center Plaza, 2014
For me, a lot of the magic of this evening was getting to see the spaces I see every day transformed into an exuberant playground of creativity, joy, community, and celebration. I will carry those happy images and memories with me every day now when I am in Lowertown. 4th Street is no longer just the path I walk down to get to my office, it's a giant board game! . . . as an artist myself, it was so uplifting to see so many people in one place making art, enjoying art, participating in art, interacting with art, and being art.
The anticipation of Chris Larson’s event was immense. I was one among a growing crowd of thousands, waiting for a flame and for a friend to show up. I wanted to experience this with someone close to me, someone who knew the story behind the burning of the house. Suddenly, without any prior cell phone communication, my friend emerged from the crowd in front of me. Five minutes later, we got to experience not only the glow of the successful reincarnation, but the warmth of feeling like our world was in tune with the night.”
The point of this evening is really for us to see things that are familiar and beautiful and striking but different. Looking at ourselves and our place in a unique way.”

—Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak
Northern Spark transformed the city of Minneapolis into an all night art playground . . . my favorite parts were swinging in synchrony with 20 strangers in a skyway, playing Capture the flag at midnight in neon face paint, and dancing with strangers in the streets.”
“This event has tremendous opportunity to become a signature summer event for Minneapolis, much like the White Nights in St. Petersburg, Nuit Blanche in Paris or Fete des Lumieres in Lyon. There was fantastic energy on the Stone Arch Bridge—you could tell people were loving the strolling and being outside on such a beautiful night and craving artistic inspiration.”
—Tristan Pollock, The Line
The Notion Collective, Station Identification  W Minneapolis-The Foshay, 2011

Michael Murnane and Andrew Saboe, Landmark in a River City  Landmark Center, 2011

Top: Debora Miller, MURMUR  Stone Arch Bridge, 2011
Bottom: Janaki Ranpura, Egg & Sperm Ride :: Hide & Seek  Stone Arch Bridge, 2011
Partners 2011–2019

- 4 Seasons Dance Studio
- African Economic Development Solutions
- airsweetair gallery
- Alchemy Architects
- All My Relations Arts
- Alley Cat Cycles
- Altered Esthetics
- American Composers Forum
- American Craft Council
- American Indian Cultural Corridor
- American Swedish Institute
- Ananya Dance Theater
- Annicha Arts
- Art Institutes International MN
- Art Shanty Projects
- Arts, Culture and Creative Economy Program of the City of Minneapolis
- Artspace
- Asian Economic Development Association
- Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation
- AZ Gallery
- Baaken Museum
- Bauhaus
- Bedlam Theater
- Bell Museum of Natural History
- Big Table Studio
- Black Dog Cafe
- Brave New Workshop
- Burnet Gallery
- Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters
- Can Can Wonderland
- Catalyst Arts
- Center for Energy and Environment (CEE)
- Center for Hmong Art and Talent
- Center for Spirituality and Healing
- Climate Generation
- Conservation MN
- Cycling Museum of Minnesota
- Deborah Elias Danza Espanola
- Douglas Dayton YMCA
- Emily Johnson / Catalyst
- Eyeo Festival
- FOCI Minnesota Center for Glass Arts
- Forecast Public Art
- Forever Young
- Franklin Art Works
- Gallery13
- Gamut Gallery
- Glitch
- Gorilla Yogis
- Grand Challenges Curriculum, University of Minnesota
- Green Minneapolis and The Commons
- Guthrie Theater
- Hack Factory
- Hallie Q. Brown Community Center
- HECUA
- Hennepin County Library
- Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC)
- Hennepin Theater Trust
- HI-FI Hair and Records
- High School for Recording Arts
- Highpoint Center for Printmaking
- Hmong Museum
- innova
- Institute for Advanced Study, University of Minnesota
- Intermedia Arts
- Juxtaposition Arts
- Key 4/4 Kids
- Landmark Center and Plaza
- Leav
- Loft Literary Center
- Lowertown Bike Shop
- Lunalux
- MacPhail Center for Performing Arts
- Make It. MSP.
- McNally Smith College of Music
- Meet Minneapolis
- Midtown Greenway Coalition
- Migizi Communications
- Mill City Museum
- MINN Lab
- Minneapolis American Indian Center
- Minneapolis Art Lending Library (MALL)

- Minneapolis Bike Coalition
- Minneapolis College of Art and Design
- Minneapolis Convention Center
- Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts
- Minneapolis Photography Center
- Minnesota Center for Book Arts
- Minnesota Children's Museum
- Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Building
- Minnesota History Center
- Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light
- Minnesota Museum of American Art
- Minnesota Sacred Harp Singers
- Mississippi Park Connection
- Mizna
- MN Orchestra
- MN Original and Twin Cities PBS
- MN Planetarium Society
- MN350.org
- martists.org
- Model Cities
- Motion Poems
- Mpls Parks Foundation
- MSP Film Society
- Museum of Minneapolis
- Musicant Group
- Nash Gallery
- Native American Community Development Institute
- Nautilus Music Theater
- Northern Clay Center
- Northern Voices Festival
- Northrop Auditorium
- On Being
- Open Book
- Open Eye Figure Theater
- Ordway Center for Performing Arts
- Palace Theater
- Penumbra Theater
- Printland Press
- Public Art Saint Paul
- PUNY
- Rain Taxi Review of Books

- Regis Center for the Arts
- Revolver
- Rondo Community Library
- Saint Paul City Ballet
- Saint Paul Public Library
- Saint Paul Saints
- Schubert Club
- Science Museum of Minnesota
- Screenprinting on the Cheap
- Somali Museum of Minnesota
- Soo Visual Arts Center
- Springboard for the Arts
- St. Cloud State University Art Dept
- St. Paul Neighborhood Network
- Students for Design Activism
- Studio Sendero
- Sumunar Indonesian Music and Dance
- Sundance Institute
- Take Action Minnesota
- The Commons
- The Loft Literary Center
- The Museum of Russian Art
- The Soap Factory
- The Southern Theater
- The Textile Center
- The UpTake
- Twin Cities Maker / The Hack Factory
- University of Minnesota Department of Art / Beijing Film Academy
- University of Wisconsin-Stout School of Art and Design
- Upstream Arts
- VidTiger
- Vine Arts Center
- W Minneapolis – The Foshay
- Walker Art Center
- Water Bar + Public Studio
- Weaver's Guild of Minnesota
- Weisman Art Museum
- West Bank Business Association
- Whittier Artists in Storefronts
- Works Progress
- Zeitgeist
Select Sponsors 2011–2019

Minneapolis City of Lakes
ARTS, CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY City Coordinator

green minneapolis

Knight Foundation

BUSH FOUNDATION

National Endowment for the Arts

Lowertown Future Fund of THE SAINT PAUL FOUNDATION

SAINT PAUL STAR PROGRAM

MAKE IT. MSP.

Metro Transit

FULTON

parallel

NORDSTROM

AMERICAN ABBOTT

EUREKA RECYCLING

UNION DEPOT

mpls

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MINNEAPOLIS ARTS

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89.3 the current

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THE PRIVATE CLIENT RESERVE U.S. BANK

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cynthia roid group

meridien

MERIDIAN CHAMBERS MINNEAPOLIS

cynthia roid group

downtown minneapolistelephone

artspace

Neighborhood Partners 2017–2019

African Economic Development Solutions

AEDA

West Bank Business Assoc. MPLS

LISC

Hennepin County Library

NA D E A

BETTER LIVES

AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURAL CORRIDOR

NACDI

AETNA

ModelCities

Hennepin Historical Society

ASA MDC
Video Highlights

Northern Spark 2019
https://vimeo.com/northernspark

Northern Spark 2018
https://vimeo.com/297152679

Northern Spark 2017
https://vimeo.com/233936253

More videos: http://vimeo.com/northernspark
All photos: http://nspk.mn/photos
Photo highlights: http://nspk.mn/topphotos

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