

# THE GREAT NORTHERN WINTER FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE MINNESOTA LEGACY ARTS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND

Fiscal Year 2024 | July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024



**The Great Northern Festival 2024**

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## Overview

The Great Northern's festival is a platform designed to spark conversations and cultivate community through diverse programming. We exist to bring people together during the most isolating time of year: Minnesota's long, cold winters. We encourage people to get outdoors, build connections, get active, and embrace the unique cultural ecosystem that makes this place special. Through multidisciplinary programming, we raise awareness about climate change, encouraging action and responsibility. Our arts programming features performances, site-specific art, film, and writing by visionary artists, amplifying diverse voices with a focus on cultural representation, and fostering a collective vision for a sustainable future.

Our annual winter festival takes place during the last week of January and the first week of February across the Twin Cities attracting tens of thousands of curious and adventurous attendees from Minnesota and beyond to its unique combination of art, outdoor, and climate programming.

## Legacy Funded Projects

The Great Northern's 2024 festival mounted the following series of art projects with the support of Legacy funding:

With this grant, TGN contracted cutting-edge artists to create its programming for the 2024 festival. For its 2024 festival, TGN commissioned the accomplished violinist Ariana Kim and composer Steve Heitzeg to create a new work for solo violin performed in total darkness. Nicholas Galanin, a member of the Tlingit and Unanga tribes in Alaska, to curate an evening featuring Indigenous musicians from the northern US, including those local to the Twin Cities. Galanin's band, Ya Tseen, headlined the evening and presented visuals co-created by a local indigenous artist Jaida Grey Eagle. TGN also commissioned Morgan Thorson to create a new outdoor dance piece that reflects on disappearing dark skies.

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## **Broken Ice: Indigenous Sonic Salve from the North**

Indigenous artist Nicholas Galanin, a member of the Tlingit and Unanga̓ tribes in Alaska, curated and performed at Minneapolis' iconic First Ave venue featuring Indigenous musicians and artists from the Northern US. In addition to Galanin's band Ya Tseen, which includes members from Washington and Alaska, the evening featured work by Joe Rainey, Sr. (Red Lake Ojibwe) and his band Bizhiki, composed of musicians from Minnesota and Wisconsin, and Aku Matu (Iñupiaq), who lives in Alaska. Minneapolis visual artist Jaida Grey Eagle (Oglala Lakota) created a visual backdrop projected during the performance. Grey Eagle is a photojournalist, producer, beadwork artist, and writer. This landmark presentation was the first all-indigenous Native American performance at First Ave.

## **Ariana Kim & Steve Heitzeg: light/see + dark/hear**

Violinist Ariana Kim and composer Steve Heitzeg created a new work for solo violin performed in total darkness in a gallery space at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Kim performed the 15-minute composition by Heitzeg followed by violin improvisations totaling 40-45 minutes experience. Ariana Kim sat in the center of a dark room, with the audience surrounding her as the music enveloped the room.

## **Sphinx Virtuosi**

Continuing its partnership with Minnesota Orchestra, The Great Northern co-presented performances by the Sphinx Virtuosi, a chamber ensemble from Detroit comprised of 18 Black and Latinx musicians. The ensemble opened with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Michael Abels' piece "Global Warming," a nod to the festival's climate focus.

## **Morgan Thorson: Untitled Night**

The Great Northern presented Morgan Thorson's Untitled Night, an outdoor nocturnal dance performance for extreme climates. Drawing its inspiration from the firmament of nightscape and the dynamic winter of the Upper Midwest, Untitled Night is a choreographic work created by a collective body of queer interdisciplinary collaborators. Untitled Night was performed outdoors at Silverwood Park. Attendees were invited to witness and engage with dance, winter night walking, and star gazing. The neighbors surrounding the park were

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encouraged to turn off their house lights during the time of the performance to enhance the experience.

### **The Nosebleed by Theater Mu**

Presented in partnership with Walker Art Center, Theater Mu, and The Great Northern, The Nosebleed was an intimate autobiography exploring playwright/director Aya Ogawa's fractured relationship with their long-deceased and enigmatic father. Through a series of turbulent, absurd, and poignantly comic vignettes, Ogawa revealed the seemingly insurmountable cultural and generational gap between them and their father, and the questions they face in their own motherhood today. A theatrical memorial and healing ritual for the audience, this darkly humorous, tender, and inventive play considered how we inherit and bequeath failure, and what it takes to forgive.

### **Contact information**

The Great Northern Winter Festival

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### **Members of the board**

Eric Dayton, Board Chair & Treasurer

Maxine Bédard

Jothsna Harris

Carson Kipfer

Jennifer Newsom

Andrew Zimmern

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## Amount and Source of Funding

- The five Legacy supported projects had direct project expenses totalling \$141,635.20.
- FY24 Minnesota Legacy Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund - \$72,000

## Amount and Source of Additional Funding

- \$10,000 - NEA Challenge America grant (for Broken Ice)
- \$7,500 - Sponsorship from Dr. Tom von Sternberg and Eve Parker (for light/see + dark/hear)
- \$15,319 - Ticket sales

The remaining expenses were covered by The Great Northern's general operating budget.

**A portion of two FTE employees** were supported through this funding:

- Festival Producer (.9)
- Chief Programming Officer (.2)

## Project Duration

The Great Northern's 2024 Festival ran from January 25 - February 4, 2024

Legacy supported activities took place as follows:

- **Broken Ice: Indigenous Sonic Salve from the North** - Feb 1, 6pm - 9pm
- **Ariana Kim & Steve Heitzeg: light/see + dark/hear** - Jan 26-28, two 90 min performances per day, 10:15 am and 2:15 pm
- **Sphinx Virtuosi with Micheal Abels discussion**- Feb 1, 11 am -1pm; Feb 2, 8pm - 10pm; Feb 3, 7pm - 9pm
- **Morgan Thorson: Untitled Night**- Jan 27, 5:30 - 6:00pm; 7:30 - 8:00pm
- **The Nosebleed**- Jan 25-27, 8pm

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## Outcomes & Evaluation

### Proposed Outcomes

The Great Northern anticipated Legacy-funded programming in 2024 would support at least 29 artists:

- Indigenous Music Spotlight: 11
- Music in the Dark: 2
- Sphinx Virtuosi: 1
- Untitled Night: 8
- The Nosebleed: 8

The Great Northern anticipated Legacy-funded programming in 2024 would attract at least 3,260 attendees:

- Indigenous Music Spotlight: 500
- Music in the Dark: 60
- Sphinx Virtuosi: 2,000
- Untitled Night: 100
- The Nosebleed: 600

### Proposed Evaluation

The Great Northern planned to send email surveys to participants of each arts event to track audience demographics and experience. The surveys would include both quantitative and qualitative questions that would provide insight on perceptions and reflections on what participants learned about themselves, the artistic work, and how it intersects with the community. Ticketing/registration data would be analyzed to determine performance against audience goals. Evaluation data would be disseminated to stakeholders and used to inform future design and execution of programs, commissions, partnerships, and event promotion.

### Actual Outcomes

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The Great Northern's Legacy-funded activities supported 30 artists during our 2024 festival:

- Broken Ice: Indigenous Sonic Salve from the North: 11
- Ariana Kim & Steve Heitzeg: light/see + dark/hear: 2
- Sphinx Virtuosi: 1
- Morgan Thorson: Untitled Night: 8
- The Nosebleed: 8

The Great Northern's Legacy-funded programming attracted 2788 attendees during the 2024 festival:

- Broken Ice: Indigenous Sonic Salve from the North (Indigenous Music Spotlight): 219
- Ariana Kim & Steve Heitzeg: light/see + dark/hear (Music in the Dark): 207
- Sphinx Virtuosi: 1250 (approx)
- Morgan Thorson: Untitled Night: 257
- The Nosebleed: 855

The Great Northern achieved 100% of its proposed outcomes by presenting all of it's proposed activities attracting thousands of attendees and supporting 30 artists.

## **Actual Evaluation**

The Great Northern collected demographic and geographic data from participating artists through a Google Form survey. To evaluate and assess their experiences, we supplemented this with post-event surveys, scheduled Zoom meetings, and in-person feedback sessions. Additionally, The Great Northern partnered with the University of Minnesota Extension's Community Development department to deploy surveys to event attendees. These surveys captured audience demographics and included qualitative questions about their experiences.

We also gathered geographic data and tracked trends in interest and event popularity through our ticketing platform. Our partnership with the University of Minnesota significantly boosted survey participation, increasing responses eightfold. This collaboration provided valuable insights, including audience quotes, recommendations, and experiential

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data. Notably, 90% of our attendees are Minnesota residents. These findings have been instrumental in shaping our upcoming programming.





The Great Northern festival has social and economic impacts in the Twin Cities. An University of Minnesota Extension study found...

**1. Overall, attendees are satisfied with The Great Northern.**

**96%** of attendees were satisfied or highly satisfied.

**38%** learned about the festival via word of mouth.

**2. The festival is growing and attracts people to new locations.**

**70%** were first-time attendees of the festival.

**37%** visited the event location for the first time.

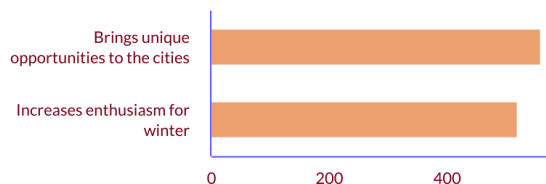
**3. The Great Northern festival's diverse and eclectic programming is valued by attendees.**

**#1** most cited favorable aspect of the festival was the eclectic mix of programming

**#2** most cited favorable aspect of the festival was the sauna village.

**4. Showcasing winter in a uniquely Minnesotan way is an underpinning of the festival's success.**

Most highly valued aspect of The Great Northern festival



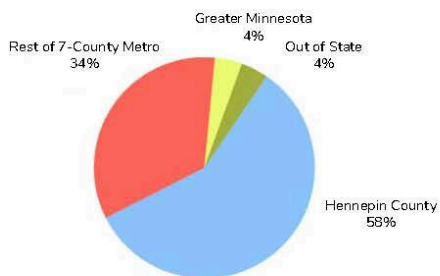
**5. The Great Northern festival generates economic activity.**

**\$** **\$2.1 million of economic activity generated by the festival.**

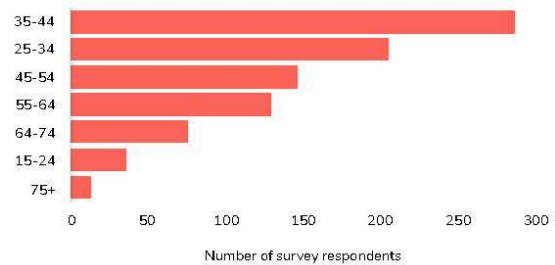
**\$** **real estate, professional services, and the arts benefit the most.**

# 2024 ATTENDEE DEMOGRAPHICS

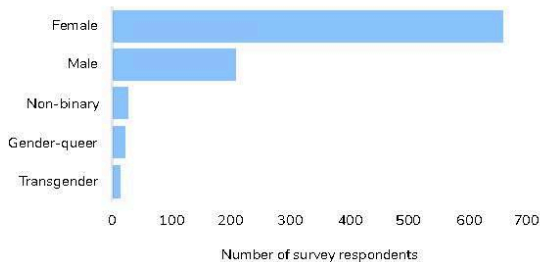
## Location



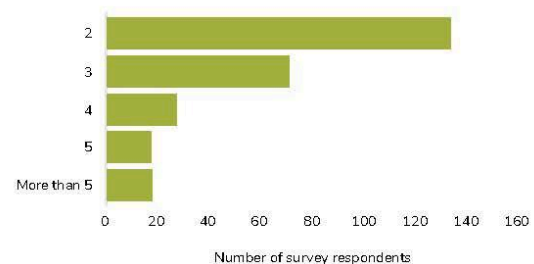
## Age Range



## Gender



## Number of Events Attended



"[The Great Northern] embraces the winter and offers unique perspectives on winter health and activities."

"[It's] a feeling of community during a typically isolating time of year."

