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## **Sandra Laronde Awarded Lifetime Artistic Achievement in Dance by Governor General's Performing Arts Awards**

**Toronto, ON** – The Governor General's Performing Arts Awards (GGPAA) announced today that Sandra Laronde, director, producer, choreographer, author, and Executive & Artistic Director of Red Sky Performance, is the recipient of the 2025 Lifetime Artistic Achievement in Dance. Recognized as Canada's highest accolade in the performing arts, the GGPAA's Lifetime Artistic Achievement honours artists for their outstanding and enduring contribution to culture in Canada and abroad. Laronde will receive the award's \$25,000 cash prize, contributed by the Canada Council for the Arts, and a commemorative medallion struck by the Royal Canadian Mint.

"As someone who has devoted her life to bringing Indigenous stories of resilience, hope, and inspiration to the stage, this recognition is profoundly meaningful to me. I am honoured and grateful to be included among such extraordinary individuals," says Laronde. "My deepest passion is helping people feel connected and at home in this world, and I have always believed that storytelling is one of the most powerful ways in which to achieve this. It is incredibly rewarding to know that my body of work, created alongside brilliant collaborators, has resonated with audiences across my cherished homeland of Canada."

Born in the northern Ontario rural community of Temagami, Laronde is a member of the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe (People of the Deep Water). A highly accomplished arts innovator and visionary leader, Laronde grew up with a passion for the arts. After graduating from the University of Toronto with an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree, Laronde founded Red Sky Performance in 2000 – named after her Anishinaabemowin name, Misko Kizhigoo Migizii Kwe, meaning Red Sky Eagle Woman. She has played a pivotal role in the resurgence of Indigenous culture across Canada through her works, which explore story and cultural identity, expand the Indigenous canon, and awaken a wider ecological relationship to nature.

Acclaimed for her bold and inspiring multidisciplinary practice in dance, theatre, live music, and multimedia, Laronde has built an extraordinary body of work over the past 25 years. Under her leadership, Red Sky Performance has toured 22 countries across four continents, performing at prestigious events such as the Cultural Olympiads in Vancouver and Beijing, World Expo in Shanghai, the Venice Biennale, the Kennedy Center, and Jacob's Pillow.

From 2007 to 2016, Laronde served as Director of Indigenous Arts at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, driving the artistic and strategic vision for Indigenous-led programming across all disciplines on campus. In 2017, she partnered with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra to curate a groundbreaking genre-defying creation that blended Indigenous, electro-acoustic, and orchestral music with dance and film.

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Most recently, in 2022, Laronde became a published author with her debut young adult novel, *She Holds Up the Stars* (Annick Press), which was named one of CBC Books' Best Canadian Books for Young Adults and received the prestigious Kirkus Star review.

Several ambitious projects are in the works at Red Sky Performance, including a compelling adaptation of her novel, *She Holds Up the Stars*, commissioned by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, in association with TO Live. The work combines life-sized puppetry, dance, storytelling, theatre, visual screen design, and orchestral music, and will receive its world premiere in Toronto in April 2026. The company is also creating and producing a new dance documentary, as well as a new dance work which will enjoy its world premiere at Canadian Stage in 2027.

Laronde's numerous accolades include the Governor General of Canada's Meritorious Service Cross, the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Excellence in Conservation, the Canada Council for the Arts' Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award, the Smithsonian Institute's Expressive Arts Award, Indspire Award for the Arts, the Toronto Arts Foundation's Indigenous Artist Award, Horace Mann Upstander Award, and the Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize, and an honorary doctorate from Trent University, among others.

**For more information on Sandra Laronde and Red Sky Performance, visit: [sandralaronde.com](http://sandralaronde.com) or [redskyperformance.com](http://redskyperformance.com)**

#### **About the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards ([ggpaa.ca](http://ggpaa.ca))**

The Governor General's Performing Arts Awards are Canada's highest honour in the performing arts. The awards recognize a stellar array of artists and arts volunteers for their outstanding contribution to culture in Canada and abroad.

The Governor General's Performing Arts Awards were created in 1992 under the patronage of the Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn (1934-2002), then Governor General of Canada, and his wife Gerda (1935-2023).

Each year, Governor General's Performing Arts Awards are presented for Lifetime Artistic Achievement in the five categories of Stages (formerly theatre), dance, classical music, popular music, and Screens and Voices (formerly broadcasting and film). These awards recognize artists who have made an indelible contribution to Canada and the world's cultural life. Recipients of these awards are nominated by the general public.

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