

SANDRA LARONDE - Writer, Creator, and Director of *She Holds Up the Stars*

Sandra Laronde is a visionary leader, multidisciplinary artist, and one of the most influential voices in contemporary Indigenous performance in Canada. She is internationally recognized for advancing Indigenous arts and culture through bold artistic creation, leadership, and cultural diplomacy.

Sandra is from the Teme-Augama Anishinaabe (Deep Water People) and grew up in Temagami, northern Ontario. She holds an Honours Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto and founded Red Sky Performance in 2000.

As Founder and Artistic Director of Red Sky Performance—Canada’s leading Indigenous contemporary performance company—Sandra has created groundbreaking works that bring together dance, theatre, music, and multimedia. Under her leadership, Red Sky has performed more than 4,000 times across 24 countries on four continents, establishing an international presence for Indigenous performance.

Her work has also played a significant role in cultural diplomacy. Sandra has represented Canada at major global events including the Venice Biennale, Canadian Heritage’s inaugural Creative Industries Trade Mission to China, trade missions to Europe, the Cultural Olympiads in Beijing and Vancouver, and the ASSITEJ World Congress in Soweto, South Africa. From 2007 to 2016, Sandra served as Director of Indigenous Arts at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, where she provided artistic and strategic leadership that helped shape the future of Indigenous arts nationally and internationally.

Inspired by her own experiences growing up, Sandra is also the author of the award-winning novel *She Holds Up the Stars* (Annick Press), which received a Kirkus Star for exceptional merit, was named one of CBC Books’ Best Canadian Books for Young Adults and won the Horace Mann Upstander Award.

Sandra Laronde is the recipient of numerous honours, including the 2025 Governor General’s Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement in Dance, the Meritorious Service Cross (Canada), the Order of Ontario, the Indspire Award for the Arts, the Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize, the Canada Council Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award for Outstanding Artist in Dance, the Toronto Arts Foundation Indigenous Artist Award, and an honorary doctorate from Trent University, among others.