



News Release

Clay and Paper Theatre presented with the annual Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant

Toronto, June 1, 2026 – The **Ontario Arts Foundation (OAF)** and the **Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)** are delighted to announce that [Clay and Paper Theatre](#) is this year's recipient of the \$25,000 **Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant**. This annual grant recognizes advances in theatrical design and the promotion of environmental sustainability in live theatre. The grant was presented today during the press conference announcing the nominees for the *46th Annual Dora Mavor Moore Awards presented by the Romano D'Andrea Foundation*, held by TAPA at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres in Toronto.

Project Description

Ghost Walk / Earth Dance is a multi-year, off-grid outdoor theatrical project that blends ecological activism with giant puppetry, projection mapping, and community workshops at Dufferin Grove Park. Clay and Paper Theatre are developing a completely solar-powered, renewable performance infrastructure—including portable panels, rechargeable battery packs, and a mobile projection mapping system—to permanently eliminate disposable batteries from their practice. Constructed from locally sourced, rapidly renewable materials like willow and wheat paste, the production explores environmental loss and biodiversity by featuring giant luminous puppet animals as witnesses.

Ghost Walk / Earth Dance includes community workshops in mid-2026, culminating in six August performances, as well as plans for a remount and tour in 2027.

Clay and Paper Theatre

Founded in 1992, Clay and Paper Theatre is an accessible "theatre without walls" operating out of Toronto's Dufferin Grove Park. Co-led by David Anderson and Tamara Romanchuk, the charity specializes in image-driven outdoor plays, giant puppetry, and annual community festivals built in public view. For over 34 years, Clay and Paper Theatre have pioneered community access initiatives and trained more than 300 emerging creatives through their summer apprenticeship program. Additionally, since 2013, the company has actively prioritized Indigenous representation, employing First Nations artists annually.

Assessment

The Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant recipient was selected by an assessment committee comprised of **Indrit Kasapi** (CHAIR) - Artistic Producer, Theatre Passe Muraille; **Denyse Karn** – Executive Director, Associated Designers of Canada (ADC); **Shawn Kerwin** – Independent Stage and Costume Designer; and **Lisa Lambert** – Estate of Raymond M. Ferris.

The committee was unanimous in their choice of Clay and Paper Theatre as this year's recipient of the Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant. They said:

"The Jury is absolutely thrilled to award this year's Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant to Clay and Paper Theatre. We were deeply inspired by the simplicity and ambition of the idea that 'the show will run on

sunlight' — a vision that speaks not only to environmental responsibility, but to imagination and possibility within the performing arts. What especially resonated with the jury was that this proposal is not just about a single production, but about creating sustainable infrastructure and practices that can continue to serve the company and community for years to come. It is a powerful example of how innovation in theatre can and should consider sustainability practices always"

About the Grant

[Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant](#) is open to Toronto-based theatre companies who successfully demonstrate a proposal for improved sustainability practices in an upcoming production. Advances can be considered, but not limited to, the creation of unique methods of delivering a narrative in live theatre; the development of new and sustainable processes in the construction and striking of a live theatre production; and transforming non-traditional or underused spaces into theatrical venues.

Successful grant recipients will provide a written report following the conclusion of their production, detailing how the grant was used to further sustainability practice in the performing arts, elaborating on elements that worked well and others that require additional consideration. The report will be presented to the TAPA membership with goal of building upon best practices in the industry.

The Ontario Arts Foundation manages the endowment that funds the award. The Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts is responsible for the selection process and convenes a jury to review applications and make deliberations.

About Ray Ferris

This grant is made possible through a generous gift from the estate of Raymond M. Ferris, Toronto artist, mathematician, and statistician. Ray earned a Master of Science degree and early in his career and was on the team of NASA rocket scientists responsible for the successful return of the astronauts from the moon landing. In the mid-1980s, Ray started his own business in Toronto, R.M. Ferris Research Consultants. With advances in technology, he began experimenting with digital art and developed techniques to integrate his love for art, mathematics and computer technology and he collaborated with local musicians, combining art forms. Ray loved the theatre and was an enthusiastic supporter of Toronto's scene.

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To nurture an environment in which theatre, dance and opera may flourish and play a leadership role in the vitality of the City of Toronto. The [Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts \(TAPA\)](#): unites the disciplines of theatre, dance, and opera to celebrate and strengthen the performing arts in Toronto; promotes and advocates on behalf of a large and diverse membership of professional performing arts practitioners to legislators, public and private sector funding bodies, and to the general public; and provides marketing opportunities and professional development services to its membership.

Established in 1991, the [Ontario Arts Foundation \(OAF\)](#) is passionately committed to building long-term support for the arts in Ontario. In 2024-2025, the OAF paid \$4.8 million in endowment income and \$540,000 in awards and scholarships.

Ce document existe également en français.