



MONUMENTA



Trespassers Beware! Fort Conley and Wyandot Women Warriors

A Commemorative Public Art Project by the Wyandot Nation of Kansas and Monumenta

Request for Qualifications and Proposals

TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	Project Summary Project Background
04	Commissioning Organizations
05	Project Narrative & Brief History of the Conley Sisters' Battle
06	Site Description Design Criteria & Considerations
07	Design Criteria & Considerations (continued) Budget
08	Timeline 2024-2026
09	Proposal Stages & Honoraria
10	Proposal Stages & Honoraria (continued) Contact
11	Reference Images

Contact: Neysa Page-Lieberman
Artistic Director, Monumenta
neysa@monumentaart.org

PROJECT SUMMARY

Trespassers Beware: Fort Conley and Wyandot Women Warriors is a monumental public art project that tells the story of the Wyandot Nation's Conley sisters (Lyda, Ida and Helena Conley) and their battle to save their family's cemetery in Kansas City, Kansas. Co-led by the Wyandot Nation of Kansas and the public art organization Monumenta, we are commissioning an artist/artist team to create a mobile monument to debut in the Kansas City area and travel to related historic sites.

The Trespassers Beware! project will interpret the extraordinary story of the Conley sisters' fight to save the historic Wyandot National Burying Ground (formerly Huron Indian Cemetery) from urban development and erasure in the early 1900's. This multiyear public art initiative seeks to deepen Wyandot/Wyandotte engagement and to bolster our mission to preserve Wyandot history and culture. The title is inspired by the actual "Fort Conley," the small dwelling the sisters built inside the cemetery to live in and defend their family's resting place for multiple years. The monument will be an artist's interpretation of The Fort, and will be a platform for education for Indigenous and diverse populations about Wyandot/Wyandotte history, tribal sovereignty and the strong lineage of women leaders. The traveling work is designed to meet community members where they are and to deepen knowledge of our shared history.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Trespassers Beware! was developed between several organizations who were compelled to elevate the story of the Conley sisters to a more prominent place in history. The Wyandot Nation of Kansas, led by Chief Judith Manthe has long been educating public audiences on this important story, including building archives, leading tours and workshops and building partnerships with cultural and academic organizations. In 2022, Monumenta and Kansas City Repertory Theatre joined the movement to envision and commission artistic works to further amplify the Wyandot's work. Monumenta developed the idea for a mobile monument to interpret The Fort and publicly launched the project at Wyandot/Wyandotte Weekend in December 2023, and KCRP Theatre also supported a residency for Wyandotte of Oklahoma playwright Madeline Easley to write the full-length play, *Representatives for Those at Peace*, which had a sold-out staged reading during W/W Weekend. The Kansas Studies Institute at Johnson County Community College, Wyandotte County Historic Museum and Kansas City Kansas Public Library joined early in the process to help shape and host the project. Additional partners including PBS, KCUR/NPR and CLIO have been documenting and broadcasting our collaborative work.

COMMISSIONING ORGANIZATIONS

The Wyandot Nation of Kansas

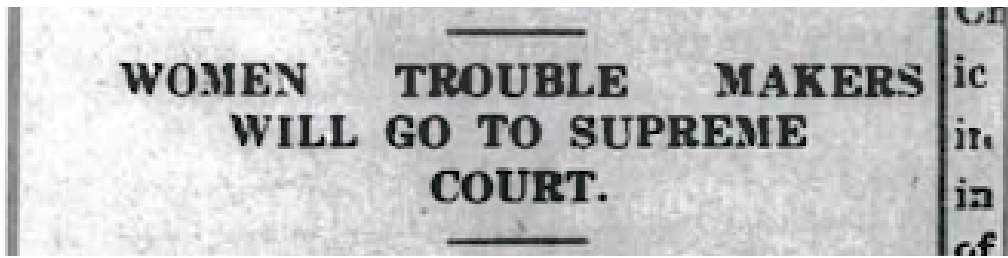
The Wyandot Nation of Kansas is dedicated to the preservation of Wyandot history and culture and the preservation, protection, restoration and maintenance of the Wyandot National Burying Ground in Kansas City, Kansas. The Wyandot Nation of Kansas descends from the ancestral homeland of Georgian Bay, an inlet of Lake Huron. They were displaced multiple times due to war, disease and forced removal, which resulted in four different bands: Wyandot Nation of Kansas, Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma, Wyandot Nation of Anderdon and the Huron Wendat of Wendake. All are part of the Wendat Confederacy, which was in effect before Viking explorers arrived and was reaffirmed on August 27, 1999 in Midland Ontario by the leaders of the four groups.

The Wyandots arrived in the Kansas City area in 1843 and soon founded the towns of Wyandot and Quindaro, which later became Kansas City, Kansas. They incorporated in the State of Kansas in 1959, attained 501(c)(3) status in 2020, and are currently petitioning the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs for federal recognition. Examples of their current activities include: workshops on traditional craft; tours of the Wyandot National Burying Ground and the Quindaro site; Wyandot language classes; and presentations with Wyandot collections and archives at museums and libraries.

Monumenta

Monumenta is a public art initiative that engages artists and community partners to monumentalize our collective actions and stories. Based in Kansas City and led by curator, writer and organizer, Neysa Page-Lieberman, Monumenta produces commemorative art projects locally, nationally and internationally. In close collaboration with partners, Monumenta envisions, incubates, develops, advocates, connects and presents collective stories as monuments. Projects are co-designed to be inclusive of the world's diversity, centered in feminist practice, and working towards justice and equity in our shared public spaces. Current projects and partners can be found here monumentaart.org and Neysa Page-Lieberman's bio can be accessed here: neysapagelieberman.com/about.

PROJECT NARRATIVE & BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONLEY SISTERS' BATTLE



Trespassers Beware! will tell the extraordinary story of the Conley sisters' battle to save their family's sacred cemetery through a multi-site, multidisciplinary and community-embedded public art monument inspired by Fort Conley. A sacred place for the Wyandot Nation of Kansas and the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma, the 2-acre cemetery exists today because of the Conley's decades-long activism.

Originally from the Great Lakes region, the Wyandots arrived in present-day Kansas City in 1843 after being forced to move multiple times by colonists. Upon arriving, they discovered the land promised to them was not theirs, leaving them vulnerable to illness and death, including a flood that killed hundreds and necessitated the immediate need to establish a cemetery on higher grounds. A decade later, the federal government initiated another displacement treaty, stipulating the Wyandots needed to move to a reservation in Oklahoma to keep their tribal rights, or stay in Kansas and forfeit them. Struggling with how to resist colonialism, the tribe split between Kansas and Oklahoma, eventually coming to be known as the Wyandot Nation of Kansas and the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma.

As downtown Kansas City grew, the cemetery land gained value and by the early 20th century, orders were given to excavate the bodies and sell the land. At this time the Conley sisters' parents, sister and other relatives were buried there and they quickly organized to defend the land. They courageously armed themselves, built "The Fort," and hung a sign on the cemetery gates reading: "Trespassers Beware." During a 4-year battle of which the Conleys lived in The Fort to watch over the cemetery, Lyda Conley earned a law degree and prepared a case stating that selling the cemetery violated prior treaties. By 1910 her case had advanced to the nation's top court. Lyda Conley went to Washington, D.C. and became the first Indigenous woman to argue a case before the U. S. Supreme Court.

Conley lost the case but the sisters remained determined and attracted national support, including Senator Charles Curtis, a Kaw Nation member from Kansas, who led a federal bill to protect the cemetery. Still, repeated attempts to develop the land endured for decades. In 1999 when all four Wyandot Nations agreed to work together to protect the land, and later in 2016 the cemetery was declared a National Historic Landmark. The actions and legal arguments of the Conley sisters reverberated far beyond the cemetery gates, contributing to preservation and tribal sovereignty movements nationwide, and elevating the role of women in law.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Trespassers Beware! will be on view in at least 4 locations (outdoor and indoor) and will debut at the Wyandot County Historic Museum followed by Johnson County Community College. Once the artist/artist team has been selected, they will be involved in determining exact placements for the monument at each site. Since the work will be in conversation with multiple sites and contexts, it will need to be designed flexibly rather than responding to one place. There may be opportunities to extend the mobile monument's exhibition schedule to more sites and more regions, and the artist/team will be an essential contributor to those decisions and plans.

DESIGN CRITERIA & CONSIDERATIONS

- The design will commemorate the story of the Wyandot Conley sisters who saved the Wyandot National Burying Ground from urban development in the early 1900's.
- The work will interpret Fort Conley, a small 6' x 8' dwelling that the Conleys built within the cemetery walls to live in and defend their family's cemetery. Fort Conley is a powerful symbol for the Wyandots which represents their ancestors' bravery, resilience and strategic determination, which came at great sacrifice and personal risk.
- The design need not be a literal replication of The Fort. We encourage imaginative responses and welcome all forms of media that can be presented outdoors and represent Fort Conley, the Conley's physical and legal battle, and the legacy of their actions.
- Should the artist design a work that will be stood upon, entered, or passed through, consider ADA accessibility.
- Artists should consider how this can serve as a platform for storytelling, knowledge sharing, and engagement of diverse audiences.
- Finalist artists are encouraged to read the play *Representatives for Those at Peace*, a new work by Wyandotte of Oklahoma playwright, Madeline Easley, that centers this story. We will be exploring ways for the monument and play to intersect and animate one another.
- As a mobile monument this work will travel to multiple locations and be on view for several weeks at a time, outside and inside. Thus it needs to be designed in a way to accomplish this, such as being collapsible or broken down into smaller modules to store and transport, or be replicated as a series of multiples, for example.

DESIGN CRITERIA & CONSIDERATIONS continued

- Consider how the work will inspire viewers to think beyond this famous story, to consider expanded themes related to the displacement, oppression and attempted erasure of Native peoples and cultures in North America, and how sacred spaces like burial sites are frequent targets in this process.
- The work will be outside and inside, so it must be made of material capable of withstanding outdoor elements; materials should be designed and fabricated for durability, and reasonably expected to maintain their original integrity and appearance over time.
- The monument should be aesthetically engaging and artistically stimulating to inspire conversation, interaction and appreciation by the general public.
- Consideration of an all-ages audience is key, including school groups, neighbors, educators, scholars and tourists.
- Artist(s) should be enthusiastic about a community-engaged design process and receptive to Wyandot/Wyandotte member and stakeholders' feedback throughout design phases.
- Research expectations: Finalist artists are expected to conduct thorough research on the topic. More information about project progress can be found on the Monumenta [Project page](#) and [News & Events](#) page. Artists will have access to a series of archived letters, newspaper articles and photos that have been assembled into pdf's. Finalist artists are invited to interview Chief Judith Manthe and playwright Madeline Easley and will work closely with curator/producer Neysa Page-Lieberman on concept, fabrication and budget. Other collaborators, scholars and Wyandot / Wyandotte Chiefs and Elders may be available by request.

BUDGET

The total project budget for *Trespassers Beware!* includes, but not limited to: artist(s) fee, other consultants' fees, materials, fabrication, community meetings, transportation, installation, liability insurance, documentation, public programming, marketing, evaluation and the dedication. Within this budget, the artist / artist team commission fee is \$25,000.

Shortlisted artists will receive guidance from the curator (Neysa Page-Lieberman) to develop a budget inclusive of artist fee, materials, fabrication, installation, travel, programming and contingency expenses.

TIMELINE 2024-2026 (dates subject to change)

June 28, 2024

Deadline for submission of RFQ materials

July 26, 2024

RFP issued by invitation

September 20, 2024

Deadline for Receipt of RFPs

October 11, 2024

Finalists notified of decision and invitations are made to present in person

Week of November 11

Finalists present proposals to Wyandot members and other stakeholders in Kansas City

November 22, 2024

Artists notified of decision and the selected artist/artist team invited to officially join project

TBD

Finalist announced publicly

December 2024

Artist presents concept including any new revisions to key stakeholders (may be in person or virtual)

December 2024 - April 2025

Fabrication of monument (specific benchmark deadlines added later according to production process)

Spring - Summer 2025 (TBD depending on fabrication schedule)

Fort Conley debuts at Wyandotte County Historical Museum in Bonner Springs, KS

Fall 2025

Tour begins at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, KS

Spring / Summer 2026

Tour continues at additional venues

PROPOSAL STAGES & HONORARIA

Stage 1: Request for Artist Qualifications (RFQ)

Artists are invited to submit credentials to be reviewed by Monumenta, who will recommend a shortlist of candidates from the submissions received through this RFQ. There is no honorarium at this stage.

Submission Requirements:

For the RFQ Stage, artists should submit a single document in pdf format. This document must be labeled with the name of the artist/artist team and must include:

1. A cover letter describing your interest in this project and contextualizing your past work submitted in the RFQ as it relates to this project. The letter should not exceed one page.
2. A current Resume/CV (or one for each member of the team, if applicable).
3. Examples of five (5) recent projects including images, brief written descriptions of the projects including materials, size, title, location, commissioning body and project cost.
4. Names and contact information for three references related to the projects presented.

Notes:

- Media files (audio/video) may be provided via URL with still images included in the document.
- Documents too large for email may be submitted via Dropbox or other file-sharing link.
- Concept proposals are not necessary at this stage and will not receive an honorarium.

PROPOSAL STAGES & HONORARIA continued

Stage 2: Request for Artwork Concept Proposals (RFP)

Artists who have been shortlisted will be invited to submit a detailed concept design proposal. Concept designs will be reviewed by the leadership team, who will select artists to present their proposals in person in October 2024. The Wyandot community will select the final project to be produced. The honorarium is \$1,500 for the completed proposal. For the RFP stage, artists must submit the following:

1. Monument concept narrative (max 2,500 words) for proposed piece addressing the following:
 - a. Theme and content of the work
 - b. Work's relation to Fort Conley and the Conley sisters' story
 - c. Connection to Wyandot history in Kansas and beyond
 - d. How the work engages Wyandot/Wyandotte communities, and other regional Native or connected communities
 - e. Fabrication process, materials, equipment, technology and other needed resources
 - f. Visual description of work
 - g. How this project can be moved to and/or exhibited at multiples sites
2. Digital / sketched rendering of proposed work
 - a. Materials for each portion
 - b. Scale and dimensions
 - c. Colors
 - d. Approximate weight
 - e. Renderings should show multiple angles/perspectives
3. Budget Allocations (Curator will assist with developing budget based on existing allocations)
 - a. Material costs
 - b. Fabrication costs, including base if applicable
 - c. Delivery fees
 - d. Installation and maintenance costs
 - e. Other consultant or professional services necessary

Stage 3: Presentations

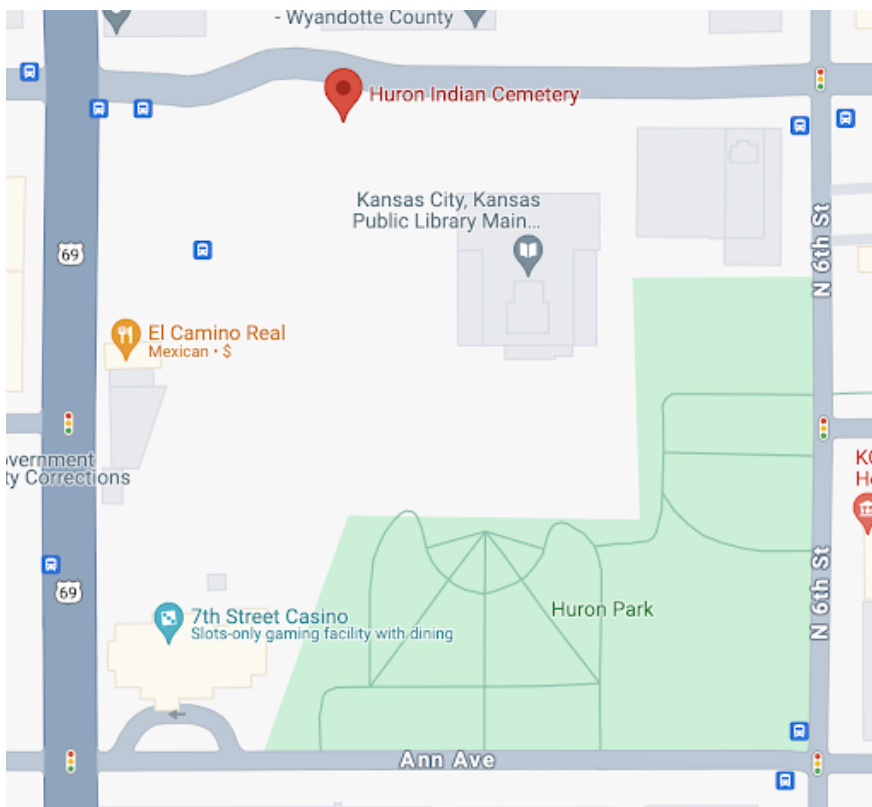
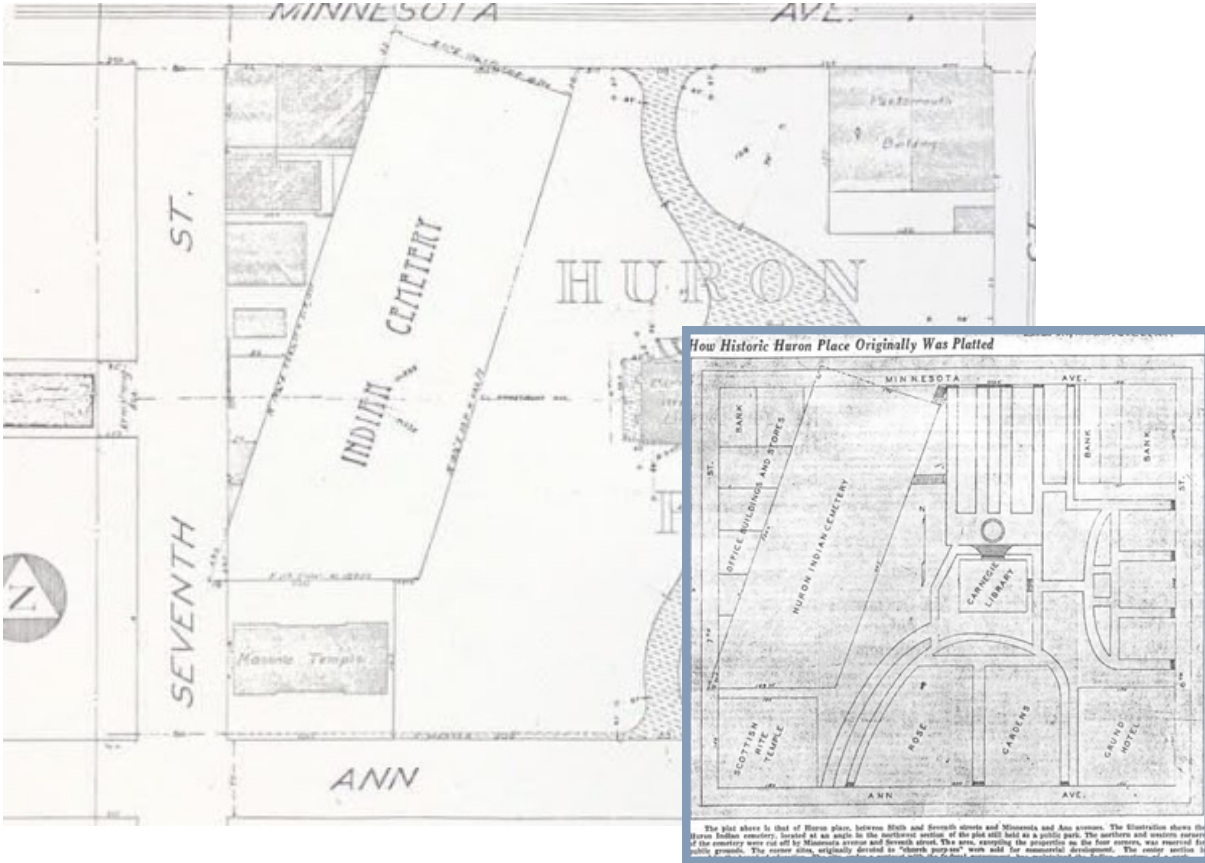
Up to 3 finalist artists are invited to present proposals at the November 2024 Wyandot community meeting; travel and lodging will be compensated.

CONTACT

Neysa Page-Lieberman
Artistic Director, Monumenta
neysa@monumentaart.org

REFERENCE IMAGES

Wyandot National Burying Ground Maps (formerly Huron Indian Cemetery) ca. 1903, and current view on Google maps, where Fort Conley once stood.



REFERENCE IMAGES continued

Wyandotte County Historical Museum building and proposed site for monument debut. This is where the project will debut in 2025 (late spring to early fall).



REFERENCE IMAGES continued

Johnson County Community College & Kansas City Kansas Public Library. These are future sites where the mobile monument will travel in fall 2025 or spring 2026.



Photos of Fort Conley, ca. 1906-11.



REFERENCE IMAGES continued

Views of Conley family grave markers, ca. 1960's, and present day with KCK Public Library in background.



On right, photo marker where Fort Conley is thought to have been, close to the Conley grave markers.



REFERENCE IMAGES continued



Helena Conley, Lyda Conley, cousin Nina Craig, ca. 1935.



Lyda Conley in a ditch protecting the cemetery, 1929.

Headline clippings, ca. 1906-1910.

ONLY GIRLS TO FIGHT

SAY THEY WILL DEFEND OLD HURO CEMETERY AGAINST ALL INTRUDERS.

BODIES CANT BE MOVED

Dynamite Will Be Used, Declared Lyda Conley This Morning, if Any Attempt is Made to Disturb the Graves of Indians.

SAY THEY'LL SHOOT

CONLEY SISTERS GUARDING THE GRAVES OF THEIR ANCESTORS.

Wyandotte Indian Girls Declare They Will Prevent Removal of Bodies From Kansas City Cemetery.



Trespassers Beware!
RFQ / RFP
©2024