

The *Road Less Traveled Conference*, a joint effort of the Kohler Foundation, Inc., the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, and the John Michael Kohler Art Center, was an almost incomparable opportunity to interact with scholars, teachers, artists, and researchers in a variety of fields to explore our common interests in identifying, documenting, and preserving art environments. It was held in Sheboygan, Wisconsin between September 27 and 29, 2017.

In a panel focusing on how community-building efforts undertaken at art environments across the country were often crucial to ensuring their survival, Anne Pryor, former State Folklorist for the Wisconsin Arts Board, delineated crucial strategies utilized by many successful conservation and preservation campaigns. She commented,

“Long-term preservation of art environments requires multiple types of efforts. Not only is the physical conservation, restoration, and protection of the sculptures themselves of major import, but so too are community-focused efforts that educate and build allies. While less technically demanding, this side of conservation still requires tremendous skill and care. Without it, these art environments would not survive and our shared cultural heritage would be diminished.

Conversations with managers of several different art environments have revealed key elements that are needed for the community side of conservation to be successful. These include, but are not limited to:

- skillful negotiation with local and supra-local governmental entities regarding services, regulations, and fees;
- positioning the art environment as a valued community asset within local and regional tourism efforts;
- nurturing sustained volunteer commitment and skills;
- building interest and dedication within next generations of leaders and volunteers; and
- undertaking continuous fundraising even if in rural areas with limited financial resources.”

Anne Pryor