

Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College Project by Advance Terrazzo Wins 2026 NTMA Honor Award

Coon Rapids-based contractor embeds sacred Anishinaabe symbols—swimming otters, St. Louis River, phases of the moon—into the college's amphitheater floor.

CLOQUET , MN, UNITED STATES, June 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When interior designer Julie Spiering first envisioned campus-wide cultural storytelling through a cohesive flooring design at [Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College](#), she knew it would take years to realize, and the right partners to make it affordable. That long-term collaboration has now earned the terrazzo contractor, [Advance Terrazzo](#) of Coon Rapids, Minnesota, a 2026 [National Terrazzo & Mosaic Association](#) (NTMA) Honor Award. The award, one of 17 installations recognized this year, was presented on May 13 at the association's annual convention.



Award-winning terrazzo was installed at Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College by Advance Terrazzo of Coon Rapids, Minn. © David Laudadio

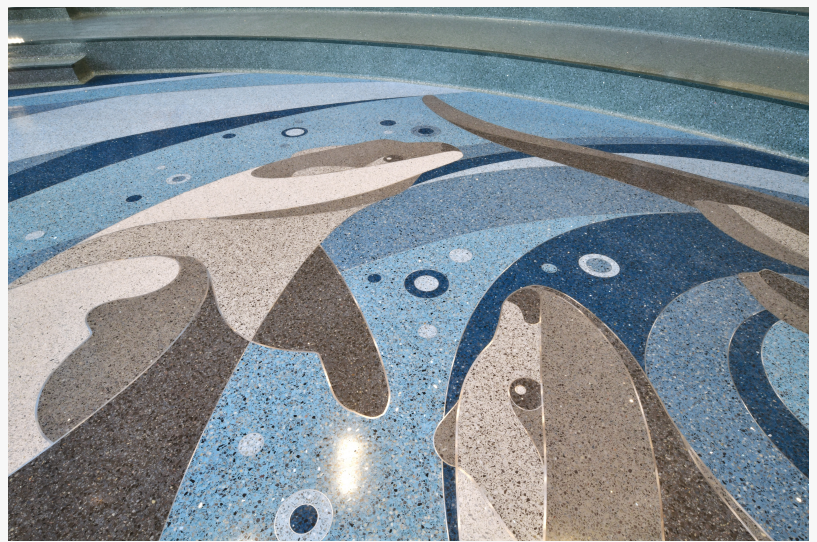
The terrazzo installation transforms the college's commons and amphitheater into a permanent, large-scale narrative artwork that weaves Anishinaabe heritage and symbolism into the center of the campus. Through material, imagery and craft, the design embodies the school's "Union of Cultures" principle of embracing diverse perspectives and traditions.

"It's a dream when we get terrazzo on a project," said Ms. Spiering, principal interior designer and CFO with DSGW Architecture in Duluth, Minn., who has led the interior design and phased master plan for the college since 2016. "It offers enormous creative opportunity; it's unlimited."

Terrazzo also provided the durability to meet the demands of a high-traffic public academic setting, while its poured-in-place installation allowed intricate imagery to be integrated directly

into the floor.

In the amphitheater's recessed performance area, a detailed image of swimming otters anchors the composition. Titled "The Twins," the image was inspired by a painting by Anishinaabe faculty artist Karen Savage-Blue. The imagery honors the memory of instructor Dan "Gaagigebines" Jones and his twin brother, Dennis. Blending personal remembrance with cultural narrative, the imagery also references the tribe's creation story, in which the otter is a sacred symbol of unity.



Anishinaabe creation myths feature the otter as a symbol of unity. The terrazzo is part of a master plan for campus-wide storytelling that follows the Cloquet, Minn., school's "Union of Cultures" theme.

Flowing through the half-moon-shaped main seating area, the St. Louis River traces tribal boundaries and marks significant place names. When the design team first overlaid the river's path onto the architectural floor plan, it aligned "like magic" with the geometry of the space. The team immediately knew that was the right direction, Ms. Spiering said.

“

This installation shows terrazzo at its finest: where craft, culture, and community converge into something that will inspire students and visitors for generations to come.”

Chad Rakow, NTMA Executive Director

"Terrazzo allowed us to tell that whole story," Ms. Spiering noted. "It also resonates beyond the Native culture. Many Northern Minnesotans have a strong connection to the outdoors, and all can find their own places in the design."

In an adjacent arched walkway, phases of the moon, referring to the seasonal rhythms central to Anishinaabe culture, are layered over braided sweetgrass, a traditional material used in ceremony, medicine, and basket weaving.

The installers and suppliers guided the design team in achieving the vision cost-effectively in terrazzo, making strategic material adjustments without compromising the design intent. The handcrafted installation incorporates 14 epoxy terrazzo colors, with precise color transitions at stair nosings and divider strip patterns continuing up the faces of stairs and other vertical surfaces.

"Along with the colors and the art, what sets this job apart is the sheer quantity of poured-in-place stairs and vertical work and the craftsmanship demonstrated in it," said Aaron Metzger,

project manager with Advance Terrazzo.

The amphitheater installation represents Phase Two of the college's master plan. Phase One was completed in 2018, and additional phases will continue to build on the campus-wide narrative. "These designs make the campus distinct," Spiering said. "We look forward to continuing the story."

Advance Terrazzo & Tile is a family-owned company specializing in custom terrazzo and tile installations. Established in 1960, the company is a member of the NTMA.

About the National Terrazzo & Mosaic Association

The annual NTMA Honor Awards recognize outstanding terrazzo installations completed by association member contractors. Entries are evaluated by design professionals and terrazzo specialists on design achievement, craftsmanship and technical execution. A full list of this year's Honor Award recipients is available at ntma.com.

Founded in 1923, the NTMA is a nonprofit trade association of over 150 contractor and supplier members, headquartered in Fredericksburg, Texas. The organization establishes national standards for all terrazzo systems and applications, advancing quality craftsmanship and innovation while supporting its members in the trade.



Designed by DSGW Architecture in Duluth, Minn., the St. Louis River rendered in terrazzo flows through the amphitheater seating area.



Advance Terrazzo's installation depicts braided sweet grass, layered under the phases of the moon, a symbol of the Anishinaabe culture. The terrazzo design fills a walkway adjacent to the amphitheater.



THE NATIONAL
TERRAZZO
& MOSAIC ASSOCIATION

The NTMA provides a broad range of free resources for architects, designers, artists, contractors, maintenance professionals and property owners. From assisting design teams with specifications to offering technical guidance throughout a project, the NTMA helps ensure terrazzo installations meet the highest standards. The association also offers AIA-registered continuing education programs for architects and design professionals. For more information about terrazzo resources, visit ntma.com. For more information about terrazzo resources, visit ntma.com. NTMA Technical Director Gary French is available at gary@ntma.com.

Terrazzo originated in 15th-century Italy, building on the mosaic traditions of ancient Rome. Venetian marble workers repurposed discarded stone chips into durable, decorative surfaces — a practice that made terrazzo an early sustainable material. Today, terrazzo is still poured by hand on-site, with options for precast panels and waterjet-cut details. Stone, recycled glass or other aggregates, which may be locally sourced, are set in a cement or epoxy base, and the surface is then polished to reveal the aggregate's color and texture. Valued for its design versatility, ease of maintenance, durability, sustainability and lifecycle value, terrazzo is built to last the life of a building.

Chad Rakow

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