As conference co-chairs, we were inspired by the findings of **Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission** and the resulting **94 Calls to Action** to honour and amplify respect for Indigenous ways of knowing and to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. October 2017, we gathered in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, at the heart of Turtle Island - Manitouabee – the Straight of the Great Spirit. As a global expressive arts community, we were in wonderful anticipation of using all of our senses and capacities to immerse ourselves in our conference: ***Indigenous Roots of Expressive Arts - Globally and Locally: Transformation, Social Justice and Social Chan****g****e.***

We started our journey with an invitation to ***Decolonize through the Arts*** during a 5-day pre-conference workshop at **Windy Hill**, on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. This beautiful forest venue offered a welcoming place to retreat and learn from Armand Volkas and Victoria McIntosh through meaningful engagements with drama therapy activities, art and Indigenous knowledge. A highlight of our pre-conference offerings was Elder Dave Courchene’s workshop at **Turtle Lodge** Indigenous healing centre in which we were invited to reconnect to our spirits and the Earth in celebration of our interconnectedness. From that place, we learned ancient Indigenous knowledge based on the 7 Sacred Teachings of the **Anishnaabe**. Pre-conference speakers Armand Volkas, Lita Fontaine, Kate Donohue and Allen Sutherland were all noted as providing an exceptional start to a weekend full of activities!

Our daily conference keynote speakers inspired and stretched us to wrap our hearts and minds around Indigenous teachings and worldview, and we took in a vast array of breakout sessions to allow experiential exploration of the topics. Our evenings and free time were filled with events that connected us to Winnipeg’s rich cultural heritage including a highlight visit to the stunning and informative Canadian Museum of Human Rights. On Friday evening we were invited to laugh and share in Tomson Highway’s stories and music at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Saturday evening we experienced teachings of local Indigenous Elders and pioneers in the field of expressive arts, capping off the evening with a drumming and African dance party with Casimiro Nhussi.

The conference was a powerful experience that united us and welcomed positive energy and active participation in the junction between Indigenous teachings and the expressive arts. The weekend concluded with a planetary dance of joyful celebration of our time together! With the willingness, openness and curiosity that nourishes a good journey, we were left feeling wiser, braver, healthier and happier, and with many new friends and perspectives to enrich the journeys that followed. We have maintained a Facebook page at ***Indigenous Roots of Expressive Arts*** and welcome your engagement there. We will be following our immersion experience up with a second annual WHEAT retreat ***The Art of Sacred Play*** at Windy Hill August 27th – 31st, 2018 with Indigenous Culture and Language teacher, Linda Manitowabi and Lance Brunner, meditation teacher and master of contemplative art practice in the Shambhala tradition. We hope to see you there or in San Francisco in 2019!

All our relations,

Darci Adam and Renee McGurry, IEATA Conference Co-Chairs