



# ICA INDIGENOUS MATTERS SUMMIT

SEE US | HEAR US | WALK WITH US

CHALLENGING AND  
DECOLONISING  
THE ARCHIVE

**EGIM**  **ICA**

Expert Group on Indigenous Matters  
Groupe d'Experts sur les Affaires Autochtones

## Welcome and Introduction

*David Fricker, Director-General, National Archives of Australia and ICA President*

This event today represents a remarkable milestone for the ICA, and in particular for those among our membership entrusted with the care of recorded memory of First Nations people.

Our purpose here at this summit was "challenging and decolonising the Archive"; I for one feel that we achieved a great deal toward this purpose. That is not to say that we have finally concluded any key issue, nor have we solved the important problems in front of us; but rather we have now articulated some of the key challenges that we in the archival community must accept if we are to decolonise the archives.

The themes of the Summit are simply expressed: "See Us, Hear Us, Walk With Us". Personally, I have learned a great deal today about the profound and far-reaching implications behind each of these themes, and where we will need to commence our journey of decolonisation.

- To "See" beyond the records in our collections in their present arrangements, and to be prepared to set aside - at least for a moment - what we think we understand to be the context and meaning of those records. As archivists, we must learn how to recognise and see the First Nations' culture, context and history that are memorised and represented in the records and be prepared to completely re-think how we see the value, meaning, and inter-relationships that exist within the archival collections. This does not make our traditional view of the archives any less legitimate, however it admits the reality that there exist several alternative views with which to "see" the people and events represented in the record.
- To "Hear" the voices of First Nations people, and accept that those voices represent *Knowledge Authorities*, with an understanding of history, memory, heritage and cultural identity. All of us, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have much to gain through a respectful dialogue that broadens our appreciation of the true value of archival collections that preserve the memory of First Nations. There are boundless opportunities to derive new knowledge and understanding once we can truly and honestly share different worldviews with which to interpret the past.
- To "Walk" together means a commitment to a future in which our traditional understanding of *property* and *ownership* can be expanded to accommodate a respect for traditional knowledge, and culturally sensitive approaches to storage, preservation, access and administration.



I am not ashamed to say that, in my capacity as the head of a National Archives, I find these concepts confronting. I do not have the answers, indeed I can barely imagine the strategies we will need to respond to these challenges.

However, as a non-indigenous citizen of a colonised country, I am profoundly inspired by these concepts, and the opportunity to share this Summit with so many wise and articulate colleagues from around the world today has given me great optimism and energy for the task ahead.

And finally, as President of the ICA I cannot think of a more important priority for our international community.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our newly established Expert Group on Indigenous Matters for this extraordinary Summit, and for setting such an important agenda for the ICA.