

ICOM-Canada, Winnipeg, September 2018

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I was very pleased to address participants the joint annual conference of **ICOM-COMCOL** (ICOM International Committee for Collecting) and **FIHRM** (the Federation of International Human Rights Museums), to welcome them on behalf of ICOM-Canada which contributed to the conference taking place from the 25th to the 29th of September at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights rises from the Prairie earth in **Winnipeg** at The Forks, where the Red and Assiniboine rivers meet on Treaty One land at a doorstep of the historical location of Métis occupation and Louis Riel's provisional government; the Museum sits on land that has been a meeting place for over six thousand years.

The theme of the conference was **Contemporary Collections: Contested and Powerful**. As said in the program and demonstrated during the whole conference: "Museum collections are not only more contested than ever before, but also hold more potential to effect social, environmental, and political change. This dynamic is reflective of the global state and the more active role museums are playing within it as change agents, promoting dialogue, understanding, and human rights". Speakers from many countries addressed, including namely Canada, Mexico, Germany, South Africa, Argentina, Japan, Taiwan, USA, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands and Italy to talk about the power of collections, challenges around interpretation and representation, more specifically when faced with sensitive or contested material. At the end of the day, Museums can become actors of social, environmental, and political changes.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights opened four years ago; in 2017, the Museum welcomed its million visitors. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is the only Museum in the world solely devoted to Human Rights awareness and education in the line of museums addressing some specific topics of Human Rights, like the **International** Slavery Museum of Liverpool, the Apartheid Museum of Johannesburg.

Participants had, during the conference, guided tours of the Museum; that experiential journey was an upward one, progressing from ground to sky, darkness to light – a metaphor for the struggle toward fully realized Human Rights for all. The architect, **Antoine Predock**, has described the building as "carved into the earth and dissolving into the sky."

