SkirtsAfire Anti-Oppression Statement – Updated December 2021

SkirtsAfire acknowledges that systemic change needs to occur in order to dismantle the oppressive systems upon which theatre practice has been built upon in Edmonton and Canada. As an organization, SkirtsAfire came to life out of a desire to break the inequalities we recognized in theatre being born out of a patriarchal society and we have learned in our work to focus as well on inequalities faced through many intersections of race, culture, gender and ability.

SkirtsAfire also respectfully acknowledges that we are telling stories on the traditional and ancestral homeland of diverse Indigenous peoples including Nehiyawak (Cree), Metis, Inuit, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux and Nakota Sioux, who have lived and travelled through this place thousands of years before us and signed treaty to share the land we live, thrive and gather on. We are all treaty people and as settlers to Treaty 6 Territory, which is also home to Métis Settlements and the Métis Nation of Alberta, we are striving to better listen, understand and learn from the Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. We respect and celebrate the languages, history and culture of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit whose presence continues to enrich this vibrant community here in ᐊᒥᐢᑲ·ᒋᐊ̇·ᐢᑲᐦᐃᑲᐣ, Amiskwacîwâskahikan, also known as Edmonton, and at SkirtsAfire.

Breaking down systems of oppression is a journey and SkirtsAfire is committed to this journey as we continue to make space for underrepresented voices in theatre and all art forms. We have begun to question all practices built out of a Eurocentric lens. We question the hierarchy of roles like the Director, Stage Manager, Performer, Dramaturg, Writer, Choreographer, etc., as we find ways to work within a system built upon this hierarchy, attempting to be respectful of all voices and roles equally. We are actively hiring consultants to open up barriers faced by both artists and audiences. We continue to commit to creating safe spaces to work in (see our Safe Space and Harassment Policy) and we continue to work towards having at least 40% representation of BIPOC artists in our festival. We are also constantly working towards more BIPOC representation at the board level and in all our hiring practices.

For nearly 3 years we have been working on an Indigenous story with Indigenous artists and we've been learning from Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers both in and out of ceremony. This work has greatly influenced our constantly evolving ways of working in theatre and other arts forms at SkirtsAfire as we work towards unravelling systems of oppression.