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We, as the board of directors of Native Earth Performing Arts, are deeply concerned about the pain caused to individuals and the community as the result of casting decisions made in the Factory Theatre/Native Earth Performing Arts co-production of *The Unplugging*.

As a board we are charged with setting the direction for the company and thus must take responsibility.

For that reason we state openly to staff, the community and the world that Native Earth will never again be involved in a production that allows an Indigenous character to be portrayed by a non-Indigenous actor.

Native Earth exists to support Indigenous actors, directors, technicians and administrators. In our most recent strategic planning process we identified our vision as “We honour Indigenous heritage, share our stories and shape the future.”

There were a number of factors that led to the decision to enter into this co-production with Factory Theatre. We knew it would support an Indigenous playwright. We knew that the members of the production team had a long record of supporting Indigenous theatre. We hoped that by accessing Factory’s audience we could attract more people to Native Earth and AKI Studio Theatre.

But mistakes have been made. Mistakes that have affected the community and we acknowledge the hurt that has been caused by those decisions.

We have heard that in the past some of the community felt that the doors to Native Earth had been closed. We are working to open those doors. One of the main goals stated by new Artistic Director Ryan Cunningham is to welcome all the community back to Native Earth.

We hope we began that process with the last Weesageechak Festival.

We are deeply thankful for the community members who have come forward to share their honesty, their thoughts, their feelings and their wisdom. This connection with the community can only make us stronger.

We invite you to support a young artistic team, to be there in the audience and at our outreach events, and to help us to recruit Indigenous board members.

Respectfully,

The Native Earth Performing Arts Board

Jed DeCory Georgia Quartaro Matt McPherson Lisa Valencia-Svensson Dean Gabourie