

IFAJ 2023: Canada's time to shine



A proud Canadian delegation of CFWF members representing Canada at the IFAJ Gala dinner, Sunday July 2, 2023. (Photo by Chuck Zimmerman, AgWired)

The IFAJ 2023 World Congress recently concluded and Canada proudly played host to more than 200 delegates from 31 countries.

Thank you to everyone who registered for IFAJ 2023. All the hard work and planning would have been wasted if you, the delegates, hadn't come from all corners of the world to join us here in Alberta.

And speaking of all the hard work, we especially wanted to take a moment to thank the large group of volunteers that made the Congress the success it was.

Trevor Bacque and Annemarie Pedersen were the IFAJ 2023 co-chairs and were involved in the early stages of the planning and decision-making. They supported every committee in their work over the last few years to make the IFAJ 2023 Congress a reality.

Jessika Guse came on as a co-chair early this year, but made substantial contributions throughout the planning of the conference. She led the registration and hospitality committees along with Alexandra Hayden, Erin Stadnicki and Karli Reimer. She also found our opening and closing entertainment acts, and the dueling pianos were the unanimous highlight on the final evening.

Craig Lester led the sponsorship committee and, despite challenging financial times, managed to raise a substantial amount of money! Together with his team—Clare Wooding, Jane Robinson, Ivor Bernatsky, Owen Roberts, Jenn Norrie, Reg Norby and Tracey Feist—they made

certain that partners were happy, the signage was right and in the right place, and that we had the funds we needed. Tracey, Trevor and Hugh Maynard also did serious work writing a government grant that provided a substantial boost to our coffers. And Ivor's creative inspiration was behind the Platinum Mixer on our first afternoon in Olds.

Laura Rance-Unger and Ashley Robinson, with help from Megan Evans, created a deep and thoughtful range of programs for our learning and entertainment throughout the week. This included a day of insight, introspection and inspiration on our Indigenous Canada Day Program that those of us who experienced it, will not soon forget.

*Special thanks to **Rachel CrowSpreadingWings** for building the afternoon breakout session program for us and sharing her knowledge and insight to ensure we were on the right track.

The **Tour Committee** really pulled out all the stops: Thank you to Michelle Chunyua, Ian Doig, Lee Hart, Clare Stanfield, Mary MacArthur, Dianne Finstad, Tracey Feist, Melissa Zembik, Alexis Kienlen, Debra Murphy, Cathy MacKenzie, Kate Laverdure and Brad Brinkworth. Tommy Wilson was our "iceman" and made sure you had cold drinks on all your tours.

Becky Zimmer was the media committee chair and worked with her team Laura Thygesen, Myrna Stark-Leader and Stephanie Gordon to keep the social media, e-blasts and websites full of information.

Jenn Norrie was in charge of facilities and food and worked tirelessly to make sure we had the rooms we needed and great food to eat throughout the week. I think we can agree that was a huge success.

Janet Kanters led the transportation portion of the Congress and got us all where we needed to be—on time and in style. Co-ordinating drivers and logistics during a national holiday are not easy feats, but she pulled it off!

Stacy Zimmer took charge of the Taste of Alberta kick-off reception and knocked our socks off. The food was delicious, the beers were cold (and unique!) and everything went off without a hitch. Many delegates commented on how easy it was to meet and mingle that evening.

The CFWF Office staff, **Hugh Maynard, Norma Tolhurst and Alexandra Hayden** supported us with bookkeeping, grant reporting and back-of-house management. You can't accomplish much if you don't have a way to receive partnership dollars and registration fees, pay bills and keep the website up-to-date. Thank you!

And there were so many others who stepped up. The following folks ran the pre- and post-tours: **David Schmidt, Myrna Stark-Leader, Craig Lester, Erin Stadnicki, Kristen Lepp, Kara Oosterhuis, Tracey Feist and Jessika Guse**. The airport welcoming committee dressed up and held their IFAJ signage high to ensure the delegates were met with a friendly smile. Thank you

to **Kelly Daynard, Lilian Schaer, Allison Finnamore** and **Maggie Van Camp** for kicking off the conference with a bang right from the start at the YYC airport.

We'll end with a funny, but true story. On the way home from Calgary on the first day of tours, one of the buses broke down. But that did not deter our trusty CFWF members. **Walter Grose** and **Maggie Van Camp** from Ontario led the mechanical charge to get the bus back on the road home to Olds! Walter was, in fact, named MVD: Most Valuable Delegate! 😊

It really does take a village to pull an event like this all together. The people above were the glue and their time, passion and effort enabled Alberta to host an IFAJ Congress that left the delegates with memories of Alberta agriculture to last a lifetime.

THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU!

Sincerely,

The Alberta Farm Writers' Association