

Prix Riel: recognizing outstanding commitment

Since being awarded for the first time in 1983 after long and careful consideration, the Prix Riel has become a veritable hall of fame for the Franco-Manitoban community.

"The idea behind the award was to raise the profile of people in the community," says Normand Dupasquier, who chaired the committee that created the Prix Riel. "I started thinking about this project in 1981. I presented it the following year, and the first Prix Riel laureates received their awards in 1983."

The awards have been handed out annually, and every two years starting in 2015, to honour community commitment in several areas. "Prix Riel awards can be given to an individual, a group or an organization," he says. "It is always a source of great pride for the recipients because it underscores the significance of their contribution for their community."

With each prize awarded, the Société de la francophonie manitobaine (SFM) has sought to recognize people who, through volunteerism, have contributed to the collective development of Manitoba's Francophone community.

Prix Riel candidates must be



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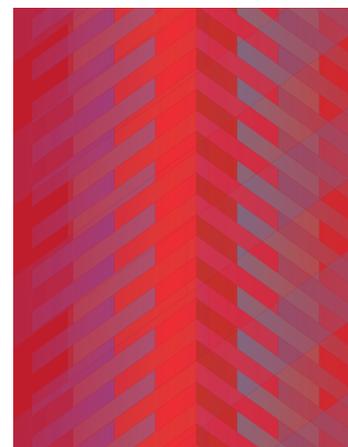
Recipients of the 2002 Prix Riel awards, from left to right: the Grey Nuns of Western Canada (Manitoba region), the Corporation de développement communautaire de Saint-Laurent, the Louis Boys, the Honourable Ronald J. Duhamel (not shown) and Monique LaCoste.

nominated by a third party. Every year, a committee meets to go over all the nominations received. The originality of the contribution as well as its sustainability and significance are key criteria for the selection of award recipients.

"The Prix Riel is a wonderful way to be recognized by our Francophone community," says Monique LaCoste, who received a Prix Riel in the area of

arts and culture in 2002. "I was very touched and humbled by the award." Her project focused on offering guided tours of the St. Boniface cemetery that included a theatrical component.

"I wanted people to be aware of the cemetery's rich history as they walked among the tombstones, while telling the stories hidden behind them, including our Francophone and Métis heritage with the Louis Riel gravesite."



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