

SUSAN ALGIE

Executive Director, Winnipeg Architecture Foundation

For almost two decades and entirely in a voluntary capacity, Susan Algie has engaged the public with the built environment and with the architects and allied professionals that shape it. Focusing on her adopted city of Winnipeg and building on her public service experience as a heritage resources planner, she has directed programs of research and public education delivered by the [Winnipeg Architecture Foundation](#). Susan has conceived, planned and executed initiatives that have had a local impact, provincial significance and national resonance.

Inspired by the example of the Chicago Architecture Foundation, Susan and a small committee of volunteers founded the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation (WAF) in 1996. As a nonprofit, charitable organization, WAF is "dedicated to advancing the awareness and appreciation of Winnipeg's built environment through public education." In recent years, as its full-time volunteer Executive Director, she is responsible for directing and implementing its research and public programs.

Under Susan's leadership, WAF has developed and delivered a broad public program connecting people to the built environment through tours, exhibits, lectures, publications, film series, a website and social media. These activities draw from Winnipeg's wealth of historic architecture, its distinct architecture of the modern era, and its vibrant contemporary architectural culture.

Winnipeg residents and visitors benefit from a range of WAF tours including guided ones on foot, bicycle and bus, as well as self-guided tours. Susan has a particular passion for modern architecture, and has edited or co-authored four guidebooks: "Broadway Modern," "Brutalist Architecture in Winnipeg," and two on the city's universities. In addition, leveraging current technology, she has established a QR Code tour for smartphone users that highlights key buildings in the city.

To promote Winnipeg architecture and its architects, Susan has directed exhibits. These include "Winnipeg Civic Centre, 1964-2014," and "University of Manitoba." In addition, she has directed on-line exhibits, on the city's neighbourhoods, public art, and even local building materials. Since 2012, Susan has curated the "Architecture + Film" series, a bi-monthly offering of international films. She also collaborates with partners to curate Winnipeg's annual "Architecture + Design Film Festival."

These various educational initiatives are built upon a long-term research program on Winnipeg architecture, its architects and allied professionals. To date, under Susan's leadership, WAF has documented over 2,200 buildings

and sites in the city of Winnipeg. Documentation of many of these places is available on the Foundation's extensive website. In addition, the website contains digitized versions of many out-of-print articles on Winnipeg buildings from the RAIC Journal and Canadian Architect. There are also out-of-print historical documents about the city and its architecture. All of these are an extraordinary benefit to students and researchers.

Susan directs a long-term, ongoing research project of Winnipeg architects and allied professionals. To date, this includes 80 individuals, mainly architects, but also engineers, landscape architects and interior designers. An important component is the oral history project, for which 20 architects have been interviewed. Biographical information of 60 individuals is available to the public and researchers on WAF's website. As many of these Winnipeg practitioners eventually worked elsewhere in Canada, this research is valuable for students, architects and researchers across the country.

Among Susan's accomplishments, about which architects should be most encouraged, are the connections she is forging between architecture and the younger generation. One example is the "Building Toys" exhibit, curated by Susan, which explored the history of architectural toys while encouraging children to experiment through play. In addition, through the research projects, exhibits and tours in which she engages others, she is nurturing younger talent. A new generation of researchers, curators and architectural historians are finding opportunities to build skills and forge relationships with architects.

At a national level, Susan's passion for modern architecture led her to co-chair the first pan-Canadian conference on the built heritage of the post-war era. "Conserving the Modern in Canada: buildings, ensembles and sites, 1945-1975," was held at Trent University, Peterborough, in 2005. This seminal conference attracted 100 architects, allied professionals, academics and students to examine the built legacy of the modern era in Canada and its continuity into the future. Subsequently, she co-edited the bilingual proceedings and co-authored a guidebook, "Peterborough Modern."

Susan will soon begin her third decade of volunteer work, and the pace of activity would seem to be increasing. As she prepares to edit a monograph and curate an exhibit on the architectural firm of Green Blankstein Russell, she is welcoming the public to WAF's newly established 'bricks and mortar' location within Winnipeg's historic Exchange District. In closing, Susan Algie is exceptionally rare in that, while not an architect, she has such an extraordinary passion for architecture combined with an exceptional understanding of it. Most importantly, she has demonstrated, and continues to demonstrate, high calibre and sustained advocacy achievements in connecting the public to architecture and architects.

James Ashby OAA, MRAIC
On behalf of the nominating architects