

Ernest-Cormier Prize 2022 (*Spatial planning, architecture and design*)

Alain Fournier (Short Biography)

Over the course of his 47-year career, Alain Fournier has cultivated valuable collaborations with Inuit and First Nations communities with a view to improve their wellbeing through the design of quality built-environments that reflect their unique worldview. Alain's creations all bear a signature with strong symbolic resonance and serve as a model for architectural projects in Indigenous territories throughout Canada's northern regions.

A Biography of Alain Fournier (Full)

Alain Fournier has "the gift of sculpting emptiness and space / for those peoples forgotten by time", wrote Innu poet Maya Cousineau-Mollen in a work she dedicated to him. With a profound sensitivity towards Quebec's Indigenous peoples, Alain has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the promotion of their cultures. Thanks to his attentiveness and respect, he has developed valuable collaborations with Inuit and First Nations communities throughout his 47-year career as an architect. He has been able to contribute significantly to the improvement of their built environment through designs that reflect their vision of the world. His creations are, without a doubt, true models for architectural projects in Indigenous communities.

Alain considers his selection for the Ernest-Cormier Prize a "recognition and acknowledgement that architecture constitutes an important vehicle for identity among Inuit, First Nations and Métis." He is encouraged to "continue supporting Indigenous communities in their desire to become masters of their built environment and masters of their destiny."

Alain Fournier's fascination with Inuit culture took root in his childhood, after watching a documentary on the construction of igloos. His interest in this culture and in architecture would continue to grow, leading him, at the age of 17, to work on a construction site in Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit), and later to study architecture at McGill University.

After his graduation in 1975, Alain went on to work with PGL architectes where he collaborated on numerous international projects before founding his own firm in 1982. The Iqaluit Air Terminal (1983), in which he participated as a consultant, proved to be pivotal in the young architect's career development. The bright yellow building, a nod to Inuit artists, became a cultural icon in the Far North. It would come to underpin a long list of Alain's projects in Inuit Nunangat (Nunavik, Nunavut and Nunatsiavut).

"Three key events, unfolding in rapid succession over a period of barely 12 months, sparked my quiet indignation and inspired my outlet for it, action through architecture: the commission for the design and construction of the Shaputuan in Oujé-Bougoumou; training on Indigenous realities with, among others, Wendat historian Georges E. Sioui; and the Oka crisis," he explains.

Built beginning in 1983, the architect's many creations over the years include cultural and community centers, seniors' residences, daycare and health centers, as well as highly complex projects such as the Canadian High Arctic Research Station, inaugurated in 2019. Much of his work was done with EVOQ Architecture, a firm he co-founded in 1996 and where he still works today. Alain is extremely attentive to ensure that each of these buildings bear a signature with strong symbolic resonance for the communities in which they are located and are designed to meet their needs.

This is demonstrated, for example, by his numerous social housing projects, which are in keeping with the lifestyle and traditional activities of the Inuit through their open spatial organization; or the development of the new air terminals in Nunavik, including the layout of the waiting rooms that encourages community interaction rather than individual isolation. Developed following an innovative process of co-creation with Indigenous communities, Alain's projects allow them to celebrate their culture within their identity narrative and promote a greater sense of ownership of the buildings. An avid art enthusiast, Alain's work contributes to increasing this sense of pride through the integration of art into the architecture, showcasing the talents of Indigenous artists in his projects.

Alongside his work in the field, Alain Fournier is involved in several organizations, notably the Association of Architects in Private Practice of Quebec (AAPPQ), of which he was President from 2007 to 2010, and is a Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). Alain also lectures at the Université de Montréal's School of Architecture, where he trains future generations of architects and helps them gain a better understanding of the challenges to be met in indigenous territories.

Biographies translated from Prix du Quebec:

<https://prixduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/recipientaires/alain-fournier/>