

# 2018 International Judge



## Bernadette Solon

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Bernadette Solon is our judge from Ireland. She lives in Mullingar the capital town of Westmeath and the administrative headquarters of the county. Since her graduation as an architect, Bernadette has had various careers - university lecturer for over 20 years, architect of Westmeath Local Authority, conservation officer and heritage officer and now, since retiring, a Tidy Towns adjudicator and more recently a Communities in Bloom judge. While a university lecturer she was invited as a visiting professor to the University of Lincoln, Nebraska.

She believes that events such as Heritage Week, Tidy Towns, National Tree Week, Biodiversity Week and Communities in Bloom are vital to raise our awareness of the natural and built heritage. She is heartened to see the work undertaken by community volunteers and states that their commitment enhances the lives of all around them and should be enthusiastically encouraged. She has assisted numerous communities and voluntary groups over the years and has advised on aspects of architectural conservation, construction methods, hard and soft landscaping design, streetscape, street furniture and signage, indigenous plants, etc. In addition to lecturing to university students she has, while working for her Local Authority, given talks to schools, community groups, and members of the public and has regularly organized seminars on such topics as protected structures, raised bogs, and, old graveyards. She also arranged exhibitions on a variety of subjects e.g. 1916-2016 (an art exhibition celebrating Ireland's Easter Rising 1916), Children's Photographs - Street Heritage, and, WWI - The Westmeath Connection. She has produced drawings for two books - The Little Book of Westmeath and Lough Ree - a short historical tour.

She is a member of the all-Ireland Follies Trust and enjoys visiting the numerous structures which have been assisted in their consolidation and repair by the Trust both in the North and South of Ireland.

Bernadette has three wonderful children and two amazing grandchildren! She thoroughly enjoyed celebrating Canada's 150th with Communities in Bloom and the various communities she visited during the 2017 evaluations.

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**Larry Hall**  
Retired Educator

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Larry was born and raised in Saskatchewan and intends to remain in the province that he loves. After high school graduation he completed his B Ed. and a post graduate diploma in educational administration from the University of Regina. In 1999 he retired from working in the education field. As an elementary school science teacher he had students studying tree types and care, planting mustard seeds that had been in space and selling bedding plants in the spring to help fund their outdoor schools.

Throughout his career in education he was then as he is now committed to volunteer work. While teaching he became a volunteer speed skating coach for the Regina speed skating club and that grew into becoming the provincial coach which allowed him to work with a number of skaters who became Olympians. This also allowed him the opportunity to coach in China on two separate occasions once in 1986 and a return invitation in 1988. Both of these experiences were in the Jilin province of China which is the twin province of Saskatchewan. It was a great pleasure to have been selected to provide the coaching knowledge to their skaters and coaches but also a privilege to having been a representative of his province.

Presently Larry is the president of the Last Mountain Lake Culture Centre. This is a 5000 square foot building housing two galleries, the municipal library, and artist studios. The facility has three part time employees and also offers many art related classes and concerts. He is also the treasurer for the local United Church and has coached girls' volleyball teams for the last 11 years. He believes this makes our community a better place to live and finds that fulfilling. He has just become a member of the national judges committee which will be evaluating the judges' role in the CIB program.

Those are present activities but after retirement he was the mayor of his village. During his 9 years in this role the village became involved in the communities in bloom program. This introduction to the CIB program convinced him that every community can benefit by being involved in the communities in bloom program. It was this that motivated Larry and his wife to become provincial judges which they have been for the last 7 years. As mayor he recognized the significant role a council has to play in allowing the program have its greatest impact.

Larry looks forward to discussing issues from a municipal and CIB committee point of view.