

BACKGROUNDER

2017 Recipients of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit



Murad Al-Katib

Mr. Murad Al-Katib is a passionate entrepreneur and leader in the agriculture industry, with one of the greatest homegrown success stories in Saskatchewan. Growing up in Davidson, Murad understood the importance of keeping jobs, values and profits at home. Fifteen years later, as President and Chief Executive Officer of AGT Food and Ingredients, he has opened new and emerging world markets to Saskatchewan producers and created new Saskatchewan jobs. A fierce advocate of the agriculture industry, his efforts helped pulses become an integral part of Saskatchewan’s economy. Throughout his career he has stayed fixed on his vision of “From Producer to the World.” He is a recipient of the 2017 Oslo Business for Peace Award, the 2017 EY World Entrepreneur of the Year, and the 2016 Global Citizen Laureate by the UN for food for Syrian refugees.

Mr. Al-Katib’s philanthropic efforts and entrepreneurial spirit benefit people far beyond Saskatchewan’s borders. Based on a corporate philosophy that he refers to as “compassionate entrepreneurialism”, Murad has demonstrated a genuine commitment to assisting countries struggling under political and social unrest. Last year AGT Food and Ingredients, in partnership with the United Nations, the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations provided food parcels to families in need in Syria, Iraq and other countries. It is estimated these food parcels have fed approximately 15 million refugees. Through his vision and innovation, his outstanding work will help Saskatchewan succeed in our efforts to achieve global food security.

Murad Al-Katib
306-244-1318/ 306-501-0975
Regina

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June Avivi

Mrs. June Avivi is an important role model for all Saskatchewan citizens. She dedicates countless hours to various organizations and causes without any need for recognition. Her dedication and commitment to creating a better quality of life for some of the province's most vulnerable citizens is nothing short of admirable. A retired teacher, Mrs. Avivi's commitment has helped make it possible for Saskatchewan students to grow up learning about diversity and acceptance. She continues to be a dedicated and committed leader and mentor for Holocaust education, the Jewish community, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, the Valley View Centre Family Group and the Transition Steering Committee.

Mrs. Avivi has worked with individuals with intellectual disabilities, the Early Childhood Education Council, the Congregation Agudas Israel Synagogue and the Canadian Jewish Congress. She has proven herself to be the finest example of a dedicated, caring, hard-working and proactive volunteer. She has been involved in the Silver Spoon Dinner, a gala fundraising event for women whose efforts contribute to the Jewish Community, Saskatoon Interval House, Ronald McDonald House and the Saskatoon Crisis Nursery. Mrs. Avivi is a career giver whose goodness and commitment have left indelible footprints on our community.

June Avivi
306-374-7859
Saskatoon

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Martha Cole

Ms. Martha Cole was born and raised in Saskatchewan. Having traveled and studied worldwide, she has chosen to make her home in the province. She defines herself as a landscape-based artist whose roots are deeply buried in Saskatchewan soil. She immortalized iconic Saskatchewan elevators before they were torn down and lost forever. By mentoring and teaching fellow artists, she is a testament to her unselfish dedication to the craft. Widely exhibited and collected, Ms. Cole has established a significant reputation provincially, nationally and internationally as a master fibre artist.

Ms. Cole has presented skills-based workshops, positively impacting hundreds of individuals from across the province and nationally by her knowledge, openness and ability to engage and inspire. Her work has been exhibited throughout Canada and internationally in both solo and group exhibitions, including venues in the United States and Japan. Ms. Cole's work is driven by her environmental concerns and by her connection to the Saskatchewan landscape. In 2010, she was instrumental in the organization of a touring exhibition "All Beings Confluence", a collaborative project consisting of 250 fabric panels submitted by numerous artists. The exhibition has toured to 35 venues in Canada and the United States.

Martha Cole
306-731-3298
Disley

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Roland Crowe

Mr. Roland Crowe was born a member of the Piapot First Nation – Treaty 4 Territory, later becoming Councillor and then spent six years as Chief. He went on to be Vice-Chief and then Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, today known as the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN). Over his career, he worked to improve housing conditions and played a key role in the development of new training and employment strategies, securing new funding for First Nations people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Crowe's term as Chief resulted in completion of a "Hunting-Fishing-Gathering" Act of the FSIN, which was an important step in the application of First Nations Treaty rights, jurisdiction and management in the area of wildlife resources. Roland spearheaded the historic 1992 Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement, resulting in the addition of 1.6 million acres to First Nations land base. A foundational agreement on gaming with the province was one of his last achievements with the FSIN, resulting in 1,800 jobs, over 1,100 of which were First Nations people, in the gaming industry and major wealth creation for First Nations. Mr. Crowe demonstrates one of the finest aspects of First Nations culture, which is to care and share. His long service and tireless efforts have resulted in major, positive benefits for his people and for the First Nations of Saskatchewan and Canada, which will have a lasting impact on the lives of his people for generations to come. Mr. Crowe truly exemplifies the values and aspirations of all Saskatchewan people.

Rowland Crowe
306-539-9200
Regina

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Rod Gantefoer

Mr. Rod Gantefoer was born in Watson, is a long-time resident of Saskatchewan, and is proud to call the province home. He has served on various boards and committees, was a founding member of the Saskatchewan Party, and served as the Minister of Finance and the Government House Leader. STARS Air Ambulance would not be in Saskatchewan if it were not for his countless hours spent building partnerships, developing fundraising initiatives and working with the community, donors and government in order to bring STARS Air Ambulance to the province. He has helped make it the successful program it is today, with bases in Regina and Saskatoon, providing the sick and injured with life-saving transport. In addition to his work with STARS, Mr. Gantefoer is involved with Parkinson Canada, with the hope of advancing a comprehensive approach to care for those with the disease – a cause that is near and dear to his heart.

Mr. Gantefoer was the founding President and Chairman of Plains Poultry, today known as Lilydale Foods. His work in agriculture, philanthropy and politics has allowed him to cultivate a strong community presence and directly impact and improve the health, safety and quality of Saskatchewan citizens. He has dedicated his life to building a strong and prosperous Saskatchewan. Mr. Gantefoer continues to play a key role in keeping families and communities together and helping save lives.

Rod Gantefoer
306-921-7679
Melfort

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Paul J. Hill, C.M.

Mr. Paul J. Hill has provided distinguished business and community leadership in Saskatchewan throughout his career. As Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, he is the third generation in the Hill family to lead The Hill Companies in Regina. He has uniquely focused his significant philanthropic effort on the importance of education to raise people out of poverty and give them a successful start in the world. As a member of the Order of Canada, he embodies the Order's motto *DESIDERANTES MELIOREM PATRIAM* (They desire a better country). He gives his time, talent and financial support for the good of others, particularly in his local community.

In 1994, Mr. Hill chaired the first major fundraising campaign for the University of Regina, which raised more than \$20 million. In 2007, he made a major commitment to the Paul J. Hill School of Business at the University of Regina, which included an enhancement of many programs, student support and a partnership with The Ivey School of Business at Western University. In 2011, together with the Jesuit community, he and his wife Carol as well as many others established the Mother Teresa Middle School in Regina which is focused on bringing under-privileged children out of poverty by giving them the tools to succeed in their lives. The program is a full eleven year program which includes high school and post-secondary right up until the first job. This is the first Nativity Miguel program in Canada and has inspired the same program to open in Winnipeg. Additional support for students in need goes to those attending Champion College in Regina, the Hill Business School, The Ivey School of Business, The Athol Murray College of Notre Dame and teacher training at St. Mary's University in Calgary.

Being an engaged citizen who cares about the disadvantaged, Paul Hill embodies the values that we all seek to promote in building a just and compassionate society.

Paul J. Hill
306-777-0604
Regina

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The Honourable Robert D. Laing

The Honourable Robert Laing, former Chief Justice of the Court of Queen’s Bench, is recognized for his many contributions to the justice system in the Province of Saskatchewan. A former member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police following graduation from the University of Saskatchewan, College of Law, he quickly rose to the top of the legal profession where he was known as a “lawyer’s lawyer.” Mr. Laing was inducted as a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, a distinction which is by invitation only.

As Chief Justice, Mr. Laing played a leadership role in promoting access to justice, including spearheading a total overhaul of the Queen’s Bench Rules of Court to make court proceedings more efficient and understandable. While Chief Justice, he was responsible for the long-needed renovation of the Saskatoon Court of Queen’s Bench Court House. In addition to his contribution to the legal community, he supports the people of Saskatoon through his work with numerous boards and committees. During his years of practice, he was one of the most well-respected litigation lawyers in the province. He is a former Bencher and served as the President of the Law Society of Saskatchewan.

Robert D.Laing
Saskatoon

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Dr. Roberta McKay

Dr. Roberta McKay is the epitome of a highly-engaged community leader who demonstrates excellence, achievement and significant contribution to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Saskatchewan residents. She has dedicated a lifetime as a leader in the Saskatchewan medical community as well as a keen advocate for the arts.

Dr. McKay is a respected dermatologist and renowned as a patron of the arts and cultural community in Regina and southern Saskatchewan. Her philanthropic efforts generously support the Hospitals of Regina Foundation, the Saskatchewan Health Excellence Awards, Regina Transition House, Regina Rescue Mission, the Salvation Army Waterston House, the Salvation Army Grace Hospice, the Mayor's Arts and Business Awards, the Regina Symphony Orchestra, the Regina Music Festival, the Moustache Bash for the Prostate Assessment Centre, the College Avenue Renewal Project for the University of Regina, and the Emerging Designer Award for Saskatchewan Fashion Week.

Dr. McKay's passion for the well-being, cultural growth and diversity of Saskatchewan people is borne from her belief that it is her responsibility to give back to community.

Roberta McKay
306-546-4902
Regina

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Robert Mitchell, Q.C. (posthumous)

Mr. Robert Mitchell, former Attorney General of Saskatchewan, was one of the province's most distinguished citizens. He served the people of Saskatchewan as a member of the Legislative Assembly and a member of Cabinet. Mr. Mitchell served as a labour arbitrator and a negotiator of First Nations Self-Government agreements. Prior to his retirement, he served as Chair of the Province's Public Complaints Commission. He was highly regarded for his thoughtful, respectful approaches to governance, as well as understanding the needs of the people of Saskatchewan. He was mindful of his responsibilities as a citizen and aspired to create a stronger, more inclusive and caring society.

Mr. Mitchell's achievements as Attorney General in developing timely, less contentious ways of resolving disputes were national "firsts". His effort to expand capacity and create programs and services for First Nations within the justice system was groundbreaking. His leadership style, which emphasized collaboration and a "cross departmental" approach on Indigenous issues, was recognized nationally. Mr. Mitchell's work with the Public Complaints Commission was recognized by the Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement naming its national award in his honour and making him its inaugural recipient. Robert Mitchell worked tirelessly throughout his career, with civility and consideration of others and with patience and humility, to build a better province.

Sandra Mitchell
Regina

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Brigadier General (Ret'd) Clifford Walker, C.D.

Brigadier General (Ret'd) Cliff Walker represents one of the finest examples of leadership that our province has produced, a leader from whom the people of Saskatchewan and Canada have benefitted greatly. He has served as educator, soldier, businessman, volunteer, supporter of the First Nations community and champion of military veterans. Brigadier General Walker was one of only a few generals in the Canadian military from Saskatchewan. He has trained and mentored people to become leaders themselves and is a role model for the 'servant-leader' – putting others first and devoting himself to others' welfare.

During his teaching career he led and inspired students at the high school and university level to excel; many of his former students are teachers today. Brigadier General Walker is a founding partner of the Bold Eagle Program, developing leadership in First Nations youth and helping them to create a vision for their futures. He was the Chief Executive Officer and later Chairman of the Board of the Corps of Commissionaires, and is President of the Saskatchewan War Memorial Committee. As a senior commander in Canada's military and a long-time educator, Brigadier General Walker has set the example and contributed enormously to Saskatchewan's youth and the leadership of young Canadians.

Clifford Walker
306-533-7713
Regina