



Cabbagetown Preservation Association Recognition Award

The 2022 Cabbagetown Preservation Association Recognition Award is awarded to
Gina Dineen

Gina, a Montreal born Torontonionian, born to musical parents, Maureen Forrester and Eugene Kash, grew up surrounded by artistic, diverse people. She moved to Sackville Street in 1980 with her boyfriend, now husband, Paul Dineen where they shared the house with various colourful characters for several years. As children came into the picture in 1983, 1985, 1987 & 1990, Gina and Paul assumed the whole house and became active neighbourhood volunteers. Engaged with the Sprucecourt and CYC Co-op Nursery Schools as their four children grew, Gina was also an assistant to Coach Paul at the Moss Park Arena's Hockey League — the first free hockey league in the City of Toronto which is still going strong after 68 years. Here they introduced youngsters, including many new to Canada, to the great sport of ice hockey.

In the Cabbagetown community, Gina has served as a member of the Cabbagetown Regent Park Museum Board of Directors and the Cabbagetown BIA. Gina coordinated child friendly activities for the BIA's annual Cabbagetown Street Festival, bringing to Parliament Street mini cars, mural painting, games and fun! She initiated and taught adult group fitness at the Cabbagetown Youth Centre from 1990-2000 — a program now lead by Brenda Brown McNee. Gina was the "Narrator" for the Babe in the Bam Christmas Eve celebration from 2017 to 2019.

In 1992, Gina founded and became the Programmer of the annual Cabbagetown Short Film Festival (CSFF). Gina continues to curate and produce the annual festival which has evolved from its first iteration at the faded but elegant Laurentian Room on the second floor of the former Winchester Hotel where the audience enjoyed a screening of films by local filmmaker, Clay Boris — including shorts: Parliament Street and Rose's House, and feature film: Alligator Shoes, as well as the NFB classic by Grant McLean: Farewell Oak Street.

What started as a celebration of local films has grown to include a diverse selection of International and Canadian short films that reflect the diversity of our neighbourhood. Some outstanding local shorts have included: Stopping in Cabbagetown, by Ralph Lucas (an all-time favourite), and Best Day of My Life, by Sarah Polley who was living at Wellesley Cottages at the time. Other notable Canadian filmmakers who had their first shorts screened at the Festival, include Vincenzo Natali (Playground), John Fawcett (Scratch Ticket), Michael Dowse (237), Sean Garrity (Middle), Stephanie Morgenstern (Curtains).

Entries were submitted on VHS for the first few years, then DVDs, and are now received from "across the world and around the corner" as digital links. Gina continues to manage the CSFF website, and personally reviews hundreds of submissions each year from which approximately 12 titles are selected for the Festival. She corresponds with distributors and filmmakers, coordinates a jury of industry professionals to select awardees, arranges the venue details and permits, and manages the virtual platform.

The Festival has remained a beloved local event and over the years has screened at The Winchester Hotel, The Winchester Street Theatre, Pope Joan, the Parliament Street Library and Daniels Spectrum. Gina's guiding principles for the Festival are that it should be eclectic, engaging, entertaining and inspiring, as well as providing a glimpse into diverse cultures. The screening remains affordable for both the artists, who submit their work for consideration for free (most festivals charge filmmakers), and for the audience as the ticket price have not changed in many years. Since 2020, attendance is possible either in person or virtually.

The Festival remains a labour of love and brings together an audience of approximately 200 fans every September. It is a strictly volunteer run not-for-profit, with all proceeds supporting the Festival costs, and the awards to filmmakers. Each year, Gina secures local sponsorships to provide essential funding to ensure access for filmmakers and audience members alike.

On behalf of the Cabbagetown Preservation Association, we acknowledge and thank Gina for her many lasting contributions to the Cabbagetown community.

Gale Moore, Chair November 30, 2022