

# RAIC | IRAC

Architecture Canada

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OTTAWA March 17, 2014 —The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) announces MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects as the recipient of its 2014 Architectural Firm or Practice Award.

Founded in 1985 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects has built a reputation for design excellence — from a modest fisherman’s cottage on the Nova Scotia coast to the Canadian Chancery and Official Residence in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

In choosing the 16-person firm, the jury noted that it has developed a distinctive contemporary architecture based on local building and craft traditions. “The work successfully expresses a strong connection with the Maritime region and its built heritage,” the jury wrote.

Among about 200 built works are residential, cultural and academic projects. [Details at RAIC Firm Award](#)

MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects is one of the few Canadian firms to consistently receive international critical acclaim and has won more than 100 awards for design. Their work has been the subject of numerous television projections, including ‘The Village Architect,’ narrated by actor Brad Pitt.

“The challenge is to maintain a childlike curiosity while trying to run a business,” says founding partner Brian MacKay-Lyons, FRAIC. “Teaching requires the architect to objectify the anecdotal experiences of practice into principles and it is through this relationship that we maintain our creativity as a firm.”

Brian MacKay-Lyons and Talbot Sweetapple, MRAIC, teach at Dalhousie University. Between 1994 and 2011, they hosted the Ghost International Architectural Laboratory, an architectural education centre, founded by MacKay-Lyons at his farm near Lunenburg.

“We consistently strive for excellence in our practice and in our teaching,” says partner Talbot Sweetapple. “It is a real honour to have our body of work recognized by the RAIC.”

The award will be presented at the RAIC Festival of Architecture which takes place in Winnipeg May 28 to 31.

The RAIC Architectural Firm Award recognizes the achievements of a firm for its quality of architecture, service to clients and innovations in practice. It also takes into account contribution to architectural education and professional organizations, as well as public recognition.



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The 2014 jury was made up of:

Peter Cardew, FRAIC, Vancouver architect and Past Gold Medalist

Yves Gosselin, AP/FIRAC, Past President of the RAIC and an urban design consultant in Ottawa

Maxime-Alexis Frappier, MIRAC, Montreal architect and Immediate Past recipient of the RAIC's Young Architect Award

Carol Kleinfeldt, FRAIC, Toronto architect

Dinu Bumbaru, Policy Director, Heritage Montreal

Architecture Canada | RAIC is a voluntary national association established in 1907 as the voice for architecture and its practice in Canada. Representing more than 4,600 members, the RAIC is the leading voice of architecture in Canada. Its mission is:

To affirm that architecture matters;

- To celebrate the richness and diversity of architecture in Canada; and
- To support architects in achieving excellence
- To advocate for the built environment

[www.raic.org](http://www.raic.org)

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**Selected Projects:** MacKay-Lyons Sweetapple Architects

**Two Hulls House, 2011**  
**Nova Scotia**

This project is situated in a glaciated, coastal landscape. It has a cool maritime climate, pristine white sand beaches and turquoise waters. The two pavilions of the house float above the shoreline like two ship's hulls up on cradles for the winter.

**Canadian Chancery and Official Residence, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2009**

Bangladesh has one of the densest populations on earth and is one of the world's poorest nations. Building within the material culture of a place not only communicates a respect for regional context but also ensures the maximum economic value. The Ganges Delta has two principle resources: alluvial silt and people, which translates into bricks and bricklayers. The building's material palette consists of an elongated brick wall, which wraps a courtyard punctuated by a series of folded metal elements.

**Ghost Campus, 1994 to 2011**  
**Nova Scotia**

The Ghost Laboratory is sited at the LaHave River estuary on Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast, where explorer Samuel de Champlain first caught sight of the new world in 1604. This landscape was re-cleared from forest by the architect over the past 25 years, revealing historic ruins and 400 years of agrarian history. The Ghost Lab is an architectural-education centre in the tradition of Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin or Samuel Mockbee's Rural Studio. The permanent structures – tower, studio, cabins, barns and boathouse – are, in part, products of the design/build curriculum. They provide accommodation for the program and a venue for community events.

**Hill House, 2004**  
**Nova Scotia**

The project gains its power through a deep dialogue with the natural and cultural landscape of Nova Scotia's South Shore. This house, built for a landscape photographer, is a camera — a landscape and weather-viewing instrument that crops views, watches the changing light, weather and seasons. Use of local materials and technology ensure durability.

**Howard House, 1999**  
**West Pennant, Nova Scotia**

The Howard House was conceived as land art for an art historian and a family of four. It has a 12-foot by 110-foot wall between the cultural landscape of the fishing cove to the east, and the natural landscape of the wild ocean to the west. Built for an extremely tight budget, the house was initially taxed as a boat shed.

**University of Prince Edward Island School of Business, 2008**  
**Charlottetown, PEI**

One of the University's objectives with this project was to move the school and the province onto the world stage of commerce.