

## Saskatoon activist nominated for political citizen award

### Nicole White is one of four Saskatchewan residents nominated for Samara's Everyday Political Citizen Project

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From the first time Nicole White organized an environmental club at her elementary school, she knew activism was in her blood.

Today, White, 36, works with READ Saskatoon, fighting poverty through financial literacy, but her life has been filled with a wide range of political activities.

“This is the type of thing that’s kind of ingrained in my own psyche,” White said with a laugh.

A 2011 provincial election NDP candidate, White managed Ryan Meili’s NDP leadership campaign. She also played a role in Saskatchewan’s legalization of gay marriage and is the former executive director of AIDS Saskatoon.

White is one of four Saskatchewan residents - and one of three in the Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggart riding - nominated for the Samara Everyday Political Citizen Project (EPCP).

Last summer, Samara - the group responsible for the Members of Parliament exit interviews - began research on 20 ways to contribute to politics outside elections.

“The purpose of the (EPCP) is to celebrate and recognize those unsung political volunteers that we all know but never really get recognized and thanked,” Samara executive director Alison Loat said, adding they hope that highlighting activism will encourage others to participate.

Loat said their research showed that while 55 per cent of Canadians volunteer in community and 85 per cent have given money to charity, less than 10 per cent had volunteered or donated to a political cause.

“If we don’t encourage greater participation we think the quality of decisions will go down and less people will be represented by their governments.”

White was nominated by New Democratic Party and Saskatoon Centre MLA, David Forbes; much to her surprise.

“I’ve never heard of Samara really before this so it was great to get to know some of the work

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that's being done nationally but it also is nice to put a spot light on the local folks that are making things happen in their own communities.”

The group hopes to have at least one nominee from all 308 federal ridings. Nominations can be made on Samara's website until Dec. 31. A panel of judges will decide on a set of categories and pick a couple winners in the New Year.

Loat said a youth category may be included because of the large number of young nominees.

White said it was honour enough to be nominated and that she doesn't care if she wins.

“I've never been honoured in any way around this work so it's really great... I don't care if I win, I think it's been really, really great to be a part of it,” she said.