

2020 ward of Merit Recipient – Burke Penny

Our second Award of Merit Recipient, Burke Penny, is a well-respected researcher and known in Midland for his tenacious and meticulous attention to detail. Raised in Hamilton, Burke obtained a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology at McMaster University, followed by a Master's degree at the University of Manitoba.

Burke came to the region to deploy his skills in archeology, participating in historical digs at the naval and military establishment (now known as Discovery Harbour). Burke then effectively managed the site for many years. Although unsuccessful in finding dinosaur bones or mosquitos encased in amber, he did find his lifelong home for his family. Following his tenure with the naval establishment, Burke served as a consultant for museums and historical organizations across the province. He also authored a highly regarded book that details the story of the Royal Canadian Signal Corps involvement in the pacific theatre in WWII, entitled Beyond the Call.

While his distinguished career is worth celebrating, it is his contributions to the Town of Midland that we recognize this evening.

Burke has dedicated countless hours to assisting the Town with many initiatives. Burke's outstanding volunteerism towards master planning and committee involvement has been an incredible benefit to the Town. Burke served on the Unimin Waterfront Master Plan Committee, helping to facilitate numerous public consultations and design meetings. He continued his involvement as a representative on the Midland Bay Landing Project Steering Committee and helped support the establishment of the Midland Bay Landing Development Corporation.

When the Town turned its focus towards King Street rejuvenation, Burke redirected his attention to the often-neglected laneways. Burke realized the incredible opportunity the laneways presented and worked with the Town, community, and business representatives to develop the Love Your Laneway Action Committee. The Committee generated custom designs for businesses with laneway access and created a plan for long overdue improvements to the laneways and adjacent parking lots. Burke dedicated hundreds of volunteer hours to coordination of the project, partnered with urban designers, worked collaboratively with the Town to allocate funding through the Town's Community Improvement Plan, hosted public meetings and engagement sessions.

While the pandemic has temporarily delayed implementation of some laneway ideas, it has given the Town and the community the rare opportunity to catch up to Burke.

It is with great pleasure and appreciation that we present the Award of Merit to Burke Penny.