

Medal of Merit Presentation for Michael Burtch

Saturday, March 17

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good evening everyone. I'm extraordinarily pleased to be here with you as we recognize an outstanding citizen—Michael Burtch— with the City of Sault Ste. Marie's Medal of Merit.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging our Member of Parliament, Terry Sheehan and our Member of Provincial Parliament, Ross Romano who are here tonight.

Before I continue, I would also like to recognize the members of Council who are in attendance. We have:

Susan Myers

Steve Butland and his wife Sharran

Paul Christian and his wife Julie

Frank Fata and his wife Pina

Rick Niro and his wife Pauline

Lou Turco and his wife Sandra

Sault Ste. Marie is extremely proud of how we continue to produce citizens who individually or as a member of a group, excel in various capacities, bringing great pride to our community in a way that should be celebrated.

In 1969, the Sault Ste. Marie City Council established the Medal of Merit award to annually honour such excellence and achievement. A citation was approved by the Council of the day which reads:

“The Mayor and members of City Council have long recognized the need to pay tribute to those special individuals or groups who achieve top honours in athletic, cultural or academic fields or who make outstanding contributions to our community.”

This Council also passed a by-law to establish a committee that would review nominations from the community and to consider other such individuals who might be worthy of recognition.

Presentation of the Medal of Merit award which includes the medal, pin, and citation, represents Sault Ste. Marie's highest honour.

The Medal has the City coat of arms embossed on its face. The colours of the ribbon and the pin – gold, blue and grey – are intended to project the image of Sault Ste. Marie as a flourishing and prosperous city.

The blue represents the water or seaway, and the grey band represents industry, steel in particular. The significance attached to this medal is indicative of an exceptional achievement or contribution.

Each year, Medal of Merit recipients are chosen by the Medal of Merit Committee, comprised of the Mayor acting as chair, and individuals representing a cross-section of the community.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the members of the 2017 committee: Dionne Elgie, Sheila Purvis, Jack Ostroski and His honour Justice Romuald Kwolek.

Sheila, Justice Kwolek and his wife Helen are here, Dionne and Jack had to send their regrets, but I do thank them for their service on the committee.

Medal of Merit Award recipients are selected from all spectrums and walks of life. The list of past honorees includes scientists, athletes, academics and community builders – people who have contributed to the betterment of our community.

Since the inception of the Award, we have recognized over 150 citizens including: Dr. Roberta Bondar, Dr. David Walde, the Hollingsworth Family, Team Jacobs, Mac and BJ Marcoux, Diane Marshall, Ella Jean Richter, Gayle Broad, Tony Martin and Ron Irwin – just to mention a few. Today, Michael Burtch's name will be added to this esteemed group of people.

I'm glad that quite a few of Michael's friends and family members were able to join us for today's celebration. They include:

Michael's daughter Michelle and her sons Michael and Matthew

Michael's daughter Sarah, her wife Stacey and their sons Aiden and Myles

Dale Innes

Loretta Durat

Joe Lauzon

Jude Ortiz

Linda Savory-Gordon and Dennis Nystedt

and Gayle Broad, as I just mentioned a past Medal of Merit recipient herself

Michael's long and distinguished career as an artist and art historian, his ongoing achievements as a sculptor, percussionist and curator and his efforts to raise awareness of the importance of arts and culture to the social, economic and cultural fabric of the community makes him a worthy recipient of the City's highest honour.

His work has spanned local and international boundaries across many disciplines.

Michael spent 27 years at the Art Gallery of Algoma as the director, 16 years at Sault College as an educator and for the past 35 years he has taught at Algoma University.

He has also given his time to numerous causes and groups, such as the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains, the Community Adjustment Committee, the Ontario Association of Art Galleries and the Arts Council of Sault Ste. Marie and District.

The impact Michael has had on the local art community and our community as a whole has been profound.

Over the course of his career and his service as a volunteer and as a member of boards and committees, Michael has continued to display a selfless passion for his community and his fellow citizens.

He has served as role model to many, he has mentored and collaborated with others in the development of unique art installations, performances, set designs and other cultural goods that have challenged artistic capacity to the benefit of those directly engaged in the creative sector.

Michael's belief that culture is the cornerstone of every community has served our community well, and I feel his work on the award winning documentary, Painted Land, is a perfect example.

Painted Land shows off the scenic sites from across Algoma that captivated the Group of Seven and still motivates people to visit the area to this day. Not only does this documentary assist in the preservation of the Group of Seven's legacy, it highlights our region as a tourism destination and promotes the heritage values of the Algoma Central railway and corridor.

Michael, our community has benefitted immensely from your involvement, and as Mayor I want to thank you for the overwhelmingly positive impact you've had on our city.

On behalf of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, it brings me great pride to present the 2017 Medal of Merit to Michael Burtch—a most deserving recipient. Congratulations Michael!