

After decades championing Caledon heritage, Heather Broadbent honoured as Community Champion

By Rob Paul, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In 2020, the Albion Bolton Historical Society nominated Heather Broadbent for a volunteer service award, and she was selected for one of the Town's highest honours as Community Champion.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the award event was cancelled last year, but Broadbent was presented with her award recently by local Councillor Tony Rosa.

As a founding member of the Albion Bolton Historical Society?the Society's second Chairperson?she's been a member for the past 47 years and during her tenure on the Society's Board of Directors, she has been a key cog in sharing local heritage with its members and the community.

As a local speaker, she's also been involved over the last few years speaking at Bolton Probus, Ebenezer Historical Society, Albion Bolton Historical Society, Caledon East and District Historical Society, and has led discussions with Indigenous young people at Bolton Camp and with school children at Allan Drive Public School.

Broadbent isn't one to look for attention, but she's proud to be recognized by the Town for her hard work; though, she would rather describe all her involvement and efforts as ?fun.?

?It's lovely and it's great to get an award,? she said. ?I've enjoyed 99 per cent of what I've done, and I love being involved in my community. It does seem to be a family trait, I remember both my grandparents and my parents being involved in their communities, so, I'd suggest it's in my genes. I've enjoyed the volunteer stuff I've done; it hasn't been a hardship, I've enjoyed it. Since I'm used to contributing because of the family example, it came quite naturally for me to become more involved in the community here, and particularly because I'm very enthusiastic about heritage.?

She spent a decade volunteering as the Town's Heritage Resource Officer before being hired as a Town employee from 1985 to 2000 in that same role. As a volunteer, she started organizing heritage bus tours and never needed any notes, relying solely on her knowledge.

Born in England, Broadbent has now lived in Caledon for the past 52 years and is even relatives of Jane and Joseph Silverthorne, the first family credited with settling in what is now Peel County.

Despite not being born in the area, her interests in it helped make it her home.

?I realize I come from a lot of people that have been interested in various aspects of history and natural heritage conservation,? she said. ?I think if you grow up with that, your interest develops. I've been involved in it for over 50 years, and I went to inquire at the old newspaper office about a local historical society and the old editor and owner said to me, ?there isn't one, but their ought to be.' And he used me and another English woman to help him start a local historical society. Then my interest in Albion, Bolton, and Caledon history grew from there. Caledon is a fascinating place with all of its villages and its natural heritage is outstanding.?

The sense of community in Caledon is a major reason Broadbent now calls the area home.

She's seen firsthand how much the people in Bolton care for one another and are there to give support when it's most needed.

?It's a wonderful place,? she said. ?One example, quite blamelessly my husband, my family, and a family friend were involved in a dreadful traffic accident. We were horribly hurt, and my uncle died, but the community was so incredibly wonderful. People I didn't

know offered to help and came to our rescue in all sorts of ways. My son was so badly hurt he was in another hospital and community members came and picked me up from a hospital in Brampton and took me to my son in a hospital in Toronto. The community was fantastic.?

Some more of Broadbent's accolades include: Chair of Caledon's Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee?she was also instrumental in their formation in other municipalities; Chair of the Peel County Historical Society (later PAMA); Director of what is now the Ontario Heritage Trust; member of Ontario Archaeological Society; member of Humber River Watershed Taskforce; President of the Ontario Historical Society; Vice-Chair and Hearing Officer of the Conservation Review Board of Ontario; Director of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario; member of Bolton Community Action Site.