

Great Gray Owl Awards – 2018

By Jim Campbell, AWA 1st Vice-President

This year's Great Gray Owl Awards recognize a remarkable duo who have contributed so much to the liveliness of a multitude of Alberta Wilderness Association events. Murray Little and George Campbell have provided the music at the Climb for Wilderness and at many fine evenings of Music for the Wild at the AWA offices. They are passionate about their music and their commitment to conservation – a powerful combination indeed.

Murray Little



Murray Little grew up in Saskatchewan as a “town boy” in Saskatoon with many memories of great fishing trips in Northern Saskatchewan with his father. After high school, Murray enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan in Chemical Engineering and after graduation migrated west, like thousands of other prairie people, to the allure of the oil and gas industry in Alberta.

After a successful career, riding booms and surviving busts, he launched himself as an in-

dependent consultant. That new career lasted for more than twenty years. His decades of success were based not only on his competence but also on his character. He never hesitated to “fire a client” if their values transgressed his thus maintaining his reputation for quality work done with great integrity.

Murray's second career has been in the Calgary music scene. Not only does he play mandolin, guitar, and bass but he has led the Foothills Acoustic Music Institute (FAMI). Since 2000 the Institute has operated an annual camp for 150 musicians at Camp Kiwanis west of Calgary where they hone their skills, create impromptu bands, and develop long-lasting friendships. The rent the musicians pay to Camp Kiwanis is used to create “camperships” for disadvantaged young people to enjoy a summer camp experience thereby creating even more good will and good memories in the community. More recently, Murray has launched the “Little Concerts” series at Fort Calgary to give local musicians a platform to become known across the City. He also provides concerts at Wellspring Calgary for people coping with cancer. Just to show that “old dogs can learn new tricks” he has created websites for 32 musicians, an essential tool for any performer working to build a public profile today.

Murray's involvement with Alberta Wilderness Association over the past seven years

stems from the friendship he struck up with George Campbell at the FAMI music camp. Murray felt an immediate affinity for the work of AWA from his boyhood in Saskatchewan and many family camping trips with his wife, Diane, and their two now adult daughters. He has always been drawn to the outdoors and has a special attraction to places with bodies of water be they rivers, lakes or ponds.

A love of wilderness and a career in oil and gas resource development has not been without its contradictions and conflicts. A wonderful memory for Murray is his interactions with the legendary Martha Kostuch during his career when she was representing the ENGO sector while he was representing the energy sector and its needs for infrastructure. From that experience he learned the importance of mutual respect and the need to see the situation from the eyes of the “other.”

Through the work of AWA and other like-mandated organizations Murray sees a growing awareness of the impact of human presence coupled with an understanding of the limited nature of natural resources. Looking to the future Murray sees that to build on this growing awareness there is a compelling need to teach environmental ethics to people of all ages so that everyone will all act in a way that makes us “tread lightly on the land.”