Haliburton Highlands
GREEN BURIAL SOCIETY

~ Forever Green ~

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April 19th AGM to Feature Ontario-Wide Green Burial Update

Susan Greer, the Executive Director of *The Natural Burial Association (NBA)* will be the keynote speaker at the 2023 HHGBS Annual General Meeting (AGM) on April 19th. Greer will provide an update on Green/Natural Burial developments from around Ontario, followed by an open Question and Answer period.

The public portion of the AGM is open to anyone who wants to attend. If you have any questions about where you can currently obtain a green/natural burial or where the prospects are looking up, this presentation is for you. Registration is required which you can do by clicking HERE.

The NBA focuses on the creation of natural burial grounds in Ontario, particularly expansive stand-alone sites nestled in Ontario's natural landscape. The NBA also supports local advocates, like the HHGBS, in their efforts to create hybrid green/natural burial green/natural burial sections within already established conventional cemeteries.

Making Green Burial A Reality in Algonquin Highlands

A joint Advisory Committee between the Township of Algonquin Highlands and the HHGBS has started monthly meetings to turn the Township's commitment to create a Green burial section at Township's St. Stephen's Cemetery into a reality.

The committee, chaired by Ward 2 Councillor, Lisa Barry, began meeting on February 28, 2023, with two AH Councillors (the other being Deputy Mayor, Jennifer Dailloux) among its three members. Operations Manager, Adam Thorn is the 3rd Township member. The three HHGBS reps include Terry Moore, Jennifer Rieger and Shirley Moore, the president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer, respectively.

The Advisory Committee's first priority is devising a workplan to create a green burial section at St. Stephen's as soon as possible. The question of whether or not a winter burial option can be provided at the same time is a more challenging matter that the committee will be taking a close look at.

All-in-all this is the most encouraging green/natural development across Haliburton County since the HHGBS was created in 2019.

Green Burial Actions We Can All Take Right Now

While we continue to press the Townships to establish green burial sections within their existing cemeteries, it is important to remember that, outside of the winter months when no burial of any kind is allowed in the County, cemeteries can already accommodate a number of green burial related requests. Embalming is not mandatory nor is the use of concrete vaults or non-biodegradable caskets.

So, if you or a loved one wish to be buried as green as possible, make that fact very clear to your family as well as funeral home and cemetery administrators. Putting your wishes in writing will eliminate any confusion down the road.

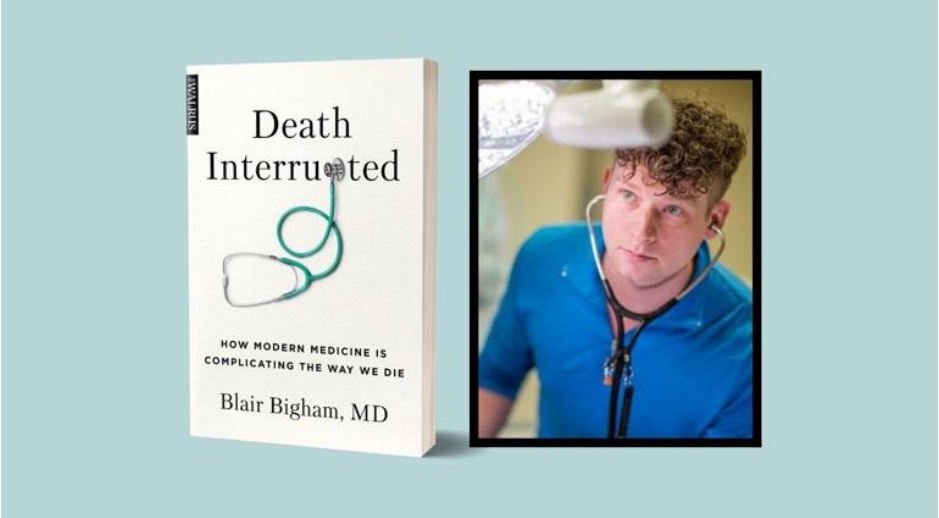
Since at least 70% of pre-pandemic deaths in the County resulted in cremation and the pandemic has accelerated that trend, policy makers are more inclined to support the purchase of columbaria to house cremated remains than creating green/winter burial sections.

The covid-19 emergency measures have, if anything, resulted in an increase in the proportion of cremations. So, if we're going to see movement toward more environmentally sustainable end-of-life dispositions, we're going to have to make that desire very clear to decision-makers.

By demonstrating to Councillors and senior Township staff that there is a demand for green burial sections, we can encourage them to support green/winter burial initiatives. Please keep us in the loop with regard to any conversations you have with Councillors or staff about green/winter burial options.

Book Review – “Death Interrupted”

Bigham, Blair. <u>Death Interrupted: How modern medicine is complicating the way we die.</u> Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2022.



Dr. Bigham began his medical career as a paramedic transitioning into an emergency room physician and then an intensive care unit doctor, while becoming a journalist along the way. He wrote, *Death Interrupted* to explore his struggle, particularly in the ICU, of knowing that technology can prevent death from coming too soon, but can also delay its timely arrival. He calls this the “death dilemma”.

In his journey Bigham interviews scholars and physicians from a number of disciplines beginning with the history of death. Before the twentieth century, death was a common human experience and most families had tended to or at least had seen a dead relative or friend. By the 1950s and 60s, advances in resuscitation and pharmacology meant that we were becoming less comfortable with death and more anxious to prolong life artificially. All of this makes it difficult for the doctors and the families to say it is time to stop and it makes it quite hard to actually die. When are you dead? Is the soul (or personhood) in the heart or in the brain? If organs are going to be transplanted, the heart must still be beating; are you dead? Who decides? Is it the doctor, the family, the religious leaders, the courts? Are physicians giving families time, transparency and knowledge so that they can take control? On the other hand, do we not work towards advances in medical science which could actually save lives? How do doctors know if their treatment which saved a life, has resulted in the loss of quality of that life?

He concludes that to solve the death dilemma, there must be a balance between the knowledge of the physician, the needs of the family and the goals and values of the patient. He stresses the importance of families having end of life discussions; of families and doctors understanding each person’s personal values. He notes that most ICU patients arrive unexpectedly and in a condition that is not conducive to in-depth discussions, stressing the importance of having these discussions while healthy. Physicians must also fully explain to families the potential ramifications of the medical technology they wish to use. Will the treatment result in long term problems? All therapeutic options—technical, medical and palliative—must be thoughtfully considered.

While dealing with a difficult topic and often complex medical issues, Bigham has managed to write with a light hand as he searches for his own answers to the death dilemma. He concludes with four steps on what to do next: think about death; talk about death; write about death; and, most importantly live your life. “It is easier to live your life when you have already planned for your death”.

Written by Jennifer Rieger, VP HHGBS

Why Become a HHGBS Member?

By becoming a Burial Society member you are helping to green after-death practices in Haliburton County while, at the same time, passing on your commitment to environmental stewardship to future generations. Membership in the HHGBS helps extend your support for more ecologically sustainable after-death practices while you are alive into a legacy that will keep on living after you have passed on.

By pooling our resources, the members, volunteers and Board members of the Haliburton Highlands Green Burial Society can encourage the adoption of greener options to conventional high carbon burial and cremation practices, thereby reducing our individual and collective ecological footprints.

Who Should Join? All those desiring increased green and winter burial options in Haliburton, anyone interested in the cultural and environmental future of their communities, as well as those wanting access to green end-of-life planning, educational and resource material.

The cost of individual membership is $20 per year while a couple's membership is $35/yr. You can join or renew your membership by going to the Membership Tab on the website www.haliburtongreenburial.ca. The membership year runs from January 1st – December 31st and we're encouraging all current (and former) members to renew their memberships for 2023, as soon as possible.

The website provides an option for membership fees and donations to be paid via etransfer or you can send a cheque made out to the Haliburton Highlands Green Burial Society (HHGBS) to the HHGBS Membership Secretary/Treasurer, Shirley Moore, 1193 Braeloch Rd., Algonquin Highlands, On, K0M1J2.

Donations Are Really Helpful!

The HHGBS operates largely on the basis of people volunteering their time and energy. However, there are some things, like a great website, that require outside professional services.

If you have the means and the inclination, donations can really help us get to where we are going faster and can be made to the **Kyle Moore Memorial "Green Burial Initiative".** The HHGBS has applied for Charitable Tax Status but we are not quite there yet.

Information on how to make a donation via e-transfer or cheque can be found on the "Donation" Tab on the website **HERE**.

Your HHGBS Board Members

We currently have six (6) members on the HHGBS Board but have spaces for nine (9) - which means that we have three (3) open positions available.

If you're interested in serving as a Director, please send us an email at hhgreenburialsociety@gmail.com.

Officers: Terry Moore, President, Jennifer Rieger, Vice-President, Shirley Moore, Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members: Carolyn Langdon, Greg Roe, Jenn Watt

To visit the HHGBS Website or the HHGBS Facebook Page Click on the Images Below