Haliburton Highlands
GREEN BURIAL SOCIETY

~ Forever Green ~

Volume 4, Number 2, Fall 2023

Year-Round Green Burial Coming Soon to Algonquin Highlands

On November 2, 2023 Algonquin Highlands Township Council endorsed motions to move ahead with both green and winter burial within the new green burial section at its St. Stephen's Cemetery on Buckslide Road.

Council has asked staff to return as soon as possible with an operational plan for introducing the winter burial option within the green burial section only. This will make St. Stephen's the first cemetery in the entire County to offer winter burial, as all four Townships currently close their cemeteries from freeze up in November through to the spring thaw in April/May. This means that burial of any kind is simply not available in Haliburton for almost half the year.

This reality has contributed to the increase in cremation as a final disposition - an option with a much higher carbon and ecological footprint as compared to green or natural burial.

Work has already started on the revisions to the AH Township Cemetery By-Law required to implement year-round green burial at St. Stephen's. These changes must be approved by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) before green burial plot sales can begin. BAO approval will not likely come until the spring or summer of 2024 as public notices of the proposed changes must be posted for public viewing in all Township cemeteries *when they are open*. With all cemeteries closed until spring thaw, BAO approval cannot happen until after they reopen.

Interment Rights at St. Stephen's

In deciding to move ahead with green burials at St. Stephen's, AH Council, also approved a change to its current "interment rights policy". In order to maximize green and natural space within the green burial section while minimizing the area required for equipment access laneways to gravesites, the right to be buried within the green burial section will be a general right to be buried somewhere within that section and not in a specific pre-determined plot. Sections within the green burial area will be opened for burials starting from the back of the green burial section with specific plots being assigned on an as-needed basis within the section currently being filled.

The rest of the green burial section will be planted with native vegetation or renaturalized with no mowing allowed except to provide temporary access to gravesites during funerals or interment ceremonies.

Winter Burial Surcharge

There will be an extra fee charged if burial is required in the winter due to the extra costs involved in providing that service. For example, clearing of snow to gain access to the green burial section as well as opening a pathway to the assigned gravesite will mean extra time and work. While it has not yet been determined what the extra charge will be or if the service will be provided by direct AH public works staff or a contracted third party, AH Council has been clear that the fee will be set on a "full cost recovery basis".

It is likely, however, that the overall costs to families for a green burial will be less than the costs of either a conventional burial or cremation, depending on the discretionary choices made by families regarding everything from caskets vs shrouds to the cost of hosting celebrations of life in rented facilities.

The HHGBS published a comparison of estimated final disposition costs in the Fall 2022 edition of *Forever Gree*n. Here's a summary of what we found:

Conventional Burial	**Cremation**	**Green/Natural Burial**
$4,570 - $18,245	**$2,690 - $8,990**	**$2,294 - $5,145**

A chart with the complete breakdown of relative costs can be found HERE or be requested by sending an email to the HHGBS at the following address: hhgreenburialsociety@gmail.com.

Joint AH/HHGBS Advisory Committee Continues to Meet

The joint AH/HHGBS Advisory Committee on the St. Stephen's Green Burial Section has been meeting monthly since it was created in January of 2023. This committee has been an invaluable forum for discussing all the details involved in turning the Township's commitment to create a Green Burial Section into a reality.

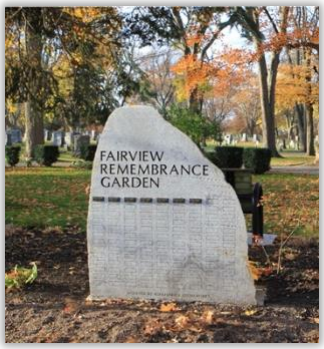
The committee is chaired by Ward 2 Councillor, Lisa Barry, with two AH Councillors (the other being Deputy Mayor, Jennifer Dailloux) among its three members. Operations Manager, Adam Thorn

is the 3rd Township member. The three HHGBS reps include Terry Moore, Jennifer Rieger and Shirley Moore, the HHGBS president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer, respectively.

Now that the key policy decisions about St. Stephen's have been made, attention can turn to what the green burial section will actually look like and the amenities it will contain.

The Master Gardeners of Haliburton County have been asked to help develop a design for the open green spaces. A proposal for a partnering with Fleming College for the construction of a timber-framed gazebo – like the one on the right is on the agenda for the next meeting in January. This structure could be either a small gathering place for families before/after internment ceremonies and/or an information centre on green burial and St. Stephen's specifically.

Communal Memorialization



While the principle of communal vs individual memorialization has been embraced for St. Stephen's, there remains a host of questions as to what that will look like in practice. There appears to be a consensus in favour of the installation of a large communal stone (similar to the one on the left from the Willow's Rest Green Burial Section in Niagara Falls.

The names of all those buried in the green burial section would be engraved on the stone along with their section and plot number. A companion plot map would allow the actual gravesite location of family members and loved ones to be identified.

Green Burial in Highlands East

While we're continuing our work with Algonquin Highlands to create the County's first year-round green burial section, the HHGBS will press the other three Townships to consider getting on-board. Highlands East made a decision during the term of the previous Council to create a green burial section at its Deer Lake Cemetery. That decision has been on-hold pending further discussion about winter burial and the Society will be asking for a delegation in January to see if and when the new Council is prepared to move ahead.

Actions We Can All Take Right Now

While we are pressing for year-round green burial options to be created all across Haliburton County, it's important to remember that, outside of the winter months when no burial of any kind is currently allowed, cemeteries can already accommodate a number of green burial-related requests. Embalming, for example, 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 is made 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.

Green Burial in The Highlands:

Making It Happen

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 pandemic resulted in an increase in the proportion of cremations vs burials. 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 Township Councillors or staff about green/winter burial options.

Why Become a HHGBS Member?

By becoming a Burial Society or renewing your membership you are helping to green after-death practices in Haliburton County while passing on your commitment to environmental stewardship to future generations, at the same time.

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 and giving 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 2024, 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, K0M1S0.

Donations Are Really Helpful!

The HHGBS operates largely on the basis of people volunteering their time and energy. However, there are some things, like the 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 – more on that below.

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

Registered Charitable Status Coming Soon

The HHGBS began the process of applying for registered charitable status back in 2022. The process is a long and involved one and was complicated by the fact that the HHGBS is the first burial society to seek Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) recognition as a registered charity.

Our initial application was turned down and we appealed. The CRA told us that the success of that appeal hinged on the Society providing clear evidence that the adoption of green/natural burial practices will help ... "restore, protect or preserve the environment or to lead to a reduction in pollution".

We submitted a large amount of information, including academic research, to make that case and the CRA responded positively. The Agency recommended changes to the HHGBS Articles of Incorporation clarifying our educational and environmental purposes which would clear the path to charitable status.

The HHGBS membership authorized those changes at a Special Meeting on December 7th and the Board is now in the process of filing the necessary follow-up paperwork. We expect to receive formal notice of charitable registration early in the new year.

Becoming a registered charity will open up new fundraising possibilities for the HHGBS as we increase our efforts to build support for widespread adoption of year-round green/natural burial options across the County.

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.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. We would love to hear any comments or suggestions you would like to send our way.

Finally, we wish all members and supporters all the best for the holiday season and a great 2024.

Officers: Terry Moore, President, Jennifer Rieger, Vice-President, Shirley Moore, Secretary/Treasurer
Directors: Carolyn Langdon, Greg Roe, Jenn Watt

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