



Haliburton Highlands
GREEN BURIAL SOCIETY
~ Forever Green ~

Membership Newsletter 26-01



Prairie Smoke (*Geum Triflorum*), a hardy native perennial, is a harbinger of renewal. It is just one of the selected native plants and shrubs that will be planted in 2026 to regenerate the green burial section at St. Stephen's

2025 was a year of both deep sadness and of tremendous progress in the realization of year-round green burial in Haliburton. In this newsletter, we're reviewing the year gone by and looking forward to a busy 2026.

It's Time to Renew!

Your membership in the Green Burial Society gives you a voice in advocating for natural burial options in the Highlands. Your annual membership fee helps to fund needed supplies, administration costs, website development and limited sponsorship of activities, such as the Master Gardeners' collaboration. Annual fees may also contribute to the development of educational materials, workshops and webinars on green burial options. Thank-you to all members who have already renewed for 2026

Please use [this form](#) to renew your 2026 membership now. While all donation amounts are welcome, please be sure to include the **individual membership fee of \$25.00** or the **couples' membership fee of \$40.00**. *eTransfer* is also available to hhgbstreasurer@gmail.com Be sure to add your full mailing address and email in the note box. All donations and membership fee payments receive a tax receipt. A full mailing address is required by the CRA.

2025 in Review

Algonquin Highlands (AH) Passes Green Burial Bylaw – Opening St. Stephen's Green Burial Area

AH Township Council passed a green and winter burial-enabling Cemetery By-law on March 17, 2025. Following that, two green burials took place at St. Stephen's during 2025, one of which was the first winter burial ever provided within any cemetery within Haliburton County.

Later in 2025, Township Council adopted an amended version of that Cemetery By-Law on on December 11, 2025, enabling the “pre-need” or before death sale of green burial interment rights at St. Stephen’s. Under the March 17, 2025 version of the by-law, green burial rights were only available for purchase “at need” or when a death had already occurred. [A copy of current December 2025 By-law can be found at this link:](#)

BAO Clarification Needed on Pre-Purchase of Interment Rights

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) initially insisted on a by-law amendment that eliminated “pre-need” green burial sales from the March 17, 2025 version of AH’s Cemetery By-law. This is the ability to reserve a place in the section. This intervention was based on an interpretation of one own its own regulations. The Green Burial Society took immediate issue with the interpretation. The Society engaged the BAO in a months-long discussion throughout the summer of 2025 about alternative interpretations of the regulation as well as how the lack of pre-need sales put green burial at a significant disadvantage in the relation to other disposition options, like cremation.



In the end, we were successful. The BAO agreed to change its regulatory interpretation and, in a September 4, 2025 decision, opened the doors to pre-need sales within the green burial area.

A Revised Bylaw Achieved

Algonquin Highlands Council embraced the BAO’s suggested pre-need sales language at a meeting in October of 2025, and passed a revised by-law including that language on December 11, 2025.

Year-Round Green Burial Rights - Now a Planning Reality



With the passage of the revised Cemetery By-law, year-round green burial rights, including the pre-purchase option, has finally become a reality in Algonquin Highlands, almost seven years following our initial presentation to Council back in March, 2019.

There are 156 plots designated within the St. Stephen’s green burial area, two of which are already occupied. We encourage all those interested in securing a green burial plot to develop a written plan covering their final wishes. Purchasing a plot well in advance of actually needing it, as part of that plan, removes any financial barriers to your wishes being carried out and ensures that you actually have a burial space when the time comes.

Peace of Mind / Piece of the Earth

From Director, Sheila Ziman

On December 19, 2025, I purchased interment rights in the Natural Burial Section of St. Stephen's Cemetery. This is especially significant for me as I am a resident of Algonquin Highlands and the surrounding lands and waters feed my soul. After my passing, my body will feed the earth. How appropriate!

The process was quite easy and fast. An appointment with Sarah Hutson, Deputy Clerk of the Township of Algonquin Highlands, is required just to make sure she is available to meet with you to go over the paperwork. Sarah was very good at explaining all the paperwork that needed a signature and was helpful answering the few questions that I had.

One interesting fact that I learned was that you can sell your interment rights back to the municipality if things change. Life and death are unpredictable, so if your circumstances change this option is available. You are compensated at the existing rate at the time of the sale. I wouldn't advise it as an investment strategy but it is comforting to know that this is possible. In total, reservation of a single plot costs \$950 + \$123 HST = \$1,073. Remember that you are assigned the interment right, but not an exact location in the cemetery. Each row starting from the front of the natural burial section is filled as needed.

When I returned home, I emailed my executors and told them I had bought interment rights at St. Stephen's Cemetery and that all the paperwork was in my will file. They both laughed and said they hoped they wouldn't need the information for a long time! I truly felt lighter as I left Sarah at the township office. Another detail in my life's journey taken care of.

What's the Tab? – Algonquin Highlands Year-Round Green Burial Fee Schedule

Algonquin Highlands – Green Section Fees (Schedule K)			
Item	AH Resident	Extra Fees	Non-AH Resident
Single Interment Right (the plot)	\$950		\$1,900
Burial (Mon-Thurs)	\$867		\$867
Week-End Burial (Fri - Sat)		\$100	
Admin Fee	\$50		\$50
Winter Opening (~Dec to March)		\$2400	
Community Monument Name Plate		\$500	
Administration Fee – Name Plate		\$100	
Total Possible	\$1,867	\$3100	\$2,817
AH Resident Cost Range	\$1867 to \$4967		
Non-AH Resident Cost Range	\$2817 to \$5917		
* All items plus 13% HST	Not including required casket & other funeral preparations		

Natural Burial in Ontario

The [Natural Burial Association](#) now identifies 25 cemeteries in Ontario with green or natural burial sections. Some have been operational since as early as 2012, while others are in final planning or opening this year. We're proud to say that St. Stephen's cemetery is noted as a significant achievement in Haliburton. If your family lives outside of Haliburton, you should discuss their local green burial cemetery as an alternative to cremation for anyone with a commitment to the environment.

Gazebo Use Continues as an Issue

As members and supporters will know, the Green Burial Society carried out a very successful fund-raising campaign in 2024 to help cover the costs of building and installing the beautiful timber-framed gazebo residing within the green burial area at St. Stephen's. The costs were split with Algonquin Highlands. HHGBS contributing \$14,000 and the Township paid \$10,000.



The gazebo is open for use by all those visiting any section of the cemetery, regardless of the area in which a loved one is interred.

There are discussions ongoing within the Township concerning the range of uses to which the gazebo can be put during both summer and winter months with guidelines to be debated at an upcoming council meeting. Chief among the concerns are health and safety issues that might arise due to difficult or extreme weather events.

On behalf of the HHGBS, Terry Moore made a presentation to Council on the use of the gazebo at its January 15, 2026 meeting. That presentation can be found at the following [YouTube video link beginning at the 7:43 mark](#):

Meeting Review: Open Forum with County Funeral Directors – November 19, 2025

At the Nov. 19, 2025, community meeting there was a panel discussion with **Barry Cray**, from Monk Funeral Homes, and **Dwaine Lloyd**, from the Community Funeral Home.

The Green Burial Society invited our local funeral directors to talk about their experiences with green burial and about their role in funeral planning. Setting the stage, both directors noted that cremations are on the increase, with about 75% of disposition now being done this way. The general feeling is that this is partly due to costs and partly due to a change in how we as a society view death and funerals.

In planning for a green burial, the municipality requires 48-hour notice to open the grave. The casket might need to be purchased. Both directors have worked with a company in Lindsay who can provide environmentally sustainable caskets. Timing is something to consider as the body begins to deteriorate immediately after death and refrigeration may not be an option. Organ

donation has to be done in a hospital. Pacemakers should be removed, but is not necessary for other implants.

The funeral director's role is to help the family in creating a service that is respectful, supportive and straightforward. They coordinate behind the scenes to make certain everything runs smoothly. They are the link between what the family desires and what the municipal bylaw requires. They are also responsible for gathering information about the deceased for the documentation that is required (birth certificate, social insurance number, proof of executor, etc.). They encourage everyone to preplan their end of life wishes, to discuss them with the family, or the person assigned to make decisions and to write them down. They are happy to help with planning. In the long run, a plan brings peace of mind to the person and to their families.

A link to the full ZOOM recorded discussion can be found on the [Green Burial Society website](#)

You Responded to Our Survey

In September we sent out our first survey request to members in over two years. With year-round green burial becoming a reality, we wanted to hear your priorities going forward. Here's some highlights:

- Survey sent to 115 addresses, 35 completed surveys received
- 3/4 of respondents cited burial society activities and information as important to their end-of-life planning
- About 63% of respondents indicated that committing to a green burial plot is in their current or future plan
- 65% of respondents indicated that year-round green burial in their home township is important – the majority of respondents were from Dysart, which does not offer winter burial (yet!)

Thank-you for participating and for helping to set Society directions. [Read the full survey report here](#)

Looking Ahead – Key Events in 2026

- **Green Burial Society Annual General Meeting – April 22, 2026** – Evening in-person location t.b.d
- **Haliburton Home & Cottage Show – May 29 – May 31** (note: Sunday in the morning only due to St. Stephen's opening.) Visit us at our booth.
- **Official Opening - St. Stephen's Green Burial Area - May 31, 2026** – at St. Stephen's, 2072 Buckslide Road., Algonquin Highlands, gather for 1:00 p.m.

We Need Your Participation!

As you can see, your Green Burial Society is very active in all parts of our mission – advocating, educating and informing. We would love to see more community participation. Opportunities will include:

- Research – staying in touch with the very active global natural burial movement
- Events – helping to plan and organize meetings and guest presentations
- Publications – In 2026, we're refreshing our handouts and our website – are you creative?
- St Stephen's green renewal – joint in the preparation and planting
- Leadership – from committees to the board – we need fresh ideas

If you are committed to a greener future and would like to contribute, please send Terry or Jennifer an email at hhgreenburialsociety@gmail.com

Officers: Terry Moore, President, Jennifer Rieger, Vice-President
Ross Peacock, Treasurer, Directors: Carolyn Langdon, Sheila Ziman, Jenn Watt,

Thank you for your support and participation. We appreciate comments or suggestions related to both Society activities and our newsletter content.