

# BEYOND

Issue 6 - June 2023

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario magazine



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## Issue 6 – June 2023

### About *Beyond*

*Beyond* is an all-digital, family focused magazine providing useful and interesting stories about the bereavement care sector and why it matters to you.

It is the magazine of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario, a government delegated administrative authority focused on protecting and informing families.

[www.TheBAO.ca](http://www.TheBAO.ca)

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## We are working with professionals, their associations and colleges to address a shortage of funeral directors in parts of northern Ontario

*By Jim Cassimatis,  
Interim CEO & Registrar, BAO*



**M**ore remotely located funeral homes across the province are having difficulty drawing in funeral directors to meet the needs of families in their communities. Some funeral directors are working off their feet seven days a week to address this – and have for years.

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) has started investigating possible solutions with funeral directors (who we license), professional associations and community colleges.

This challenge in northern com-

munities is being experienced in several business sectors, including death care. The issue didn't develop overnight, as many funeral professionals know, and it will take a collaborative approach to address it.

I've had one-to-one conversations with several funeral directors with decades of experience.

Provincially, the BAO's latest fiscal year-end numbers tell the story of the last six years. For some it's their most pressing issue in their communities, for others less so. It depends mostly on where they live.

Provincial totals	March 31, 2017	March 31, 2023	Change
Funeral Establishments	583	567	-16 or -2.7%
Funeral Directors (FD1&2)	2,776	2,504	-272 or -9.8%

We, as the regulator, will not be able to solve the matter ourselves, of course. But the BAO will join all other stakeholders in addressing the issue. The BAO recognizes this growing need, which connects to key elements of our mission to support the development of a strong and diverse sector while responding to changing needs.

## Educational needs

We are working with representatives from the bereavement sector to address educational and other factors that will improve the situation for funeral homes and directors.

It's worth noting that the opportunities are considerable for young people to join a caring profession that needs them.

We will also investigate other pathways to a funeral director licence as well as options to alleviate workloads, including:

- Graduated licensing
- Apprenticeships
- Utilizing unlicensed staff to conduct ceremonies and rites

- Reviewing our reinstatement policy for people wanting to return to the sector after having allowed their BAO licences to lapse

## Needs of current funeral directors

The needs of current working funeral directors must be considered to fully address the staffing issue, and work-life balance and salaries must be addressed by businesses in the sector. Education solutions, such as much more online learning, are equally essential.

Together, we will address how to increase the number of funeral directors needed across the province and in northern Ontario especially. Having enough funeral directors in every community is essential to serving families.



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# Save your family and yourself added stress at a time of grief.

You can pre-arrange a funeral so the  
plans are ready when they are needed.

Read about this and much more in our free [BAO Consumer Information Guide](#),  
which tells you about your rights and options.







Rooted in history and upheld for  
the future:

**Two provincial  
cemeteries rich in  
Canadian symbolism**





*Holiday Remembrance Service at Hamilton Cemetery*

**F**amilies who bury their loved ones in a cemetery leave a piece of their history behind in these sites. Some cemeteries themselves have a deep-rooted provincial and national story to tell.

## Hamilton

As one of the largest burial grounds in the province, Hamilton's Municipal Cemeteries provide a glimpse into the

city's past. John Perrotta, Superintendent, Cemeteries at the City of Hamilton, describes each of the 70 cemeteries as a museum, with each one being a part of the city's collective heritage.

"One of the most significant cemeteries is the Hamilton Cemetery," Perrotta says. "Established in 1850, it is the final resting place for many of the city's early settlers and prominent



*Hamilton Municipal Cemeteries*





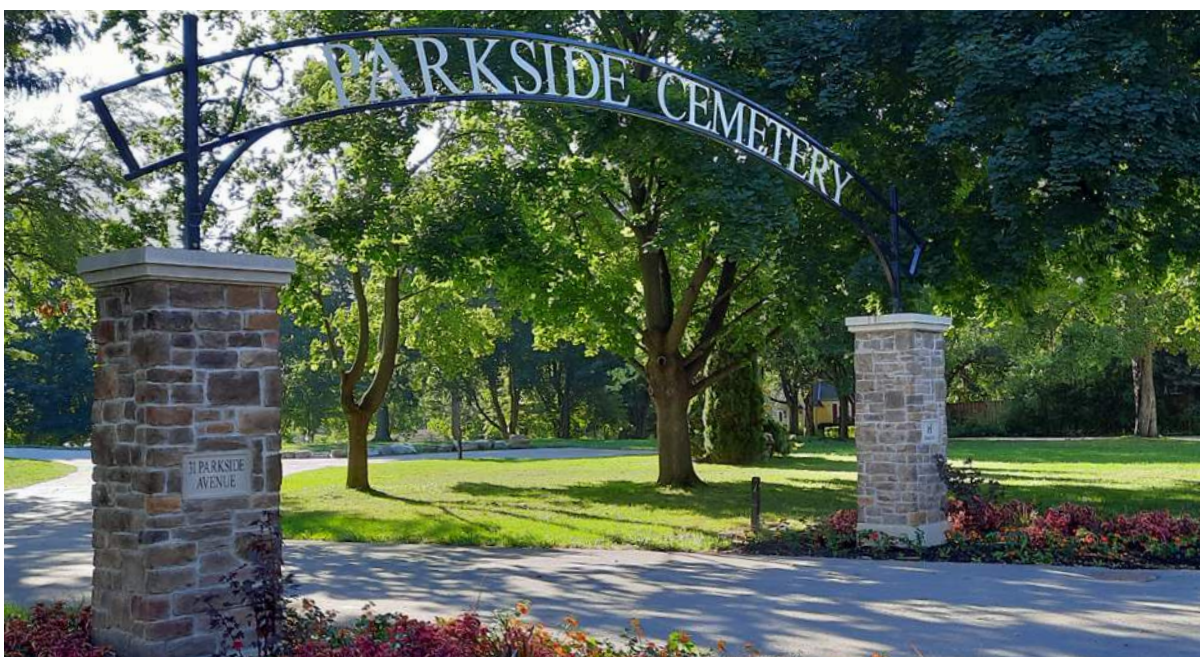
*Hamilton Municipal Cemeteries*

figures. The cemetery features a variety of interesting monuments and sculptures, including the Soldiers' Circle, which honours those who served in various conflicts throughout Canadian history."

Making each cemetery accessible to families year-round is important, Perrotta says. While visitations occur during regular hours, special events and programs like the Holiday

***"The cemetery is maintained year-round to high standards befitting of a National Historic Site of Canada."***

*—Craig Boals, Cataraqui Cemetery*



*Parkside Cemetery Entrance*



Remembrance Service, occur at all times and are an important draw for families and visitors.

The amount of care that goes into maintenance is a year-round job, Perrotta says. In addition to the day-to-day operations such as burials or monument restoration, he says that historical buildings also require their own, unique care.

“Cemetery record-keeping, for example, involves maintaining accurate records of burials and other cemetery activities,” Perrotta says. “We also conduct community outreach to engage with the community and provide information and support to families who have loved ones buried.”

## Kingston

Cataraqui Cemetery, located in Kingston, also has a rich heritage. Founded in 1850 by the Cataraqui Cemetery Company, General Manager Craig Boals says that Cataraqui has a range of noteworthy monuments of historic and artistic merit, and is the resting place of individuals who made significant contributions in Canadian politics and commerce at the national, provincial, and local levels.

In fact, Canada’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, is

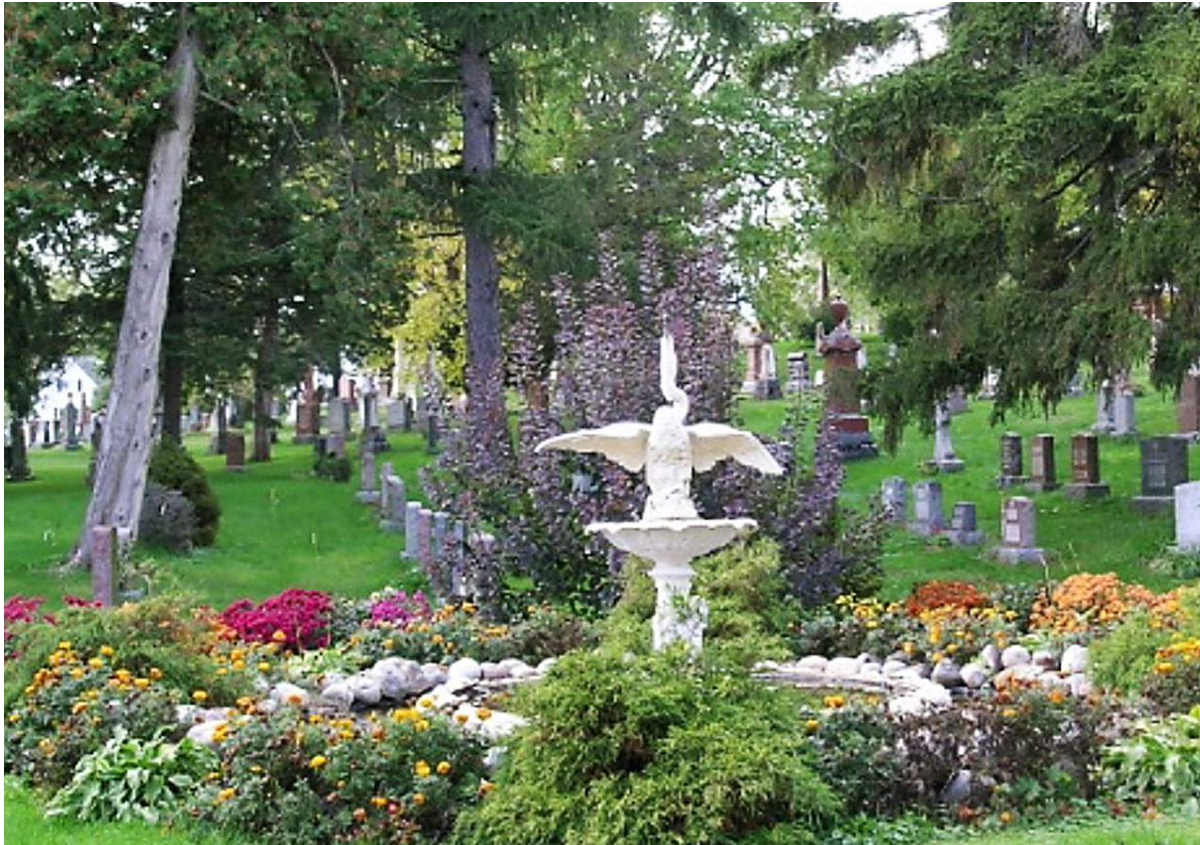


*Sir John A. Macdonald's burial site, a National Historic Site*



*Sir Alexander Campbell's burial site*





*Cataraqi fountain*

buried at Cataraqi, along with his family plot, which is a National Historic Site. Sir Alexander Campbell, another Father of Confederation, is interred approximately 30 feet away from Sir John A. Macdonald, Boals says.

“Cataraqi Cemetery is the only burial site in Ontario with two Fathers of Confederation interred within,” Boals says.

Since 2014, Boal says Cataraqi’s on-staff funeral directors have actively assisted in cemetery services, and fulfilling families’ requests and demands. Garden and landscape features found at Cataraqi require a large

seasonal crew during warmer months, in order to preserve the site’s prestige.

“The cemetery is maintained year-round to high standards befitting of a National Historic Site of Canada,” Boals says. “Such designation ensures that the cemetery will remain protected in perpetuity.”



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# Good grief: Leading Canadian grief consultant and advocate reflects on collective trauma

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*Serena Lewis, MSW, RSW has more than 20 years of experience working in the fields of health and long-term care, education, and non-profit sectors.*

**L**iving on the Minas Basin, (Colchester County, Nova Scotia) there is a familiarity and pride of the world's highest tides.

These tides are a sight to behold, given that you recognize they are also the lowest; this motion is ever-changing. This steady, rhythmic fluctuation, alongside

sightings of eagles, wildlife, wildflowers, and spectacular sunsets have provided me space professionally and personally for integration as a mother, and social worker working with trauma, death, and grief for almost two decades.

## Quiet moments of reflection

It is in these quiet moments of reflection we find ourselves standing; sometimes alone, and with others, in the face of tragedies. Tragedies that have, and are, unfolding in ways that call upon the need for grief and bereavement resources to stretch and grow. Every loss has a ripple effect; so too, does every tragedy.

Standing alone, in lockdown in my living room window in the long night and early morning of

April 18 and 19, 2020, I knew that life would be forever changed. Only a month prior, our entire country faced the impending fear and deadly consequences of a pandemic wreaking havoc at a global level, resulting in the first layer of my lockdown. The second was due to a gunman impersonating a police officer setting a violent stage for what would become Canada's largest intended mass casualty. My young, adult children and parents on one side of the community of Portapique, and me on the other, a 15 km immense radius. Neighbours, friends, and co-workers' lives taken; the rest significantly

changed by the trauma of those horrific and deadly thirteen hours.

Two years later, standing alone in the same window, violent winds unleashed through Hurricane Fiona. Those winds, combined with pounding rain destroyed my home, and those of so many other community members. Roads blocked, substantial power outages; a debris-laden path ahead of us all. Climate change/environmental trauma has been all too real around the world, and now closer and more violently in our own Canadian landscape.





Only nine months later, I stand today in a different living room window, still displaced from my home. I am reaching out to friends and family as raging wildfires threaten homes, wiping out communities and livelihoods, destroying beautiful forests and wildlife – and once again, testing the limits of terribly weary first responders. Tragedy takes its toll, and fire, a violent reminder of how fragile beauty, and life, can be.

## Trauma and grief

Trauma and grief together create a muddying of the waters when it reveals itself through mass events, and while Canada reconciles the traumatic impacts of unresolved tragedies that have affected historically-oppressed communities, it is also contending with current environmental, accidental, and intentional events.

Considering our understanding of mental health resourcing, there is a progressive need to understand that trauma, grief, and bereavement require a proactive whole person, whole family, whole community, and whole country approach. Our sense of safety, physically and emotionally/ mentally, requires changes in how we create long-term responses in more creative,

***“Only nine months later, I stand today in a different living room window, still displaced from my home.”***

*—Serena Lewis, columnist*

engaging, and relevant ways.

Collective traumas require collective, integrated, and coordinated approaches that are grounded in understanding the necessity to grieve all that has been changed or lost in our lives. I believe our collective social and environmental legacy depends on this compassionate evolution, as we re-envision what past and present tragedies have taught us, and the progressive steps to proactively support future trauma.

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# Religious burials: Buddhist traditions on honouring the life of a deceased disciple

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**T**he BAO continues its feature series on religious burials with *Beyond exploring Buddhism, and how devotees are honoured.*



*The Reverend Dr. Bhante Saranapala,  
Urban Buddhist Monk*

## **Buddhism**

The Reverend Dr. Bhante Saranapala, the Urban Buddhist Monk at Mississauga's West-End Buddhist Temple and Meditation Centre, says that death is an important life moment. In Buddhism, the breaking of samsara [the cycle of life] is necessary for reaching Nirvana [utter freedom from suffering and true peace].

"As sentient beings, we want to have a good rebirth into the





*West End Buddhist Temple and Meditation Centre.*

next life,” Dr. Saranapala says. “When a person dies, the next rebirth depends on a particular consciousness called Cuti Citta or the last death consciousness or moment. We want to maintain tranquility as the Buddhist attempts to have a happy rebirth and reach Nirvana.”

One of the first tasks to complete when a Buddhist passes away is to contact a monk at a local temple, Dr. Saranapala says. A funeral service must be performed

within seven days, and all attendees must wear mataka-vastra, white attire that is symbolic for purity, he says. All participants of the funeral service take refuge in the Noble Triple Gem [Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha] and observe five moral precepts, a Buddhist code of ethics, to refrain from five negative actions. Then, a gift of Mathaka Vasthra, funerary raiment, is offered to the Maha Sangha, the community of monks and nuns, in loving

memory of and on behalf of the deceased.

## Simultaneous prayer recitation

A senior monk leads the recitation of Buddhist prayers, but having loved ones recite the prayers simultaneously is crucial, Dr. Saranapala says. At the dying moment, Buddhist monks are invited to recite Pirith [Blessing] Chanting and a journal of merit, or Pin Potha, is read out loud by relatives to verbalize good deeds the dying person committed in their life, he says. This allows the dying person to truly break free from samsara and have a desired rebirth. During the servicing, he says all must pay respect to the Buddha, with the following phrase:

**“Namo tassa  
bhagavato  
arahato samma-  
sambuddhassa.”**

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(I pay homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One.)

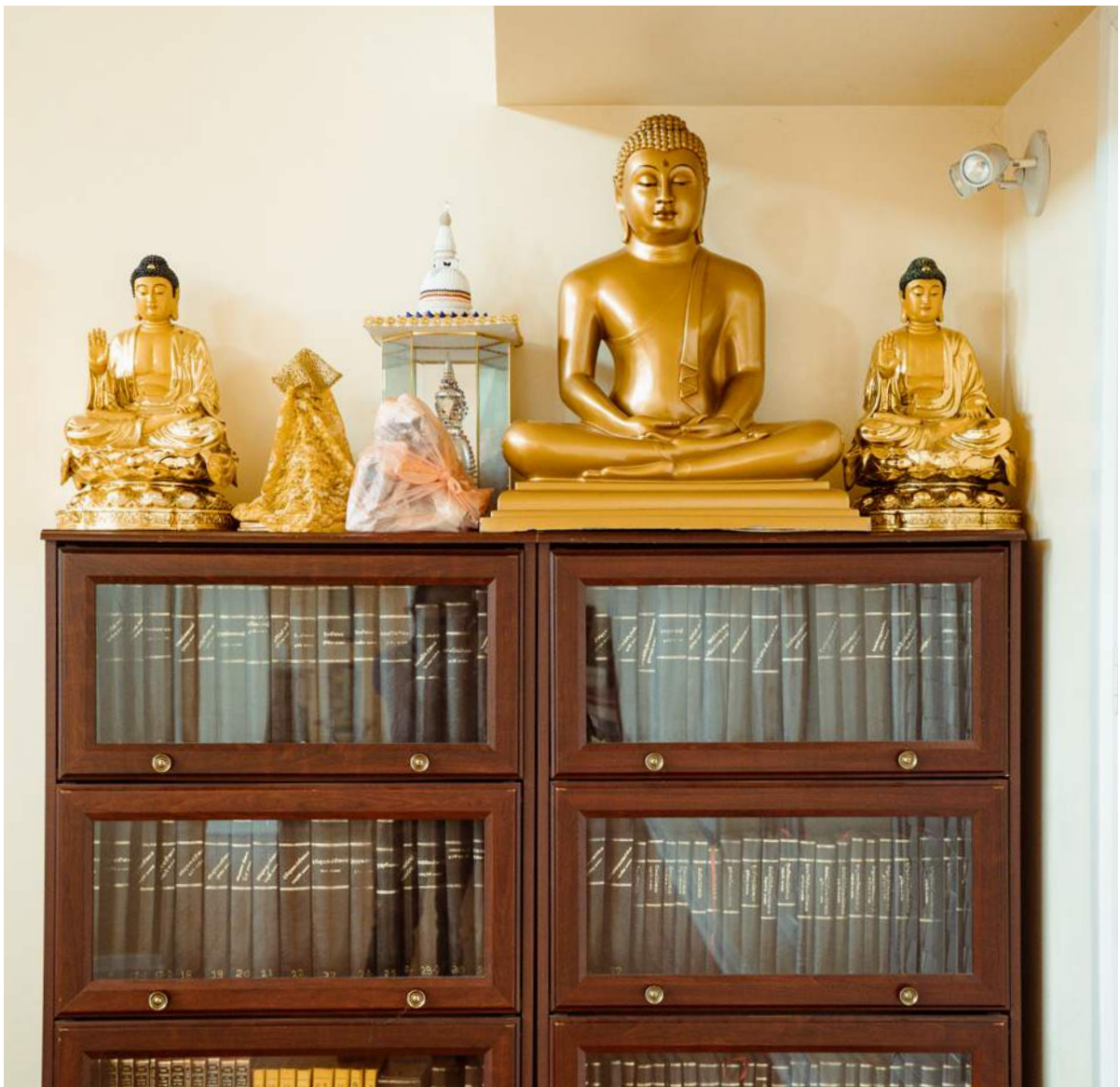


*David Wolf, Managing Funeral Director of Basic Funerals and Cremation Choices*

David Wolf, Managing Funeral Director of Basic Funerals and Cremation Choices, says his funeral home has coordinated Buddhist funerals and supported families in several ways.

“When our staff arrange any funeral, we work with the family to make sure that their wishes are communicated and noted in their file,” Wolf said. “If they are unsure what items will be needed, then we will connect with the monk that the family has selected, to ensure that their needs are going to be met with the appropriate equipment and style of room setup. Preparation and





*Buddhist materials, relics, and books*

preparedness are the keys to a smooth funeral service, so that families may concentrate on what's important: saying good-bye to their loved one in a way that is meaningful to them."

Transferring merits to the deceased Buddhist, Dr. Saranapala

***"When our staff arrange any funeral, we work with the family to make sure that their wishes are communicated and noted in their file"***

*—David Wolf, Basic Funerals and Cremation Choices*

says, is important during the final stages of funeral rites. Family members 'transfer' merits using a jug of water, which is poured into an empty cup. With the service completed, the family then takes the casket to be buried or cremated, and a seven-day memorial service concludes the process.

"One thing that we should all keep in mind, is that we are all going to die," Dr. Saranapala says. "Before Buddhists die, doing meaningful things for ourselves, and for others, is morally imperative. As the Buddha said in his last sermon, all disciples must live their lives diligently, as everything is impermanent. Therefore, refrain from bad deeds, cultivate good deeds and purify the mind through meditation, as these are the teachings of the Buddha."



*Observing during a Buddhist funeral*







# Cemetery workers at the City of Niagara Falls' Willow's Rest show us what green burials are—and what they can be

*Willow's Rest, Niagara Falls*

**G**reen burials have been receiving more interest from the public and growing news coverage during the last year. So, we thought we'd provide families with an overview of this emerging trend with this set of videos.

The BAO's Beyond magazine visited a well-known and already well-regarded green burial section within the City of Niagara Falls' Fairview Cemetery.

That part of the cemetery, called Willow's Rest, started thanks to community interest in having a

natural burial site developed. It was established in 2016/17 in consultation with the community, as you'll hear from the city's Mark Richardson, Manager of Cemetery Services.

Our 19-minute interview video also focuses on what green burials are and what they can be.

**Watch this feature interview by clicking [here](#).**

To learn more, watch the video vignettes of less than two minutes each on the next three pages.



## Origins of Willow's Rest

Mark Richardson, Manager of Cemetery Services, City of Niagara Falls, tells us about how the green burial site was established. [Watch it now.](#)

Watch this interview  
by clicking [here.](#)



*Mark Richardson, Manager, Cemetery Services, City of Niagara Falls*

## Family Connection

Jean-Paul (JP) Narbonne, Supervisor of Cemetery Services, City of Niagara Falls, talks about how personal connection to Willow's Rest has been so important to families of those buried here. [Watch it now.](#)

Watch this interview  
by clicking [here.](#)



*Jean-Paul (JP) Narbonne, Supervisor of Cemetery Services, City of Niagara Falls*


*Willow's Rest, Niagara Falls*





## Environmental Connection

Jean-Paul (JP) Narbonne, Supervisor of Cemetery Services, City of Niagara Falls, tells us how strong interest in the environment by individuals and their families has created a bond with Willow's Rest. [Watch it now.](#)


Watch this interview by clicking [here.](#) 



*Willow's Rest, Niagara Falls*

## Sweet Partnership

Mark Richardson explains the cemetery's unique partnership with Niagara College that adds some sweetness to Willow's Rest. [Watch it now.](#)

Watch this interview by clicking [here.](#) 



*Niagara College Golden Honey*



*Willow's Rest, Niagara Falls*




# Ecological Harmony

Chris DiRaddo, Restoration Ecologist of Sassafras Farms, is a contractor who works on site at Willow's Rest. Here he describes his unique work at Willow's Rest. [Watch it now.](#)



*Chris DiRaddo, Restoration Ecologist Sassafras Farms*

Watch this interview by clicking [here](#). 



*Willow's Rest, Niagara Falls*







# Freshly brewed conversations on mortality: What is the death café?

**A** cup of coffee to go with your thoughts on death?

It's a premise that may be a bit eyebrow-raising, but a death café is much more heartwarming than its name implies.

Death cafés are informal gatherings of people who discuss the inevitable. Participants from all walks of life assemble in an informal, community-driven environment, and engage in a free-flowing dialogue about death and mortality. Setups are aesthetically-pleasing, where people are joined by others in a relaxed and safe setting.

The first death café was originally founded in 2011 by Jon

Underwood in London, England. He was influenced by the ideas of Swiss sociologist Dr. Bernard Crettaz. Underwood's café was a success, with the event's purpose and activities spreading to many countries adopting the idea in their own unique ways.

## Funeral home in Kingston hosted a death café

Therese Barrett, Estate Care Provider at Kingston's James Reid Funeral Home, says that their May 1, 2023 death café was part of a larger need to provide comfort to consumers.

"In 2021, with COVID-19 happening, we really wanted to rethink

how funeral homes connected with people,” Barrett says. “Sarah Reid, Assistant Manager at James Reid, put together a team, and we came up with the Examined Life Series. A death café was our way of launching the Series, allowing people to come in and speak their minds, which we now hold twice a year in the spring and autumn.”

The dialogue format is informal with no expectations, Barrett

***“In 2021, with COVID-19 happening, we really wanted to rethink how funeral homes connected with people.”***

*—Therese Barrett, James Reid Funeral Home*

says, with the exception that individuals respect each other. Susan Young, who works with Ottawa’s Bells Corners United Church, echoes this sentiment.

Young says that a guiding principle has been bringing together all who have a common interest in truthfully speaking about



*Therese Barrett, James Reid Funeral Home*

death. The Church’s Pastoral and Spiritual Care Team, she says, has seen increased engagement in hosted death cafés since their debut in November 2019, with their most recent gathering occurring on May 9, 2023.

“Our only objective is to be good hosts, as participants lead the dialogue,” Young says. “A death café is an intentional gathering of those who want to be present, which normalizes these conversations. There aren’t any awkward social undertones, and, in this way, the setup is very effective in facilitating positive discussions.”



## Inclusionary

Death cafés have also evolved overtime into more inclusionary environments for different communities. Tiana Dargent (she/they), Founder and Facilitator of Queer Community Deathcare, conducts monthly virtual Queer Death Salons. Dargent says that the Salon adapted the café's structure into a safer space for various groups to freely speak about their lived realities.

"Before conducting the Salon, I did many 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) death cafés for the Home Hospice Association at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic," Dargent says. "To better serve the queer community, which suffer higher rates of trauma than others, I later shifted to a practice that allows for heavy subject matter to be spoken about without [potential] tension from the original model's openness. Everyone involved is more emotionally-prepared for these specific types of conversations."

## Death is part of life

Death is a normal part of life, Young says, and having a socially safe and pleasant setting where people can gather and speak safely is crucial, without



*Tiana Dargent (she/they), Queer Community Deathcare*

the stress that comes with it. Serving refreshments, like coffee or cake, is integral to the success of the café, Barrett says, as participants are relieved of the stress that usually comes with death-related conversations.

"It's a rule of ours to serve cake," Barrett says with a laugh. "Everyone has a choice to participate how they see fit, but cake will always be served."

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# Haldimand County now owns and operates Street Cemetery and is working to open the Underground Railroad gravesite to the public

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**A**n historic Underground Railroad cemetery will be open to descendants and the public within six months, reports the municipality of Haldimand County, which became the owner of the Street Cemetery property in June of 2023.

Haldimand County is now the licensed operator of Street Cemetery, 40 kms south of Hamilton, where a number of American Black people fleeing slavery came to live in the 1800s. The cemetery site has more than 15 known graves.

Haldimand County completed work to become licensed under the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation*

*Services Act, 2002*, with the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO), as the owner/operator of the formerly unlicensed cemetery. Easement lands providing access, and the cemetery land itself, are now also registered to the municipality.

## **Licensing means maintenance in perpetuity**

“The licensing means that this historically significant burial ground will be respectfully maintained by the municipality, which we congratulate for completing the detailed two-year process with government agencies, two



previous property owners, and the BAO,” says Michael D’Mello, Deputy Registrar, BAO.

Haldimand County staff recently met on site to discuss a schedule of work required to ensure the safety of visitors. The work to take place includes:

- Leveling a pathway for access to the cemetery
- Removing and/or trimming hazardous trees
- Clearing brush and debris
- Removing and replacing of the cemetery fence

- Ground restoration and levelling
- Construction of a pathway from Haldimand Road #32 to the site

Phil Mete, General Manager of Public Works Operations at Haldimand County, says, “This will include additional survey work, on-site coordination of the anticipated work with the BAO and other authorities having jurisdiction ... Based on the current condition of the cemetery and surrounding area, we anticipate this work will take four to six months as it involves securing and coordinating appropriate



*The gravestone of Carrie Barnes, a niece of Harriet Tubman, is visible at the cemetery in Haldimand County. (Photo – CBC)*

contractors to complete the majority of this sensitive work.”

Haldimand staff will also start bringing together the Community Stakeholder Committee. Mete



*Michael D'Mello, BAO Deputy Registrar*

***“The licensing means that this historically significant burial ground will be respectfully maintained by the municipality, which we congratulate for completing the detailed two-year process with government agencies, two previous property owners, and the BAO.”***

*-Michael D'Mello, BAO*

adds, “We know families of the original freedom-seekers and members of the public were hopeful to have the cemetery site available for a visit on Emancipation Day, which is August 1, however, that will not be possible this year given contractors will be on site and significant safety concerns.”

Heritage Haldimand has plans for an Emancipation Day community gathering to take place on Sunday, July 30 in nearby Canfield.

The county news release also states that the event will include a presentation by Niagara-based historian Rochelle Bush, a freedom-seeker descendant with family ties to American abolitionist Harriet Tubman, who rescued about 70 enslaved Black people using a network of antislavery activists and safe houses – known as the Underground Railroad.

### **More work by the BAO**

The BAO is actively working to license another cemetery, which may also be connected to Underground Railroad freedom seekers.

An archaeological investigation has recently been completed confirming burials at the Morris-Williams-Burke Cemetery, located in Haldimand Country.



Many old cemeteries become abandoned over time, meaning there is no one responsible for their maintenance. The BAO works with municipalities and owners of land on which these sites are situated, to ensure all cemeteries are protected and maintained to reflect the dignity of the persons buried in these sites.

## **BAO consumer protection actions**

Illegal advertising in the north, a Scarborough funeral home no longer in operation, a Toronto cemetery ordered to cease selling burials and more are part of the actions the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) has taken in recent months on the public's behalf.

Learn more in our Notices to the Consumer at these links on the [BAO website](#):

- A Richmond Hill cemetery is required to stop charging and collecting additional interment fees
- Unlicensed business illegally advertising funeral services in northwestern Ontario
- Proposal to Refuse to Renew Funeral Director Licence and Funeral Establishment
- Registrar orders a Toronto cemetery to cease operations for not establishing a required trust fund
- And more at in our Notice the Consumer web section.

**“ I felt protected.**

I checked the  
Canadian Regulatory Guide.”



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[www.regulatoryguide.ca](http://www.regulatoryguide.ca)