


# BEYOND

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario magazine

A photograph of a woman and a man standing in a cemetery. The woman is on the left, wearing a grey tank top, black pants, and a black crossbody bag. The man is on the right, wearing a maroon t-shirt, blue jeans, and a grey cap. They are both smiling. The background shows several gravestones and trees in a cemetery setting.

**p20 | Volunteers  
making a  
difference at  
cemeteries**

**p9 | The value of  
funeral home internships**

**p14 | Cemetery  
migration history along  
the St. Lawrence Seaway**

### About *Beyond*

Beyond is an all-digital, family focused magazine providing useful and interesting stories about the bereavement care industry 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)

**Subscribe** to *Beyond*. It's free!

### Editor-in-chief

[David.Brazeau@TheBAO.ca](mailto:David.Brazeau@TheBAO.ca)

### Graphic Design

Eyebeam Design Inc.

### Photo credits

-Cover: Volunteers Glenn King and Montana Hughes at Union Cemetery, Sturgeon Falls - by Chantal Larochelle

-The BAO

-Others supplied by interviewees

# Table of Contents

p3 - CEO/Registrar's message

p7 - Judge orders restitution and house arrest of Simcoe funeral home owner

p9 - The value of funeral home internships

p14 - History: Cemetery migration along the St. Lawrence Seaway

p20 - Cover story: Volunteers making a difference

p28 - The BAO's free Consumer Information Guide

**Subscribe to *Beyond***

© Bereavement Authority of Ontario

## What and who is the Bereavement Authority of Ontario?

*By Jim Cassimatis, CEO/Registrar,  
Bereavement Authority of Ontario*



**T**he bereavement business sector knows the BAO very well, but the public – not so much, until they need us.

So, it's my pleasure as the Chief Executive Officer and Registrar of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) to describe what we do for families (consumers), licensed professionals and businesses in the bereavement sector.

### **Consumer protection**

The BAO administers the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 (FBCSA), on behalf of the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement.

We are a consumer protection not-for-profit corporation delegated by government to administer the FBCSA. We regulate, ensure compliance with the law, provide resources and services to those we license:

- Funeral establishment operators, directors and preplanners;
- Cemetery, crematorium and alternative disposition operators;
- Transfer service operators; and
- Bereavement sector sales representatives across Ontario.

We are wholly funded by licensee fees and not tax dollars.

As background – the BAO was created in 2016, merging the former Board of Funeral Services and the Cemeteries Regulation Unit at the former Ministry of Consumer Services, to regulate the bereavement sector.



## Professional commitment

Regulation means making sure the law is being followed in the public interest – that families are treated honestly, fairly, professionally and with respect.

Through our work, we also raise the profile of the bereavement sector by demonstrating that there are regulations and standards which licensed professionals must follow. By and large, they do.

The vast majority of licensees demonstrate their professional commitment to serving families in their times of grief, in accordance with the law, every day. But the BAO spends a disproportionately large amount of time and resources ensuring compliance with the FBCSA among a very small percentage of our 9,500 licensees, who we guide toward compliance with some becoming subject to inspections, suspensions, orders, and in more egregious matters, revocations of their licences.

Here are a few examples of our recent consumer protection actions in the last year:

- Licensing and annual licence renewals of businesses and individuals to ensure continued compliance with the law
- Requiring a cemetery to stop charging additional fees on interment rights that were already fully paid for by the consumer(s)
- Ordering two cemeteries to cease operations – one as a result of the cemetery not establishing the legally required Care and Maintenance Fund, which helps ensure long-term upkeep of a cemetery, and the other for not being licensed
- Ordering a township to cease operating a cemetery for not filing its annual reports for the Care and Maintenance Fund
- Communication – Promoting our [consumer notices](#) on obituary piracy, closures of a few funeral homes, people operating without a required licence, and other topics

## Our team



Services and the effectiveness of the BAO continue to grow and improve, as recommended by the Auditor General of Ontario's report in December of 2020. The audit provided information that demonstrated the BAO's need to expand so we could more effectively serve Ontario's 15 million people.

We're still fairly small, but since 2021 we have almost doubled in size to 38 staff members enabling us to implement and sustain the Auditor General's recommendations.

Our team consists of our BAO Board of Directors, the CEO/Registrar and staff in the departments of licensing, financial compliance, inspections and enforcement, inquiries and complaints, as well as supporting corporate services.

## Enforcement tools

Our legal team of two, financial compliance team of five, and our seven-member inspections team are the core of our regulatory enforcement side of the BAO. Staff from other departments also support

our regulatory enforcement role.

As Registrar of the FBCSA, I make use of these regulatory tools, when educational efforts by financial compliance and inspections staff go unheeded or fall short of compliance:

- Registrar's orders
- Suspensions of operator or personal licences
- Revocations of operator or personal licences
- Conditions placed on licences
- Disciplinary measures

The Provincial Offences Act (POA) is also available to us as an enforcement tool for contraventions of the FBCSA that do not fall under the Code of Ethics, and do not involve issues of fitness for licensing under the FBCSA. Charges under the POA are heard in the Ontario Court of Justice and are sometimes necessary when consumers are at risk from the actions of unlicensed people or organizations.

Registrar's orders, suspensions, immediate suspensions, and Notices of Proposal to revoke licences, are effective tools when licensed individuals and businesses put consumers at risk. A revocation of licence, used in extreme cases, means the person or operator can no longer provide services requiring a licence – effectively putting them out of business.

You can see examples of these enforcement tools in action on our public website in our [Suspensions/Revocations/Conditions/Discipline/Orders](#) section.

## Information and complaints

We also provide information to the public, such as our free [BAO Consumer Information Guide](#), and make sure that information is easily accessible to you. This includes the fact that licensed businesses are required by law to make their current price lists available to the public on their websites or in print.

We also accept and respond to public [complaints and inquiries](#) related to licensed bereavement businesses and licensed individuals. The public can file written complaints against a business or licensed professional at [this link](#). We investigate each complaint and report back to the complainant and the person or business named with a final written response to each, within 30 business days of receipt of the written complaint.

## Modernization

We've recently stepped up our technology. Our greatest modernization initiative, since the BAO was established, is the development of our new customer relationship management system and web portal, called the Ontario Bereavement Information System

(OBIS), which went live on April 30.

My job as the authority's new CEO/Registrar, appointed by the BAO Board of Directors in February, is to ensure we harness our team and tech toward greater informational support and regulatory effectiveness for you – the consumer.

## Government partners

Although we are not part of the government, we work with the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement, which oversees our work.

We have an information sharing agreement with the Ministry of Labour and will soon have a similar agreement with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, with whom we meet regularly to discuss joint regulatory compliance initiatives.

Our collaborations have greatly assisted all parties in implementing the recommendations of the Auditor General in the last few years.

For more information, please refer to our:

- Website [TheBAO.ca](#)
- [Contact Us](#) webpage
- [Beyond](#) magazine

Thank you.

# Judge orders \$386,000 restitution and house arrest for a former Simcoe funeral establishment owner

A judge has sentenced a former Simcoe funeral director and funeral establishment owner to 12 months house arrest and ordered him to pay \$386,064.97 restitution to the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) concerning fraud over \$5,000 in relation to prepaid services.

On May 9, Paul Taylor, of Norfolk County, received an 18-month conditional sentence after he pled guilty to a charge of fraud over \$5,000 under the Criminal Code of Canada, with the first 12 months being under house arrest wearing a global positioning system (GPS) device. This will be followed by three years of probation.

The ruling, made in the Ontario Court of Justice in Norfolk County, also ordered Taylor to pay restitution of \$386,064.97 to replenish the BAO Compensation Fund.

The BAO Compensation Fund was established to compensate consumers who have suffered a financial loss as a result of a licensed funeral professional or transfer service licensee mishandling prepaid funds. The compensation fund has reimbursed about 100 people affected in this matter, as the fund was designed to do.

The ruling orders Taylor to pay a minimum \$1,000 a month back to the BAO Compensation Fund for the duration of the restitution order. Failure to meet the minimum payments could result in jail time, the judge told Taylor in court. The remainder of the ordered restitution is due on the first day of the 54th month of the restitution order period.

## Four years ago

In January of 2020, BAO inspectors started inquiries into financial irregularities related to prepaid funerals and cremations at the two establishments owned by Paul Taylor, The Baldock Funeral Home Inc. and South Coast Funeral & Cremation Alternatives Inc., in Simcoe, Ontario. The Registrar, of the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 (FBCSA), suspended the licence of Taylor and the two establishments in 2020.

As of Feb. 5, 2021, Taylor had abandoned the appeal of the Proposal to Revoke licences. As a result, the BAO proceeded with the revocation of Funeral Director – Class 1 licence of Paul Taylor, and the Funeral Establishment Operator – Class 1 licences of The Baldock Funeral Home Inc., and South Coast Funeral & Cremation Alternatives Inc.

## About the BAO

The Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) is a government delegated authority and not-for-profit corporation administering provisions of the FBCSA. Accountable to the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement and the government, the BAO is responsible for the protection of the public interest. The BAO regulates, ensures compliance with the law, provides resources and services to licensed:

- Funeral establishment operators, directors and preplanners;
- Cemetery, crematorium and alternative disposition operators;
- Transfer service operators; and
- Bereavement sector sales representatives across Ontario.

The BAO is wholly funded by licensee fees (not tax dollars).



---

# Internships introduce new funeral directors to the day-to-day challenges of a rewarding funeral home career

---

**R**emember when you were the newbie and you asked questions like:

“Do we always work at night and on weekends?”

Well, yeah, that’s pretty standard, for funeral directors. File that as post-grad learning, which only hands-on experience and a coach can teach new funeral directors.

The “on-call” lifestyle of a funeral director (FD) was something to adjust to as an intern, even for one who grew up helping his parents at the family-owned Mighton Funeral Home in Hanover, a 90-minute drive north of Kitchener.



*Adam Mighton*

Funeral Director Adam Mighton returned to the family business after completing two master’s degrees and knowing what the profession can be like.

He says he's grateful that his internship as a licensed FD in 2019 helped him adjust to the realities of caring for deceased people and their grieving families.

"Getting used to the on-call lifestyle of a small town funeral homeowner and funeral director – always having a backup plan for the backup plan" became part of his accepted routine as he and his wife Kim assumed ownership of Mighton Funeral Home.

## Required and valuable

Funeral director interns must work a minimum of 30 hours per week for 12 months, or over a longer period completing the same hours, to become licensed.

During that time, all interns must demonstrate a level of proficiency for every competency listed that aligns with entry-to-practice standards for their licence class. The competencies are in:

- Communication and Responsiveness
- Care of the Deceased
- Disposition, Funeral Services and Visitation
- Business Practice
- Professionalism

But it's so much more than just putting in your time, FDs say.

"As a new FD and new owner, I had to work quickly to become comfortable and respected by my new colleagues and employees who were working at the funeral home when I took over operations," Mighton says looking back at his internship of five years ago.

"Going through an internship just before the pandemic was helpful in the sense that it prepared me to be ready to adapt quickly to all the changes that came and went, and all of the technology changes and requirements that were called upon due to social distancing and attendance restrictions, etc."

His move into the family business proved timely for his parents as well. "I was often told by my parents that they weren't sure how they would have managed the pandemic if I hadn't moved home and helped navigate the funeral home through those times, as they have never been super comfortable with technology."

"Overall, this transition also went fairly smooth. I was also completely accepting of my inexperience as a new intern and FD." Helping him at the start was an experienced FD at Mighton Funeral Home. Her name is Angela Summers-Sim, who was licensed more than two decades ago and continues to work at the funeral home.

## A preceptor's view

Angela Summers-Sim has served as a coach, or preceptor, to new FDs.

She also saw firsthand how the 24/7 work lifestyle of an FD is not for everyone.

“I was a preceptor for a few interns with Mighton Funeral Home in Hanover and with my previous employer at Breckenridge-Ashcroft Funeral Home in Owen Sound. Both interns (in Owen Sound) had decided that this lifestyle was not for them.”

Summers-Sim says, “When I started in the program over 25 years ago, all students had to have a preceptor to guide us in our training. I had taken the Preceptor Training Course to allow our funeral home to be able to train interns.”



*Angela Summers-Sim*

She recalls that having a good preceptor when she was starting out made all the difference. “I did have a great preceptor when I started. She was able to not only help explain things, but really took an interest in my learning by going above and beyond with helping me learn. She helped me to become more confident in my abilities, various roles throughout my internship and continues to support me all these years later.”

Adam Mighton recommends that students and interns keep an open mind about the calling of the profession and its many demanding responsibilities. “I went into my schooling at Humber (College) and my internship with a completely open mind, ready to try to learn as much as I possibly could from as many people and professionals as I could. So, I sought out as many of these chances as I could.”

His experience as an intern encouraged him to stay current in the profession. “To this day, I still very much enjoy the value of continuing education, seminars, etc. and the opportunity to chat with other professionals, to try to soak in as much information as I can, in hopes that I continue to evolve as a professional in funeral services.”

## Learning from professionals

Mighton says, “I had great teachers at Humber and great people to learn from at my funeral home and other professionals nearby. The internship was great at preparing me to be able to learn from multiple people, again, to help me evolve my own approaches and preferred techniques that I was most comfortable with. I found this made me quite confident and independent in the prep room in a very short period of time.”

He encourages FD students to keep learning throughout their careers. “I would strongly encourage you approach every learning opportunity with an open mind, ready to listen, watch, and absorb, then reflect, practice, reflect some more, practice some more, and refine. You are never too young or too old to learn.”

## Adaptability

For Sarah Kuntz choosing her place to have an internship was easy.

“I did my internship in 2011 at the Henry Walser Funeral Home because I grew up in the Kitchener Waterloo area and had heard a lot of positive things about it. Knowing it was family owned really solidified it for me.”

Like Adam Mighton, she also found adaptability was a key professional learning of her internship.



*Sarah Kuntz*

Kuntz says the most valuable things she learned were:

- “Always be flexible as things can change quickly
- If you don’t know the answer, ask someone who does
- Listening to families tell stories about their loved one is part of their grieving process
- Families will never forget the kindness they are shown in the most vulnerable time of their lives
- Clear communication is so important, with helping families and with coworkers.”

***“It is a good feeling to be able to provide advice and support to the new interns.”***

*-Sarah Kuntz*

## **Stay organized**

She is grateful for the preceptor she had during her internship.

“My main ‘coach’ was my coworker Katie (Eatemadzadeh). I was told to shadow her and do what she did. She was and still is such a dedicated and hard worker. She always just seemed to know everything and was always two steps ahead,” she recalls.

“The biggest thing she taught me was to always look ahead, stay organized and be ready for what comes next. You can never be too over prepared or use enough sticky notes. She helped me understand what the bigger picture looks like.”

## **Good feeling**

Kuntz says a personal loss and the care of a professional confirmed her high school interest to join the profession.

“Shortly after I started my co-op placement at a funeral home, my grandma passed away and my dad mentioned to the funeral director I was thinking of becoming one. She was great throughout the whole process with me and my family and after that I realized I wanted to help people through this journey as well,” says Sarah, who herself has been a preceptor for an intern.

“It is a good feeling to be able to provide advice and support to the new interns.”



*Mighton Funeral Home is a family business.*

---

# Cemetery migration along the St. Lawrence Seaway was a logistical feat – and history in the making

*By Stuart Lyall Manson*



*The St. Lawrence Seaway Authority was established by an Act of Parliament in 1954. Photographed not long after opening, in 1959, the most westerly of the seven locks on the St. Lawrence controls traffic between the lower parts of the river and Lake Ontario, whose level is controlled by the Iroquois Dam, shown at right. - The Globe and Mail*

In the 1950s, the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project forever transformed Eastern Ontario.

Affected were great swaths of land, including several small towns that dotted the river shoreline, known as the Lost Villages, and no less than 18 cemeteries.

Engineered flooding was the cause of this disruption. A large part of the project involved the construction of a hydro-electric power dam and several water-control structures. It was an international endeavour between Canada and the United States.



*Trucks with cranes, and other machinery, were used to move tombstones from their original locations in the Lost Villages to new cemeteries such as the St. Lawrence Valley (Union) Cemetery, depicted here in May 1957. (SD&G Historical Society, Ellis Collection of HEPCO Photographs)*

Situated near the City of Cornwall, Ontario and the Town of Massena, New York, these dams were necessary to enable the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario (HEPCO), and the New York Power Authority, to harness the Long Sault Rapids.

The dams also inundated thousands of acres of land upstream, in both the Province of Ontario and the State of New York.

In the period immediately before this inundation, hundreds of houses and families were forced to move to new communities away from the flood zone. At the same time, the fate of the numerous cemeteries in the area, some dating from the late 18th century, had to be addressed.

## **To move or not to move**

In Ontario, there were two options available to planners at the time:

- Either move the buried remains and the associated tombstone to higher land; or
- Leave the buried remains in the area to be flooded and move only the tombstone.

The latter became an option when the provincial government authorized HEPCO to “flood and submerge a cemetery whether or not all human bodies buried therein have been removed” after proper notification to the public.

HEPCO was required, however, to remove all the tombstones, leaving none in the area to be flooded. The legal frameworks employed included

a provincial Order-in-Council, the *St. Lawrence Development Act*, and the *Cemeteries Act*.

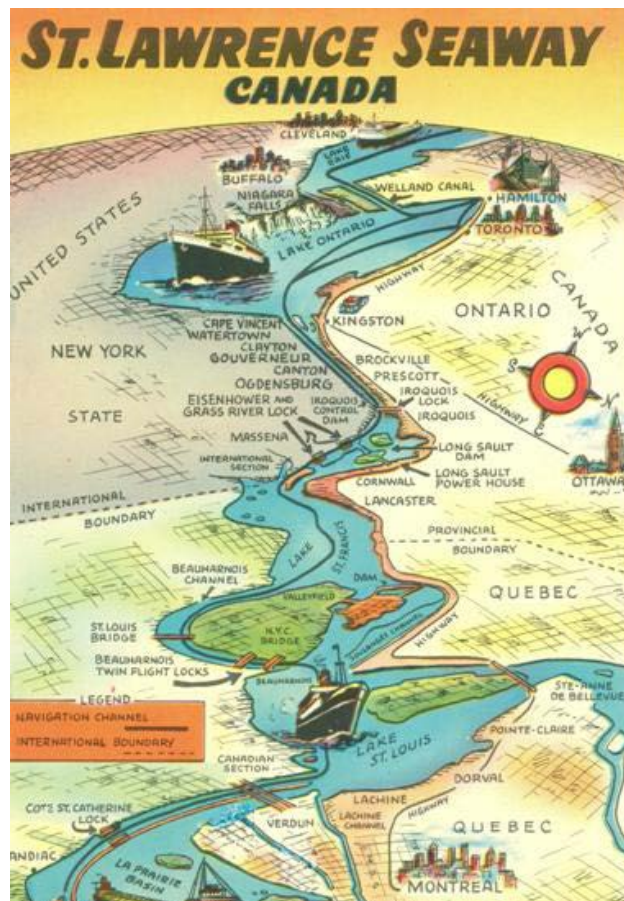
The opinions of local clergy carried much weight at the time. They generally recommended to families that the burials be left where they were. Seaway historian Daniel MacFarlane, in his book *Negotiating a River*, estimated that out of the 5,000 burials in the flood zone, about two-thirds were not moved; the remaining third were moved to cemeteries in the interior.

When buried remains were not moved, boulders were scattered on top of the old cemetery before the area was inundated. This was a preventative measure, to avoid water erosion that might have the undesirable effect of eventually exposing the buried remains.

The relocation of these tombstones and burials was a significant logistical feat. It was likely the largest project of its kind in the history of North America.

James A. Smart was contracted by HEPCO to take charge of the operation. He and his colleague Allan Clark (the superintendent of Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Toronto) implemented a system in which small aluminum discs with identity codes were affixed to the tombstones.

Smart carefully recorded these, along with basic information about the tombstone, in a typed report titled “Data on Existing Cemeteries in the United Counties of Dundas and Stormont Affected by the St. Lawrence Power Project.” He completed this report in April 1956.



Vintage promotional map image - Google

An updated edition of the report was republished in 2007, several decades after Smart’s work. The new edition, prepared by local genealogists Lyall and Margaret Manson (my mother and my late father), is an invaluable research tool. It provides information on the former location of each tombstone, and its current location such as one of the relocated cemeteries or a unique tombstone display called the Pioneer Memorial, discussed below.



## St. Lawrence Valley (Union) Cemetery

Fifteen of the original cemeteries flooded by the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project were amalgamated into one large new cemetery located between the also-new communities of Ingleside and Long Sault. Appropriately named St. Lawrence Valley Union Cemetery (now simply St. Lawrence Valley Cemetery), the site occupies 72 acres. It has a specific mandate to “preserve and maintain all historical ‘Lost Villages’ burials transferred by the Ontario Hydro Commission,” in addition to administering new burials.

At the time of its creation, sections of the cemetery were reserved for groups of burials from specific originating cemeteries. Space was reserved among the old burials and tombstones for new additions, allowing modern descendants to be buried among their ancestors.

The cemetery looks out onto a peaceful stretch of the St. Lawrence River, close to the former location of the Lost Village of Wales. During times of low water levels, roadways and building foundations of that village can be seen rising above the surface of the water.

## Maple Grove Cemetery

Leaving buried remains in situ was not an option for Maple Grove Cemetery, located just west of the City of Cornwall. The original cemetery was located directly where the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project required a deep excavation for the main power dam. That work would certainly disturb those burials. In this case the entire cemetery – including all burials and all tombstones – were relocated to a new lot.

Maple Grove Cemetery’s old position as ground zero for the hydro-electric project was underscored in 1954 during its breaking-ground ceremony. It took place at the Village of Maple Grove and was attended by Ontario Premier Leslie Frost and New York State Governor Thomas Edmund Dewey. This event also highlighted the international aspect of the project executed jointly by Canada and the United States.

The sometimes-haphazard burials in the old Maple Grove Cemetery created some problems with the move. As reported in the local *Cornwall Standard-Freeholder* newspaper at the time, the old cemetery caretaker, Gower Stephenson, used old diagrams to help locate some irregularly placed graves.



*The Pioneer Memorial and parts of Upper Canada Village during its construction in 1957. The best tombstones from the Lost Villages were selected and carefully encased in brick walls, preserving them for future generations. (Lost Villages Historical Society)*

The article also noted that “To ensure quiet and a reverent manner, no trucks or machinery were used on the job. Remains were removed to their new locations by hearses.”

This cemetery included the mortal remains of Jeremiah French and Elizabeth Wheeler, the couple who donated the land for the cemetery. The Frenches were Loyalists of the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Jeremiah was an officer in the King’s Royal Regiment of New York, one of the disbanded regiments that settled the Cornwall area. Elizabeth was also an ardent defender of the Crown: Her rebellious neighbours back in Vermont described her strong character as “very turbulent and troublesome” and they bemoaned her “bitter tongue.”

Over time, the original French family

tombstone at the new cemetery was badly broken and partially buried beneath the ground. In 2005 a group of volunteers arranged to erect a new tombstone, and its unveiling event was attended by a crowd of 150 people, in addition to several uniformed members of the re-created King’s Royal Regiment of New York living history group.

## **The Pioneer Memorial**

The oldest and most historically significant tombstones from the flooded zone were not placed in relocated cemeteries. Instead, their destination was a permanent installation called the Pioneer Memorial. It is located outside Upper Canada Village near Morrisburg – a living history attraction comprised of many heritage buildings moved from the Lost Villages.

The Pioneer Memorial was the idea of Anthony Adamson, an architectural planner involved in the creation of Upper Canada Village. The tombstones were set into walls constructed from bricks originating from demolished buildings that could not be moved from the flood zone.

James A. Smart was also involved in this process. In an early proposal, he noted precedents: Placing tombstones in a wall “has been used in modified application in old burial grounds in the United Kingdom and on this continent.”

The original plan was to reinter the remains of prominent residents beneath the Pioneer Memorial. This did not come to pass. In the end, it featured only tombstones.

Restoration architect Peter John Stokes, who was involved in the project, referred to the Pioneer Memorial as “a telling reminder of the early settlement of the Seaway area and probably a poignant one for area people. It is noble and dignified, peaceful and proud.”

While the Pioneer Memorial is now more than 60 years old, it remains a focal point for historians, genealogists and heritage tourists. For example, in 2022 it was the scene of a special ceremony. Lawyer and author Ron Doering arranged for a metal plaque to be affixed above the tombstone of his ancestor, John Marselis (1741-1801). The inscription

of the original tombstone is difficult to read, owing to the ravages of time and weather. The new plaque provides biographical information on Marselis’ history as a Loyalist settler and War of 1812 militiaman who fought at the nearby 1813 Battle of Crysler’s Farm.

## Forgotten but found

While every tombstone in the flooded area was supposed to be relocated in the 1950s, some were evidently forgotten. In 2018, St. Lawrence River scuba divers Marc Pilon, Andrew Emard, Sam Hamed and Steve Guindon found an underwater tombstone near the flooded location of St. Andrew’s United Church, in the Lost Village of Moulinette.

They recovered the tombstone, which commemorates the death of Cyrus Johnston (1811-1839). It is now on display at the Lost Villages Museum near Long Sault.

Stuart Lyall Manson ([stuartmanson.wordpress.com](http://stuartmanson.wordpress.com)) is an historian, heritage cemetery advocate, and author of the book series *Sacred Ground: Loyalist Cemeteries of Eastern Ontario*, published and distributed by Global Genealogy.

---

# Volunteers making a difference

BAO guides volunteer-run cemeteries  
on regulatory compliance so they  
can focus on maintenance and  
community needs

---



*Board Chair Glenn King and Montana Hughes volunteer at Union Cemetery  
in Sturgeon Falls.  
Photo - Chantal Larochelle*



*Scotch Line Cemetery, near Perth, is one of many small community cemeteries facing issues such as a lack of new volunteers, aging, and support. The BAO continues to focus on assisting these unsung community stalwarts who maintain their cemetery properties, file required reports, provide a needed service in their communities -- and all on their own time.*

It's a tough job, but someone has to do it.

In fact, it isn't a really a 'job'.

"Without volunteers we'd be closing the gates of cemeteries," says Glenn King, volunteer Caretaker and Chair of the Board at Union Cemetery in Sturgeon Falls, a community of 6,939 residents.

And he's not complaining. King loves volunteering for his community, a half hour's drive west of North Bay.

"We've been working to improve it and doing a restoration. We've been making it more aesthetically attractive to patrons and visitors."

Cemeteries have different ownership structures. Some are owned and operated by large corporations, others by religious orders, municipalities and volunteer boards of directors.

All are licensed and regulated by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) to ensure they are maintained for grieving families, communities, and that they comply with the law – the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002.



*Nairn Mennonite Cemetery*

Volunteer-run cemeteries rely very much on their communities' goodwill to maintain graves, cemetery properties, administer sales of new \*interments, and contribute to a care and maintenance fund, which ensures the preservation of the cemetery in perpetuity.

## **Sign of the times**

"It's just very hard now to get people interested in volunteering. It's a sign of the times," King says echoing a common theme at volunteer-run cemeteries across the province. The handful of volunteers he has with him are fully engaged in maintenance of the thousands of graves at the cemetery, which started in 1855 – a dozen years before confederation of the Dominion of Canada.

"Some of our volunteers are second and third generation," he says.

Average age on the volunteer board of directors is 70, says the 67-year-old retired railway conductor. Unlike many small cemeteries, they have a few younger people involved as well. "A couple of young mothers work with me. They do clean-up, grass-cutting (and other jobs). We've also done about 100 monument restorations in the last few years. There are three of us who do that – three guys including me," he adds.

But it's difficult to attract new volunteers. He says people don't generally know that small cemeteries perennially need help.

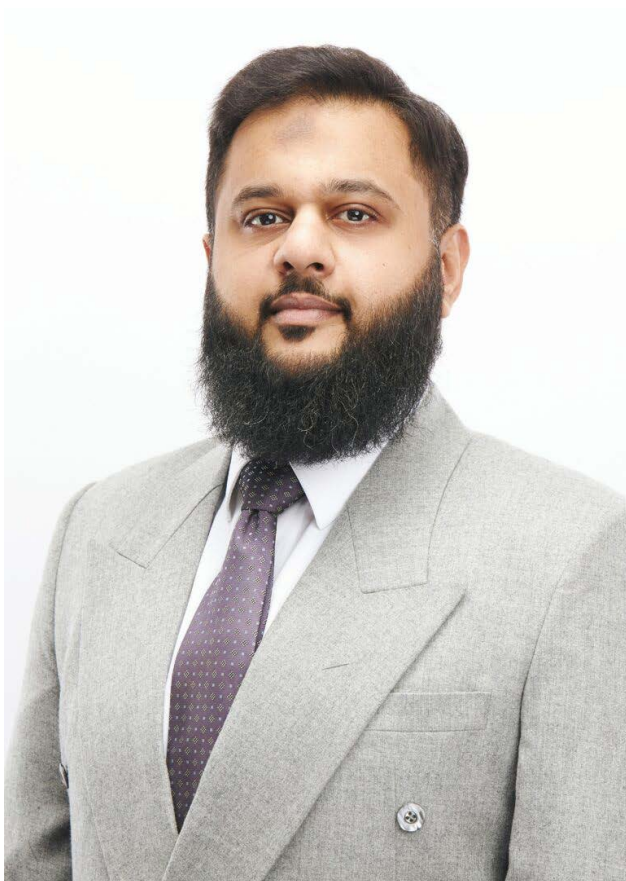
"People think we get reams of money from many levels of government. But we don't get any government money. We get by on cemetery fees and donations from local families, he says noting that the local Labelle family (whose roots trace to the Empire Loyalists) donated an 80-niche \*columbarium a few years ago.

## Help with regulatory requirements

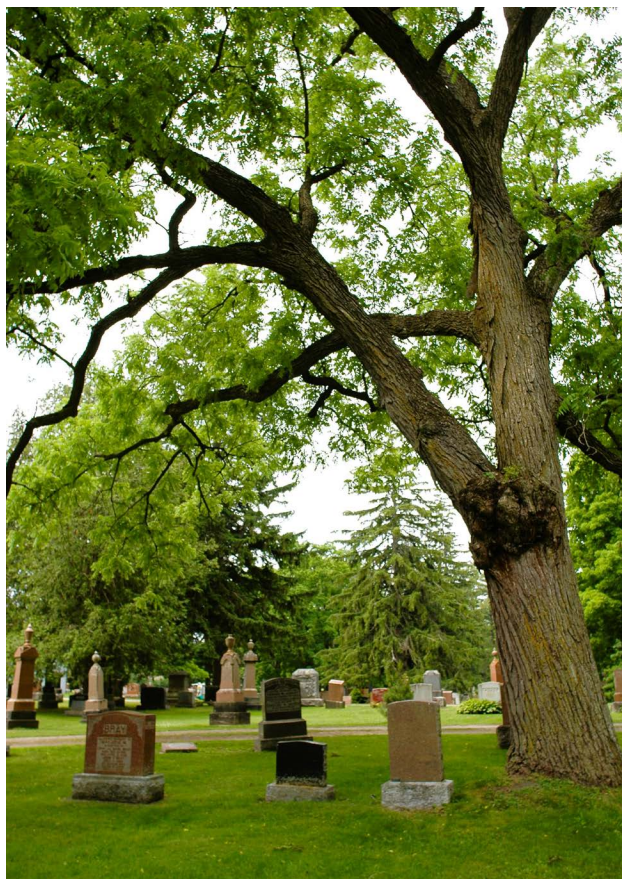
But at least the paperwork isn't too bad, thanks to helpful staff at the BAO, King adds.

"It's time consuming for a caretaker, like myself. At this time of year, you could be volunteering 50-60 hours a week."

"I do the licence reporting as chair and caretaker. The BAO is very helpful. In any interactions with the BAO, the staff, and compliance officers are exceptional. It's the paperwork that can drag you down. I talk to a lot of other cemetery volunteers, and they tell me the same thing."



*Hamza Majid, BAO Manager,  
Financial Compliance*



*A cemetery in Durham Region*

The BAO's licensing and financial compliance staff help small volunteer-run cemeteries meet reporting requirements so they can maintain respectful burial places, while providing a service that preserves community heritage.

The BAO does this by considering it all from the perspective of the communities and the people who work at small cemeteries.

"Our staff knows that it's hard to get used to a routine report when you only do it once a year. So, our team focuses on what it's like to work or volunteer at a small community cemetery and what they need to know," says Hamza Majid, Manager, Financial Compliance at the BAO.



*Scotch Line Cemetery, near Perth*

Local municipalities often become the licensed owner/operators of small cemeteries, when they no longer have the volunteers they need to maintain the property, process transactions with families, and file reports. Community volunteers are their lifeblood.

Majid adds, “We know how important volunteers are to their community cemeteries.”

Just ask Anton Engel what it’s like to operate a small community cemetery. He’s a trustee of the Nairn Mennonite Cemetery Board, which has one or two burials a year, or sometimes none.

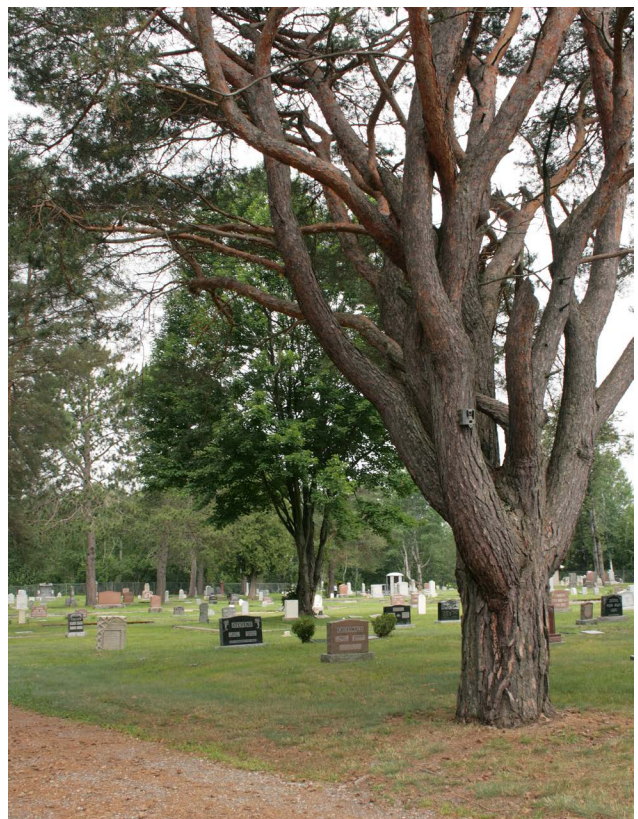
“My role is to look after interments. I look after making sure the grave is dug and filled in again,” says Engel, who along with the grass cutter

makes up the entire volunteer staff at the cemetery, 36 kilometres northwest of London.

## Age is a factor

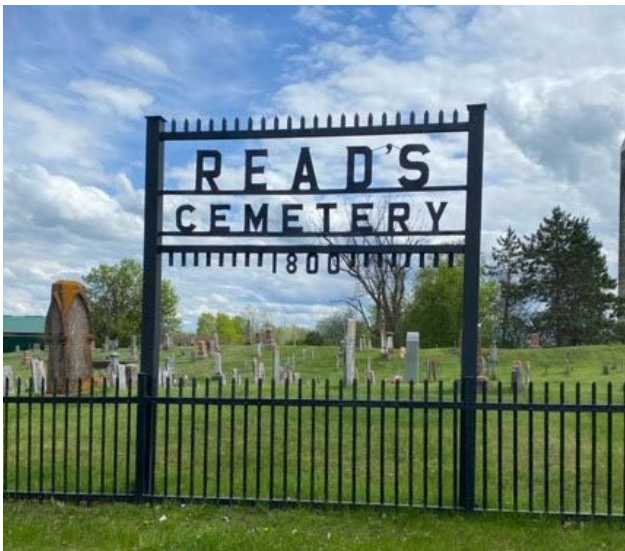
“We’re getting older. The hard part is that I’m not that computer savvy to get the forms filled out. But I know some nice people who help me out,” says Engle, 82. “I call the Bereavement Authority for assistance. They guide me right through licence renewal and the forms. The BAO staff help me a lot, especially a few years ago. They’ve been of great help,” he says.

Roderick Woolham, Secretary-treasurer of Scotch Line Cemetery Board near Perth, says age is a factor for membership renewal of the volunteer board. But it’s a matter of perspective.



*Union Cemetery, Sturgeon Falls*





*Read's Cemetery, Brockville*

"I thank Alan Menzies (manager) for recruiting new people on the board. We have seven board members altogether. They are sort of younger. Average age is about 70. I'm the oldest," says Woolham, an 87-year-old retired mining geophysicist.

## **Volunteers getting it done**

He adds, "Anytime I've dealt with the BAO, I've found people to be very helpful. It's nice to get someone on the phone, and that's almost impossible nowadays."

Age certainly doesn't stop Woolham from being effective in his volunteer job. "I established charitable status for the cemetery, and because of that we got a lot more donations."

Many smaller cemeteries are entirely volunteer, or have a spartan number of employees. Woolham says, "Everybody's a volunteer here, except for the guy who cuts the grass."

Majid says BAO staff make a point of explaining the how-to of Annual Licensure Reports (ALR) Forms because they know that seniors at small cemeteries are proud to learn new things as part of the volunteer roles they've chosen.

## **Recruitment**

At age 69, retired school board executive assistant Joanne Gudmundsson is one of the youngest on Read's Cemetery Board of Directors in Brockville. "We're trying to recruit people as the next generation. We're all volunteers. We have one of our gals who does the mowing. (But) we pay for someone to mow the hilly part of our cemetery."

She says, "We had a gentleman who used to repair gravestones and monuments. He's retired from that now. So now we need to recruit people who know what they are doing."

## **Support from communities and the BAO**

"Our township here supports us with a cheque to pay insurance for the cemetery," says Gudmundsson.

Majid adds that it's in a municipality's interest to support their volunteer cemeteries to reduce potential impact on taxpayers if or when small cemeteries run out of people willing to volunteer.

Gudmundsson also cites changes by the Ontario Public Guardian Trustee (OPGT) as supportive. “They make interest deposits (from the cemetery’s required Care and Maintenance Fund) several times year, rather than in one lump sum cheque at the end of the year. It’s better for me to finish my books. Now it comes in an e-transfer, which is much better for us.”

She adds that she has gotten to know some of the staff at the BAO and appreciates how she is treated.

“Every year I have questions about our reports. And every year, I call the BAO and they are so understanding and never make me feel like I don’t know what I’m doing. They provide me with the information I need. Because of their support, it’s encouraging me to stay on as a board member and do the job. Jamie Traynor (a BAO Licensing Officer) has been so responsive in sending me information that I need.”

## The future

The volunteers said that recruiting volunteers and even more assistance with forms from the BAO would be helpful in supporting small community cemeteries.

Back in Perth, Woolham recommends that the authority should maintain and increase their assistance to keep more community cemeteries going

**“Hopefully, there will be enough money in the kitty if the cemetery goes to the municipality (Tay Valley Township).”**

*- Roderick Woolham,  
Scotch Line Cemetery, near Perth*

so they don’t have to be assumed by local municipalities. “The challenge here will come when I retire from the board. Hopefully, I can explain what to do then (to a new volunteer). But nobody wants the job.”

He adds that it’s because he and other board members have run their cemetery well, with helpful information from the BAO, that its Care and Maintenance Fund is in good shape.

“Hopefully, there will be enough money in the kitty if the cemetery goes to the municipality (Tay Valley Township).”

The volunteers say they’d each prefer an even better outcome – that a new generation of volunteers step in to serve their community cemeteries.

*\* Interment: The burial of human remains, including the placement of human remains in a lot (grave, crypt, or niche.)*

*\* Columbarium: A structure designed for the purpose of interring cremated human remains in niches or compartments*

*\* Niche: A space in a columbarium or mausoleum wall to hold an urn*

*Learn more bereavement sector terms on page five of our free*

**[BAO Consumer Information Guide.](#)**

Click  
here!

# 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.

