



Thinking outside of the casket...

November 2017

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Good Green Death Project!

Good Green Death Forum October 2017



Our first forum and death cafe were a great success, with a full room! Cemetery managers, Trisha Bradshaw and Bryce Crouse from the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, respectively, talked about what green burial options are currently available locally; funeral director, Ellen Newman, provided useful and extensive information on current death and dying practices and shared our vision of what a good, green death entails. Departure nurse (death doula), Marion Willms, shared her experience and knowledge on how her profession can contribute support to both the dying

person and loved ones during that final transition. Both John Kloeze and Susan Koswan shared information and answered questions about the potential for composting our mortal remains, a practice widely used with animal mortalities on farms. Two video talks were shown by Caitlin Doughty, a Los Angeles-based mortician, and Katrina Spade, founder of the Urban Death Project in Seattle. Links below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcMj4Az1MwE&t=203s> – Caitlin Doughty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnvnBwP9sTo&t=17s> – Katrina Spade

The afternoon, in the beautiful Mennonite church that was purchased and restored by the City of Kitchener, was rounded out by a Death Cafe facilitated by Rev Jessica Rodela and Lay Chaplain Michele Cadotte from the Grand River Unitarian Congregation.

Big thanks to financial donations from Grand River Unitarian Congregation, Grand River Environmental Network, Williamsburg Cemetery and people attending; homemade goodies by Anne Morgan and Eva Rucki, greeting at the door by Karry Sawatsky, and help setting up and cleaning up from Anne, Ludmila and Williamsburg Cemetery staff. We also extend a special thank you to Lisa Gillett for getting a great head start on our website in time for the forum.

All financial donations were used to cover room rental, with any remainder going into a dedicated account.

What's next?

Everyone who attended or registered for the forum is being sent a brief, 10-question survey to gauge their interest and support of our vision for a good green death. This information will be used to support our efforts to change legislation, as needed, to allow "gooder and greener" options than traditional burial and cremation.

The Vision of the Good Green Death Project is to integrate meaningful, personal involvement with environmentally-friendly options into our death and dying practices.

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Ellen, John and Susan met with the Manager of Consumer Affairs on November 1 to discuss the legislative changes we'd like to see. As follows:

- Include composting, or Recomposition, as a legally-defined alternative to burial and cremation;
- Define composted human remains as soil (pending testing for human DNA) OR to be treated similar to cremated human remains;
- Define “cremated human remains” under the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act as a separate entity from “human remains”;
- Allow cremated and composted human remains to be buried on private property;
- Allow community death care practitioners (thanadoulas or death midwives) to assist families in body care of the dead, including washing the dead which is now considered topical embalming under the Act;
- Mandate a reasonable percentage of all cemeteries be classified as “Green Burial” based on current best practices;
- Provide support to open up discussions with Infrastructure Ontario and Hydro One to allow “Green Burials” on hydro corridors; and
- Redefine cemeteries to allow Conservation Burials to promote forest conservation, and secondary uses such as bee-keeping, orchards for food or cider production, and protected pollinator areas.

We all felt the meeting went well and we're looking forward to their response to guide us in our next steps.

As always, we welcome your thoughts, your time and energy towards these goals.

Funding

The Good Green Death Project is currently entirely volunteer-run, unfunded, driven by passion and personal interest. Our current expenses include maintaining the website, and building a resource base for future Good Green Death Forums and Death Cafes, and related costs of advocating for our vision. All donations are gratefully received and deposited into a dedicated account at a local credit union.

You can reach us at

info@goodgreendeadproject.ca to subscribe, unsubscribe, ask questions, share your thoughts...your time...your expertise...your money... ;-)

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