

THE

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BEECHWOOD

MAGAZINE

WAY

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Letter from the editor

It's an exciting time to look forward to what 2025 holds for Beechwood Cemetery as we continued our over 150 year dedication to serving our community in all forms that it may take. Beechwood remains a space for both reflection and celebration.

We are crafting a series of events designed to honour our shared history while actively shaping our future through educational initiatives, meaningful commemorations, and robust community engagement.

We are particularly excited about the expansion of our environmental initiatives. The upcoming year will see the full realization of the Marsh Rehabilitation Project and the development of the Beechwood Arboretum, illustrating our deep commitment to environmental stewardship.

Moreover, we will enhance our Death Literacy programs. These include the continuation of our Death Cafés, which foster open discussions about dying and death, and our Death Dialogue series, which brings experts to share insights on topics ranging from death doula services to casket manufacturing and more.

Our outreach and educational efforts will also grow. We aim to engage more schools in tours that delve into subjects from reconciliation and Canadian history to military and policing heritage, ensuring a rich, well-rounded educational experience. As well as host a series of events that look at certain aspects of our history and cherished symbols of our country.

Your active participation is vital as we expanded our initiatives. We invite you to join us at our events, engage with our programs, and continue to share your stories and experiences, which are the heart of our community.

Beechwood Cemetery is excited to announce our presence on Bluesky, a rapidly growing social media platform that fosters engaging and meaningful dialogue. By joining Bluesky (@beechwood-ottawa.bsky.social), we aim to extend our community outreach, sharing updates, events, and stories that resonate with our values of remembrance and community involvement. This platform offers us a new avenue to connect with you, allowing for deeper interaction and more dynamic exchanges about our initiatives and the rich history we preserve. We invite you to follow us and join the conversation as we continue to celebrate and honor our shared heritage in innovative ways.

Together, let's make 2025 a year of memorable ceremony and storytelling. We look forward to continuing to foster a space that not only preserves memories of the past but also inspires the next generations for the future.

Stay up to date with Beechwood by following us on social media.

- Facebook (@BeechwoodCemetery, @NMCBeechwood, @cimetiereBeechwood)
- X (@BeechwoodOttawa)
- Bluesky (@beechwood-ottawa.bsky.social)
- Instagram (@beechwoodcemetery)
- YouTube (Beechwood Cemetery)

Thank you

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We want your feedback on how we are doing!

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Ecological Restoration Work Delayed at Macoun Marsh

By Christina Keys

Macoun Marsh, a sanctuary for many of us in Manor Park and Cardinal Glen, has been undergoing changes over the last few years. Locals have noticed lower water levels, increased cattails, and shoreline invasive species.

In response, Beechwood Cemetery has launched a project to revitalize and restore the marsh ecosystem. Unfortunately, what turned out to be a groundless complaint has delayed the work until fall 2025.

Adjacent to Dunbarton Court on the southeastern edge of the cemetery's property, Macoun Marsh is a small, urban wetland that has been protected by the cemetery for over 150 years. More than 1,400 species have been recorded in the marsh area including midland painted turtles and blue-spotted salamanders.

Imbalanced ecosystem

Michael Leveille, science teacher at St-Laurent Academy and Macoun Marsh biodiversity expert, reports that "there have been dramatic changes to our marsh area over the past 20 years. Some species have disappeared completely."

Part of this may be attributed to lower water levels. Once shallower, the marsh became an ideal environment for cattails across its entirety instead of just along its shallow edges.

Cattails (*Typha latifolia*) are a semi-aquatic perennial, native to the Ottawa region. They are essential to many aquatic ecosystems, growing along the edges of marshes, ponds, lakes, and rivers in water

up to 60 cm deep. They prevent shoreline erosion and provide critical habitat for birds, fish, amphibians, insects, and mammals.

Yet in shallow bodies of water like Macoun Marsh has become, cattails are aggressive. They can rapidly create dense stands, making it very difficult for other plant species to compete and limiting the open water necessary for some species. Macoun Marsh now has little open water.

No eating or harvesting cattails

The lack of use of the cattails by animals and humans is also contributing to their overgrowth. According to Patricia Senack who has lived near the Marsh since 1989, there were over 20 muskrats eating and making dens in the cattails in the 1990s, keeping their population under control. Now, there are no muskrats.

Harvesting apakweshkwayag, cattail in Anishinaabemowin, also helps to keep them in check. Cattails have been used for food - its rhizomes, pith, and flower stalk are edible - and for fiber.

Indigenous scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer says one of the Potawatomi words for cattail - bewiieskwinkuk - means "we wrap the baby in it". The sturdy fibre of its leaves are used for mats, shelters, thread, and twine while the fluff of the flowers make pillows and bedding. Its gel is similar to aloe vera, and the flower stalk can be lit like a torch. Without harvesting for these uses, cattails can create an ecological imbalance.

Christina Keys is a wildlife gardener with Garden ReLeaf, a Glebe-based ecological garden restoration and design company and a Manor Park Community Association Environmental Sustainability Committee volunteer. Her loved ones are buried in Beechwood Cemetery



This photo from 2007 demonstrates the radical change to the marsh ecosystem. (Photo : Michael Léveillé;



The second photo was taken in November 2024 and shows the marsh is overrun by cattails. (Photo : Erika Wagner)

Restoration plans

Beechwood Cemetery has been consulting Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and has contracted environmental consultants with expertise in aquatic habitat restoration to design an ecological restoration plan for Macoun Marsh. The team of experts includes biologists, ecologists, a geomorphologist, and engineers.

They plan to remove shoreline invasive species, remove excess cattails, deepen the marsh to create open water areas, and restore habitat with native vegetation and other features.

Work delayed

In late September, after bird nesting season, invasive species removal started along the northwestern side of the marsh. This included removing Manitoba maples, common buckthorn, and garlic mustard. While native to the extreme northwest of Ontario, Manitoba maples are deemed invasive in Ottawa as they outcompete native vegetation. Their weak branches are also a danger for people and property.

Contractors specialising in water drainage started draining the northern segment of the marsh. Their aim was to lower the water level before the critical date of October 15 in order to ensure that the local midland painted turtles could not hibernate there and instead will choose to hibernate in the southern segment of the marsh where it will remain deep enough for hibernation. Over winter, the team could begin removing cattails, knowing the turtles would be safe from harm.

However, before the work could be completed, the City received a complaint about butternut trees being removed during this work. Butternut trees are an endangered species and protected under Ontario's Endangered Species Act.

While butternut trees are found in the adjacent forest, they were not present along the northwestern side where invasives were removed. The complaint proved to be baseless, yet the City's investigation delayed the completion of the work past October 15. The project must now be delayed until next fall to avoid any potential harm to hibernating turtles.

Future plans

Once excess cattails are safely removed in September and October 2025, the marsh will be deepened up to two metres in some areas. Then turtle basking logs, a raptor pole, rock and boulder piles, and root wads - a shoreline protection technique that stabilizes slopes - will be installed strategically. The shoreline will also be re-planted with native trees and shrubs including red osier dogwood, nannyberry, sandbar willow, and pussy willow. A seed mix with native perennials, sedges, or grasses will be sowed.

While droughts have contributed to lower water levels, the swale, a channel that directs water to the marsh, has become clogged with debris and overgrown vegetation including invasive species, further reducing water in the marsh. This swale will be cleared, regraded, and reinforced. This work will also prevent potential flooding in surrounding areas including Dunbarton Court properties.

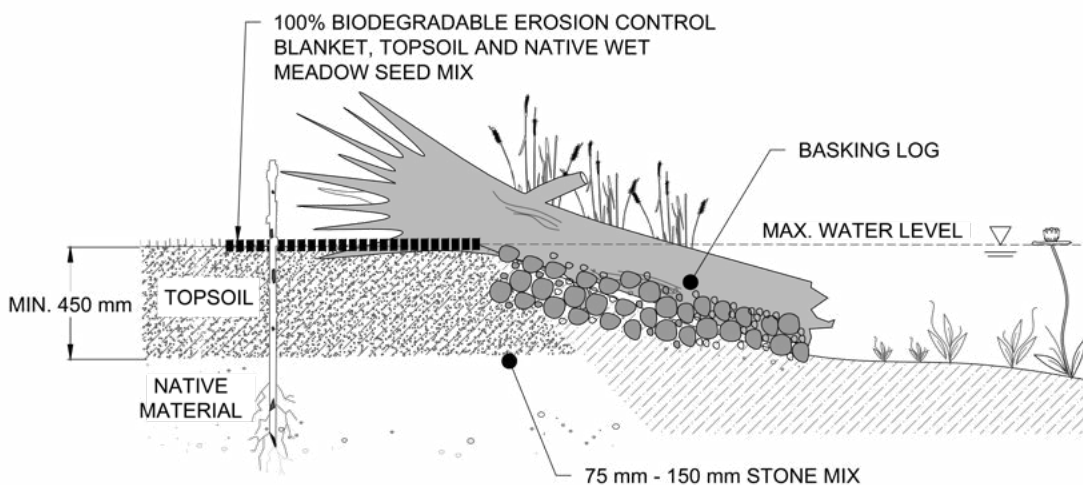
Beyond the marsh

On the western side of the marsh, Beechwood is developing plans for a green burial site in a wooded area. Removal of Manitoba maples and other invasive species has already started here with plans to add native trees and shrubs at a later point.

On the eastern side of the marsh in the forest, there unfortunately has been a radical explosion of invasive species. Japanese knotweed is growing exponentially. Common buckthorns dominate the canopy understory. Goutweed and periwinkle, likely escaped from nearby Cardinal Glen backyards, crowd out native species. Many Ottawa forests are facing similar invasive species pressures.

Future restoration work of the forest by the cemetery is planned in order to remove these serious invasive species and replant native species, complimenting Beechwood's commitment to reconciliation.

For now, we can look forward to a revitalised marsh for walkers, birders, students, and especially wildlife to enjoy.



Conceptual design drawings for Macoun Marsh restoration include a turtle basking log and native plants on the shoreline. (Photo supplied by Nicolas McCarthy of Beechwood Cemetery)

A Reflection Room at Beechwood Cemetery: Finding Healing in Shared Experiences

By SE Health

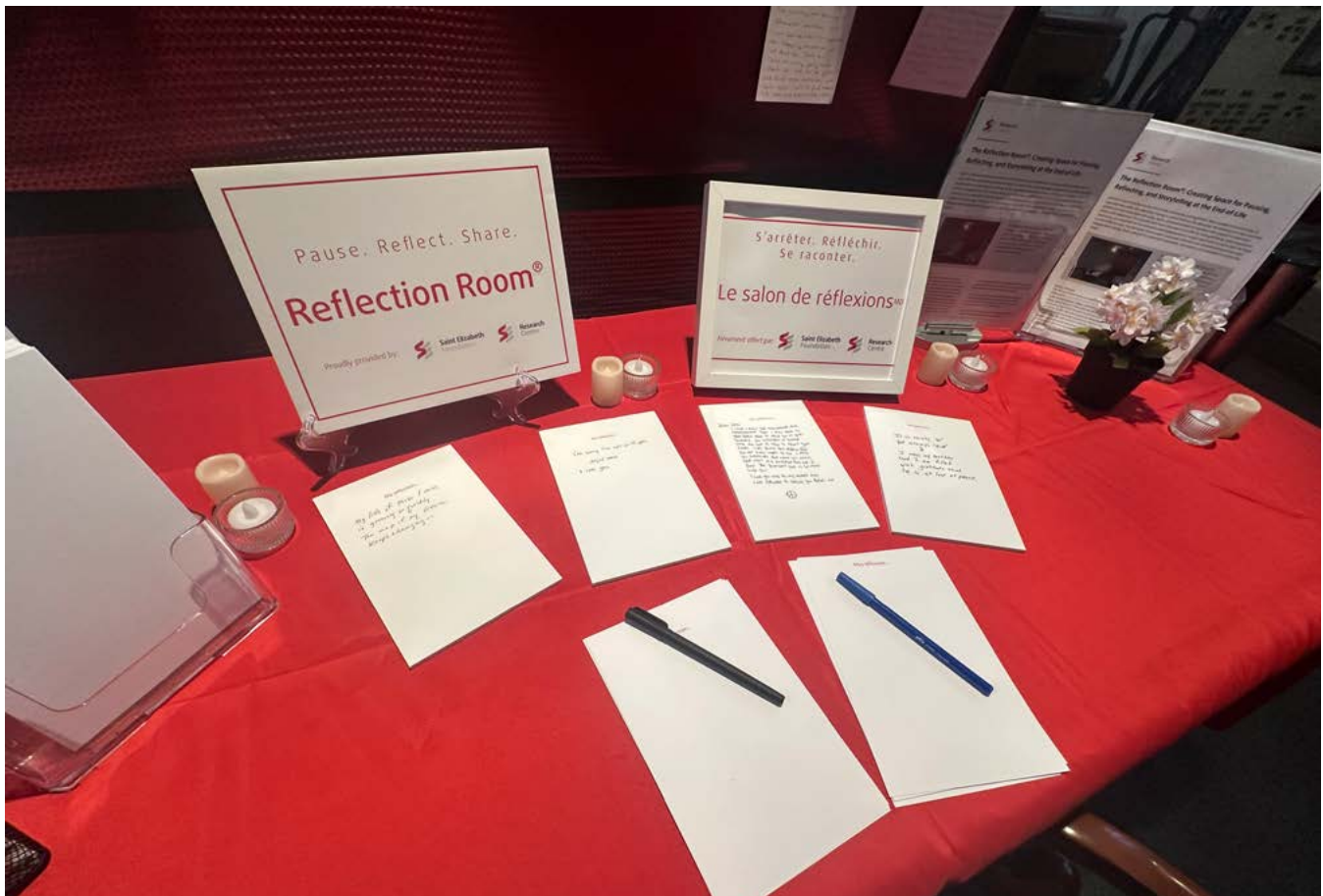
Grief touches everyone, yet no two experiences are the same. It's both deeply personal and universal, shaping how we remember, heal, and connect with others. Despite its importance, grief is often processed in isolation. The National Reflection Room® at Beechwood Cemetery offers a welcoming space where visitors can acknowledge and share their grief, reflect on their loved ones, and connect with a community of remembrance.

Located in the Beechwood Mausoleum, the Reflection Room is a collaborative initiative created by Beechwood Cemetery, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, the Saint Elizabeth Foundation, and the SE Research Centre. More than just a quiet space, the Reflection Room encourages visitors to write and share their reflections on cards provided, read the thoughts of others, and experience the shared nature of grief and memory.

The Origins of the Reflection Room®

The Reflection Room first emerged in 2016, developed by the SE Research Centre in partnership with Memorial University. It was initially conceived as a place for individuals to explore grief and bereavement through quiet introspection.

At Beechwood Cemetery, the Reflection Room is a semi-permanent installation within the mausoleum and a pop-up feature at Beechwood events throughout the year, which will ensure accessibility to our community.



What is the purpose of a Reflection Room®?

Grief is often an isolating experience, but the Reflection Room transforms it into an opportunity for connection. Visitors are encouraged to engage in several meaningful ways:

1. **Leave a Reflection:** Write a thought, memory, or tribute on a reflection card and leave it for others to see.
2. **Read and Connect:** Spend time reading the reflections left by others, finding comfort in the shared experience of loss and remembrance.
3. **Experience Community:** The Reflection Room fosters a collective narrative of grief and memory, reminding visitors that they are not alone in their journey.

This sense of community is one of the most powerful aspects of the Reflection Room. By participating in a shared space of remembrance, visitors discover the healing potential of connection

Why the Reflection Room Matters

The Reflection Room is more than just a quiet space—it's a transformative environment designed to address grief and remembrance in meaningful ways.

- **A Safe Space for Grief:** For many, grief is a private emotion. The Reflection Room provides a safe, judgment-free environment to express those feelings and reflect on personal loss.
- **A Celebration of Legacy:** The room encourages visitors to honour the lives and contributions of loved ones, preserving their stories for others to read and reflect upon.
- **A Symbol of Community:** Grief is not something we must carry alone. By participating in the Reflection Room, visitors contribute to a collective experience of healing and remembrance.

Engage with the Reflection Room

The community is welcome to explore the Reflection Room during their visit to Beechwood Cemetery. Each visit is a unique experience, allowing guests to contribute their reflections, sit in quiet contemplation, or simply read and connect with the thoughts of others.

For those unable to visit in person, the Reflection Room's mission extends online on Beechwood Cemetery's social media channels.

Building Connections Through Grief

Grief, though deeply personal, is something that binds us together. The National Reflection Room serves as a reminder that while our experiences of loss are unique, they are also shared. By encouraging visitors to leave reflections and read those of others, it creates a space where individuals can find solace in the community and strength in the collective experience of remembrance.

The Reflection Room at Beechwood Cemetery is a unique resource for the community, offering an opportunity to reflect on their past, connect with others in the present, and find hope for the future. It reminds us that grief, while personal, is also communal—and that healing is often found in shared moments of understanding.

The Reflection Room® is a register trademark of [SE Health](#).

The Beechwood Cemetery Book

By Erika Wagner

How do you tell the story of cemetery? What is there even to talk about? Buried within Beechwood Cemetery are the stories of the founding of Ottawa, the building of Canada and 85,000 stories about loved ones.

Launching in Spring 2025, *The Journey of Beechwood Cemetery: Canada's Legacy Written in Stone* by Nicolas McCarthy and myself, will give an inside look into the preservation of not only history but also of legacy.

Within the book, you'll learn about history through the lens of those who did the work influencing our current world. The stories are people's life's work, whose impact has lasted the test of time; poets, hockey players, soldiers, artists, politicians, lumber barons, philanthropists, activists and many more categories.

Once Beechwood Cemetery opened its historic gates in 1873, the land itself needed to be shaped and constructed into the institution the public knows today. What went into the various building designs? Who carved the stones on the mausoleum? Why is the Sacred Space inside the Beechwood National Memorial Centre a 9-sided room?

Even the 162 acres of land has a story to share. The historic trees and the gardens beds are all landmarks visiting families and walkers get to enjoy with each visit. People walk by a Beech tree without even knowing that was the tree species that inspired Beechwood's name. Within the book, you'll get to learn the history of 10 of Beechwood's most famous trees.

What is a cemetery? Is it just a place that holds granite memorials to those gone before us? Or can it be more? The monuments, the symbolism of the craftsmanship, and the various cultural sections – all significant details that make up Beechwood Cemetery.

Most importantly, for the very first time since the incident, Beechwood Cemetery will share the story of the 10-year court case that inspired creating the Beechwood Cemetery Foundation.

Canada's Legacy Written in Stone was a passion project, as historians, Nick McCarthy and I have spent years studying and building content for the Historical Portrait Book. This educational and ever-growing book holds over 350 biographies, many brought forth by family members or staff. The credit for the preservation of history doesn't lay just with us, all the contributors to the Beechwood Way Magazine over the years has added depth and recorded the history of Beechwood Cemetery growth. From creating the National Military Cemetery, to gaining two National Historical Site designations, having the Bill C-17 to give Beechwood Cemetery the title of Canada's National Cemetery, to opening new sections for families to chose for their final resting place. We thank all those people for their work.

The Beechwood Book will be launched in Spring 2025. All proceeds will go back into the Beechwood Cemetery Foundation for future historical work or care and maintenance of the grounds.



Save the Date!

2025 Event Calendar

To stay up to date, be sure to add your email to our email list on our website beechwoodottawa.ca

- 27 February** – Ottawa the Great – Barrack Hill Cemetery
- 19 March** – Find Molly Johnson – The Untold Story of Irish Famine Orphans in Canada
- 10 April** – Second Annual National Tartan Day at the National Cemetery
- 9 March** – Death Café
- 4 May** – Dutch Remembrance Day
- 8 May** – Day of Remembrance and Victory over Nazism in World War II Ceremony
- 23 May** – RCMP Veterans' Association, Ottawa Division Annual Commemoration and Vigil
- 1 June** – Veterans Motorcycle National Memorial Remembrance Ceremony at Beechwood
- 8 June** – BFO Ottawa Butterfly Memorial Event
- 6 September** – Honouring Soldiers of Suicide
- 7 September** – Living Library – Second World War
- 17 September** – After Death Café
- 21 September** – Army Run
- 30 September** – Orange Shirt Day
- 24 October** – National Day of Tribute
- 4 November** – No Stone Left Alone
- 9 November** – RCMP & French Remembrance Day
- 11 November** – Remembrance Day
- 30 November** – BFO Christmas Candlelight
- 7 December** – Christmas Candlelight Event

