

Remembering Together



A Beechwood Guide to Honouring Lives and
Creating Lasting Memories



Remembering with Intention

Remembrance is not a single moment.

It is not confined to a funeral, a headstone, or an anniversary. It is something we create over a lifetime through stories, traditions, music, photographs, places, and the people who continue to carry those memories forward.

Every life leaves an imprint. The way we choose to remember shapes not only how we honour those who have died, but how future generations come to know them.

At Beechwood Cemetery, we have witnessed countless expressions of remembrance. Some are quiet and deeply personal. Others bring entire communities together. There is no single right way to remember. The most meaningful acts of remembrance are those that reflect the unique life being honoured.

Remembrance is also an active choice. It is found in the conversations we continue, the traditions we preserve, the places we revisit, and the stories we refuse to let fade. Every act of remembrance, no matter how small, becomes another thread connecting generations.

This guide explores ten meaningful chapters to preserve memories, celebrate lives, and ensure that stories continue to be told.



Chapter One - Photography: Capturing a Life

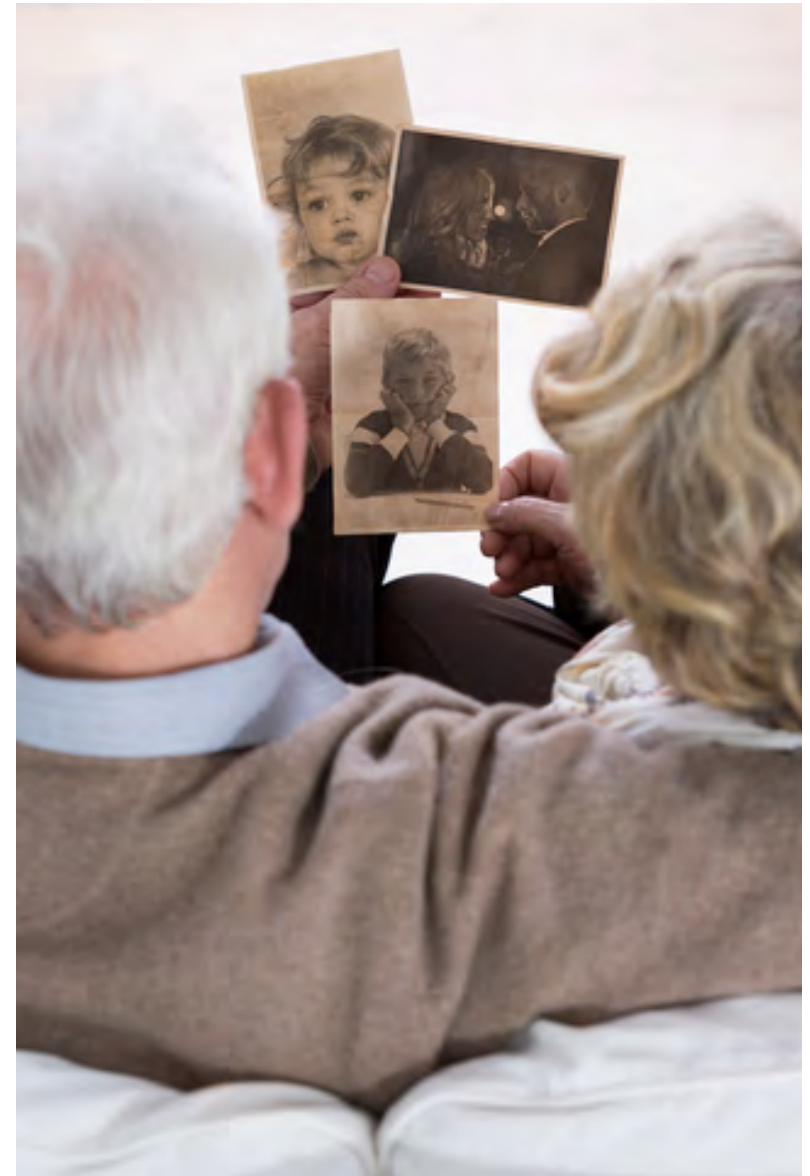
Photographs are often the first things we reach for when remembering someone. A single image can bring back voices, laughter, traditions, and moments that might otherwise fade with time.

Rather than storing photographs away, consider making them part of everyday life. Create a gallery wall that celebrates different stages of life, compile digital albums that can be shared with family members around the country, or print favourite photographs into books that can be passed down through generations.

Equally important is preserving the stories behind each photograph. Record who was there, where it was taken, and why that moment mattered. Future generations will appreciate not only the image itself, but the memories attached to it.

At Beechwood, families often include photographs in memorial services, celebrations of life, and digital tributes, allowing visitors to connect with the individual beyond the dates engraved on a monument.

Photographs preserve more than faces. They preserve relationships, personalities, and moments that continue to shape a family's story.



Chapter Two - Music: The Soundtrack of Memory

Music has an extraordinary ability to reconnect us with people and moments.

A favourite song played during a memorial service often becomes a lasting reminder of the person it honours. Long after the ceremony has ended, hearing that same melody can instantly bring back memories that words cannot express.

Consider creating a family playlist that reflects different chapters of someone's life. Include songs they loved, music from family celebrations, or pieces that remind others of time spent together.

Was your loved one a musician, take time to record them, or share their favorite piece to play or the one that challenged their abilities or always wanted to learn but never did.

Live performances at memorial gatherings, community concerts, or even quietly listening to a favourite album at home can all become meaningful acts of remembrance.

Music reminds us that memories are not only seen, they are heard and felt.



Chapter Three - Storytelling: Keeping Lives Alive

Stories are among the oldest forms of remembrance.

Every family has stories that are told repeatedly, humorous moments, acts of kindness, adventures, lessons learned, or traditions that have become part of family identity.

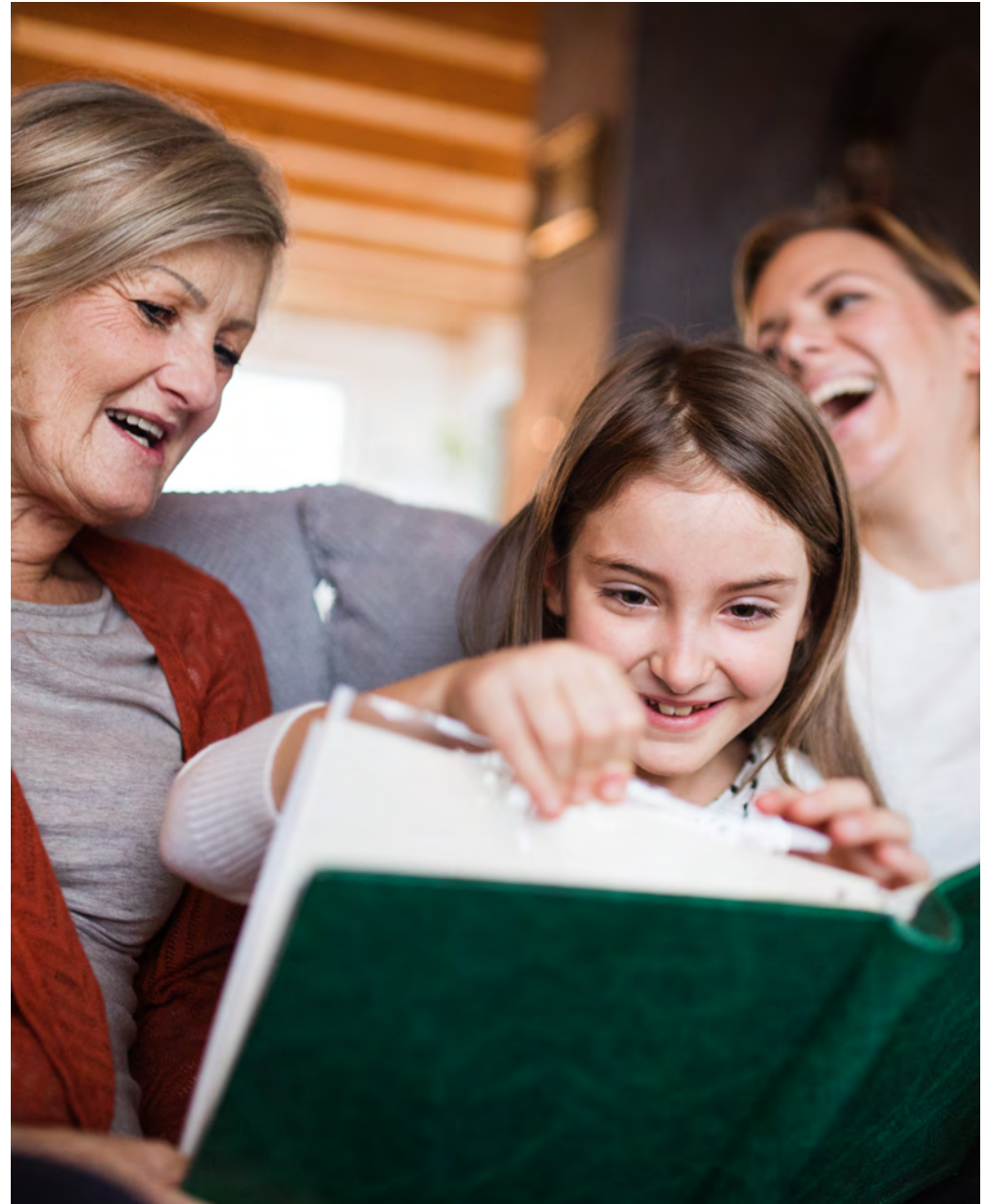
Unfortunately, many of these stories disappear within a generation.

Take time to interview parents, grandparents, relatives, friends, and neighbours. Ask about childhood, careers, military service, immigration, travel, hobbies, and family traditions.

The details that seem ordinary today often become the most treasured memories tomorrow.

Write these stories down. Record them on video. Share them with younger family members.

A remembered story becomes part of a family's legacy.



Chapter Four - Memory Books: A Legacy in Your Hands

Memory books bring together photographs, handwritten notes, certificates, newspaper clippings, recipes, artwork, and personal reflections into one place.

Unlike a photo album, a memory book tells a complete story.

It can include :

- family trees,
- timelines,
- military records,
- favourite sayings,
- travel maps,
- letters,
- recipes,
- awards, and
- treasured keepsakes.

Creating one can become a meaningful family project, with multiple generations contributing their own memories and perspectives.

Each page becomes another chapter in a life worth remembering.



Chapter Five - Video Tributes: Preserving Voice and Personality

Technology allows us to preserve more than photographs.

It allows us to preserve voices.

- Expressions.
- Laughter.
- Personality.

A short interview recorded today can become an invaluable gift decades from now.

Ask simple questions.

- What are your happiest memories?
- What advice would you give your grandchildren?
- What traditions matter most to you?
- What moments shaped your life?

These recordings preserve something photographs cannot, the way someone spoke, laughed, reflected, and interacted with those they loved.



Chapter Six - Letters: Words That Last

Letters remain one of the most personal forms of remembrance.

Some families write letters to loved ones on birthdays or anniversaries. Others preserve handwritten correspondence spanning decades.

Letters create space to express gratitude, reflect on memories, celebrate milestones, or simply continue conversations that never truly end.

Many people also choose to write legacy letters for children and grandchildren, sharing family history, personal values, life lessons, and hopes for future generations.

Long after they are written, these words continue to speak.



Chapter Seven - Family Traditions: Living Memory

Some of the strongest memories are created through repetition.

- Preparing a favourite family recipe.
- Decorating for holidays.
- Watching the same sporting event.
- Taking an annual camping trip.
- Walking the same trail each autumn.
- Lighting a candle every Christmas Eve.

Traditions transform remembrance into something active rather than passive.

New traditions can begin after someone has died, ensuring their influence continues to shape family life for generations.

Every tradition becomes another opportunity to remember together.



Chapter Eight - Anniversaries: Moments to Pause

Anniversaries often carry powerful emotions.

Rather than approaching them with uncertainty, families can intentionally create meaningful rituals that celebrate a life rather than simply mark a date.

- Visit a favourite place.
- Prepare a favourite meal.
- Play a game.
- Read a cherished poem.
- Plant flowers.
- Support a cause that mattered to them.
- Gather family members to share stories.

Acts of remembrance need not be elaborate.

Their meaning comes from intention.

Every anniversary becomes another opportunity to reconnect with memories while creating new ones.



Chapter Nine - Memorial Events: Bringing People Together

Remembrance can also be shared.

Across Canada, communities gather for memorial walks, concerts, lectures, military ceremonies, cultural commemorations, and celebrations of life. These occasions provide opportunities to reflect, learn, and honour those who came before us while strengthening the connections between families, neighbours, and communities.

These experiences serve another important purpose. They encourage people to return to the cemetery outside of times of grief.

For many families, a cemetery is first associated with loss. The first visit may be one of farewell. The next may be filled with sadness. Yet, over time, returning for a history lecture, a guided walk, a concert, a horticultural tour, or a community event allows the cemetery to become something more familiar and comforting.

Each visit creates new memories that exist alongside older ones.

Creating new memories in a place of remembrance can be an important part of the grieving journey. It helps transform a place associated with loss into one that also represents connection, beauty, learning, and hope.

In this way, remembrance continues to grow. It is not frozen in the past but carried forward through new experiences, new traditions, and new generations.



A Life Remembered

There is no single way to remember someone.

Some lives are honoured through photographs displayed on a mantel. Others through favourite songs played every summer. Some through handwritten letters. Others through stories shared around the dinner table. Some are remembered through annual traditions. Others through quiet walks beneath familiar trees.

Each act of remembrance reflects the uniqueness of the life it celebrates.

At Beechwood Cemetery, we see every day that remembrance is an act of love. It grows through the traditions we continue, the stories we preserve, the communities we build, and the moments we intentionally create for those who come after us.



A Life Remembered

A life is never measured solely by the years between two dates.

It is measured by the memories shared.

The kindness offered.

The lessons passed on.

The traditions continued.

The lives touched.

When we choose to remember with intention, we ensure that those we love remain part of our lives, not only through reflection, but through the ways they continue to inspire us.

Because remembrance is not about holding on to the past.

It is about carrying the best of someone's life into the future.

At Beechwood Cemetery, we are honoured to be part of that journey. Whether through quiet reflection, public ceremony, education, or community gathering, we remain committed to helping Canadians honour lives, preserve stories, and create new traditions of remembrance for generations to come.

Every life tells a story.

Every story deserves to be remembered.



Contact Us

EMAIL

info@beechwoodottawa.ca

PHONE

613-741-9530

WEBSITE

beechwoodottawa.ca

ADDRESS

280 Beechwood Ave
Ottawa, ON K1L 8A6

*Owned by The Beechwood Cemetery Foundation
and operated by The Beechwood Cemetery Company.*



About Us

Beechwood is the National Cemetery of Canada and is the home of the National Military Cemetery of the Canadian Forces, RCMP National Memorial Cemetery, the Ottawa Police Service Memorial Cemetery, the CSIS National Memorial Cemetery and many more organizations and religious groups. Beechwood has been proudly serving our community since 1873.

Take advantage of all the services offered by Beechwood Cemetery, including pre-arrangements, full service funerals, cremation, cemetery services and executor assistance. Beechwood Cemetery can meet whatever wishes you may have from visitations, informal gatherings, life celebrations, memorial services, catered receptions, to a custom monument or memorialization.

Beechwood Cemetery is here to provide you with everything you need to make the right decision for you and your loved ones.

Beechwood, Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services is owned by The Beechwood Cemetery Foundation and operates on a not-for-profit basis. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, it is the only organization of its kind in Ottawa. In choosing Beechwood, Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services, you can take comfort in knowing that all funds are used for the maintenance, preservation and enhancement of this National Historic Site. The Beechwood Cemetery Foundation was created for the purpose of safeguarding Beechwood's future and increasing public awareness of Beechwood, as well as the important historical persons buried within it.