

# NATURE TEACHES US TO GRIEVE



## *The place of parks and nature at end of life*

This research found that respondents believe parks can provide:

- Physical comfort at end of life (91%)
- Emotional comfort at end of life (92%)
- Spiritual comfort at end of life (93%)



### *Death Connects Us To Nature...*

- Risk and loss are reminders of vitality
- Nature provides a container for grief, a place for our stories
- Mystery, eternity, finality...whatever the belief, it connects to nature



### *Parks & Nature Reveal Death (and Life)...*

- Cycles of life and death “monuments to decay” surround us
- Profound hopefulness in nature: *“If the park could withstand the fires and floods, maybe I, too, could endure.”*



### *Nature Teaches Us to Grieve...*

- Nothing is more natural than grief and loss!
- Lessons from nature’s unconditional acceptance and forgiveness teach us to grieve
- Nature provides endless companions and teachers: birds, animals, trees... *“a tree never tells you that you look stupid”*

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## *The place of parks and nature at end of life*



### Who needs this research? Purpose and context...

Multiple agencies and disciplines are beginning to understand that health, quality of life and nature are significantly interrelated. The purpose of this research was to develop an understanding (from those who identify as palliative, their caregivers and significant others), of the role played by parks and natural outdoor settings at end of life. New understandings from Alberta Parks' Inclusion Plan, and the core value of providing Albertans a lifetime of natural experience, provided the context for this study.

### What are the future possibilities?

This study provides direction for the development of specific parks and health interventions. The findings can inform Alberta Parks policy about memorial/dedication, ceremonies and support for grief/loss and end of life experiences. Health training and programs can consider avenues for incorporation of parks and natural places into interventions and activities. For example, mobile hospice and respite, walking grief support, and other possibilities can be further examined.



### How was this knowledge generated?

Dr. Sonya Jakubec, a research nurse at Mount Royal University, led the study with Don Carruthers Den Hoed at Alberta Parks. Their study was framed by ecopsychology theory: that which is concerned with nature connection, individual wellness and social/earth justice. 118 participants completed an online survey and 15 were then interviewed. Data was reviewed in line with existing literature to create the findings.

For more information contact: [sjakubec@mtroyal.ca](mailto:sjakubec@mtroyal.ca)