

Let's Talk Trash - November 2021 – Natural Burial

Autumn has arrived and with the season comes contemplation of the life/death/life cycle. While our culture has an aversion to talking about death, there is no getting around the fact that everything that is born, will one day die.

Around the world, approximately 60 million people die every year. How we deal with the bodies left behind has a tremendous environmental impact. For the most part, in our part of the world, we have two options; burial and cremation.

According to the Northwoods Casket Company, traditional burials in the US use an estimated 100,000 tons of steel and 1.5 million tons of concrete, annually. It's estimated that US burials account for 77,000 trees being cut down for caskets and 4.3 million gallons of embalming fluid used to unnaturally extend body preservation.

Cremation is also ecologically problematic. According to the Natural Death Centre, a single cremation uses about as much gas and electricity as a 500 mile road trip. In order to fully incinerate an adult human body to bone and ash fragments, natural gas is burned at high temperatures (1400-1800 degrees for 45 to 90 minutes) releasing carbon dioxide, fine soot, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals and mercury emissions (resulting from a lifetime of exposure to toxins in various forms) into the atmosphere.

Fortunately, other options are becoming available.

Green burials are designed to have a minimal environmental impact. The body is not cremated, prepared with chemicals or buried in a concrete vault, but instead returned as naturally as possible to the earth. Simple caskets are made of cardboard, concrete, wicker or wood or the body is wrapped in a non-synthetic cloth shroud. Graves are dug by hand, left unmarked (memorialization is communal) and the land is not tended but encouraged to return to a natural state. A number of years ago, Powell River became amongst the first communities in BC allowing green burial at its Cranberry cemetery location.

Mushroom burial suits are a shroud option. They are made of organic cotton with mushroom spores sewn into the fabric which then help a body decompose. Not only do they eliminate waste, but they turn the body toxins into enzymes. This natural process assures the remains won't contaminate plant life or trickle into the water supply.

A water-based process called aquamation (or alkaline hydrolysis) is gaining traction too, though it hasn't yet been legalized in BC. It combines gentle water flow, temperature and alkalinity to break down bodies leaving only inorganic bone materials at the end.

In Washington, a company called Recompose utilizes the principles of nature to return bodies to the land. Natural organic reduction (NOR), also known as human composting,

is powered by beneficial microbes that occur naturally on our bodies and in the environment. Over thirty days, a body layered in wood chips, alfalfa and straw turns into one cubic yard of compost - enough to plant a tree!

If none of these appeal to you, you can always donate your body to science and it may even end up on a body farm, which researches the rates of decomposition.

We take in nutrients from the world around us every day that we are alive. When we die, our physical bodies are full of potential, and we can give those nutrients back to the earth. Death and decay are part of the natural life cycle. How do you want your body to be reintegrated?

Notes from Waste Manager Mark: Reminder that he's no longer accepting beer, wine or booze bottles, please return them to a bottle depot yourself. Hopefully, the oil collection unit will arrive in November.

Trash Removal System: November 10th, , the second Wednesday of the month, 10 am until the barge is full, at the False Bay barge ramp. Any changes due to weather will be posted on the email list, FB Lasqueti Hotwire, and the Lasqueti website. No construction materials, renovation or demolition waste, prohibited waste, organics, recyclable material or stewardship materials. \$5 per bag, \$25 per average truckload. Mattresses and boxsprings \$15 each. Please call Mark if you have any questions about what constitutes acceptable garbage.

Recycling Depot: Fall/Winter Hours October 1st - March 31st

Mondays 10 am - 2 pm, Thursdays 1 - 5 pm

Closed on Statutory Holidays. All recycling is monitored. Please bring it CLEAN and DRY and SORTED.

Free Store: Fall/Winter Hours October 1st to March 31st

Thursday 1 - 5 pm with occasional Mondays

Please wear your mask indoors and respect social distancing. Drop donations during open hours. Useful items only i.e. clean, usable clothing and household items. NO food, garbage, recycling, TV's, soft foam, mattresses or hazardous materials ie: chemicals, fluorescent light tubes, prescription/non-prescription drugs, or pills in general.

Recycle BC Website: www.recyclebc.ca/what-can-i-recycle

Return-It Beverage Depot open 24/7

Front left of Free Store. Accepted refundable beverage containers: aluminum beer, cider, pop, cans, coconut water cans, boxed wine cartons (leave them intact), water jugs and tetra juice packs. No milk or mylk substitute containers or any kind of glass containers (eg: glass pickle jar, glass face cream jar) - please take these to the recycling depot. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions for me and the qRD Let's Talk Trash team please get in touch! jennyv@lasqueti.ca or 8601

