

## **Peace in the Parks: Documenting the place of parks and nature at end of life**

We all feel it – whether looking outside, in a field, at a beach, or on a mountain – nature gives us perspective about life and death. There is growing evidence of how natural environments impact our physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Little is known, however, about the place of parks and nature at the end of life, or the impact of parks and nature on quality of life during end of life...until now!

Supported by Mount Royal University (MRU), Alberta Parks, Alberta Health Services and the UofA's/Augustana Campus' Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities, this project undertook to explore the place of parks and nature in palliative care for people in rural communities. Building on 2 previous projects exploring parks inclusion for adults with disabilities and people in palliative care and their caregivers, the action research cycle included planning and visiting park sites for 1-3 hour visits for patients and families, sitting in green spaces, moving (assisted or unassisted, with a walker, or wheelchair) to a view spot of their choosing. Included in the project were 5 palliative patients and their family caregivers (including 4 spouses and 1 daughter), along with 2 rural home palliative care nurses and 1 rural hospice chaplain. Participant observations and opinions of the experience were explored. Together we discovered that experiencing "Peace in the Parks" was an opportunity for personal exploration, social discovery and park/institutional awareness.

Despite the challenges to get to parks and natural places, it was always "worth it" (and perhaps even more valuable for caregivers and family!). Everyone can make the connection with nature. Ultimately there is value in even parking or sitting in areas with views of nature or short 100 metre 'walks' or strolls with a stretcher or adaptive equipment. Access does take planning, information and communication. Fundamentally, we discovered that supporting access to parks and nature for those in palliative care and their caregivers is not a call for a new program per se, but rather an invitation to the pilgrimage and sanctuary of natural places. It doesn't always come easily or naturally but pilgrimages can be supported by a mindset influenced by training, information, and coordination. Further collaborative work is underway now to extend and expand the discoveries made thus far – the pilgrimage continues!

We most wanted to let the narrative from this project speak in the voices of our gracious park volunteers, the palliative patients, family, and professional caregivers – alongside the sounds and sites of Alberta Parks and other natural settings. The overarching narrative discovered, and the title of the short documentary film we will screen (approx. 10 min) and discuss is "Peace in the Parks". The film can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/dkLSrzhwNzk>

*Rest in Peace [in the Parks] to the wonderful Bev, Ron, Liam, Garry and Maxine (with thanks to their family and caregivers).*



*Still/cover and promotional page from the documentary film*

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3x Winners!

**Sonya Jakubec, Producer/Executive Producer; Jim Baillies, Director/Editor - *Peace in the Parks***

Award of Merit: Documentary Short

Award of Recognition: Health / Medicine / Science

Award of Recognition: Nature / Environment / Wildlife

*NOTE: Laurels for Use on Promotional Materials (may use 1 Merit and 2 Recognition Laurels in either the black or gold).*



