

**“GOOD GRIEF!”:  
CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH PARKS FOR GRIEF  
AND LOSS SUPPORT**



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CASIOPA Conference, Markham, ON

**Sonya Jakubec, RN, PhD – Mount Royal University**  
Shana Barbour, Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society  
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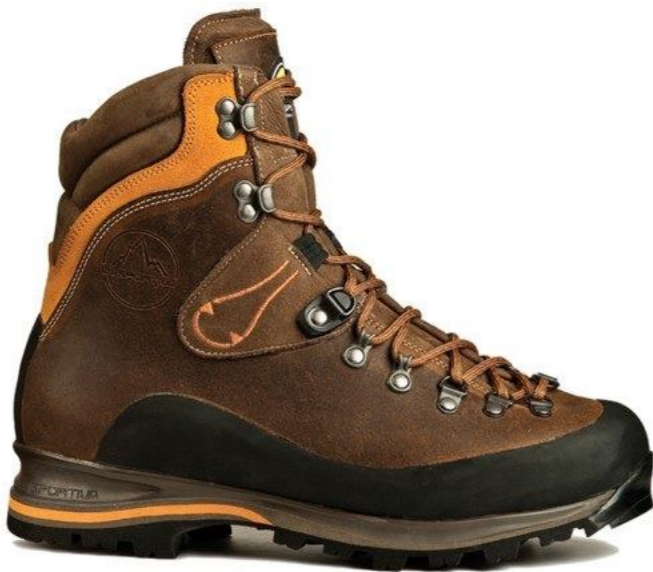


ALBERTA PARKS

# EVERYONE BELONGS

# OUTSIDE







JAKUBEC, CARRUTHERS DEN HOED, KRISHNAMURTHY & RAY

# NATURE INCLUSION & MENTAL HEALTH



MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY  
ALBERTA ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH  
ALBERTA PARKS







A black bird with distinctive orange and white wing patches is captured in flight, moving from left to right across the frame. The background is a dense, out-of-focus thicket of green leaves and branches, creating a natural, textured backdrop. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter, and the text is presented in white, uppercase, sans-serif font within three rounded rectangular panels.

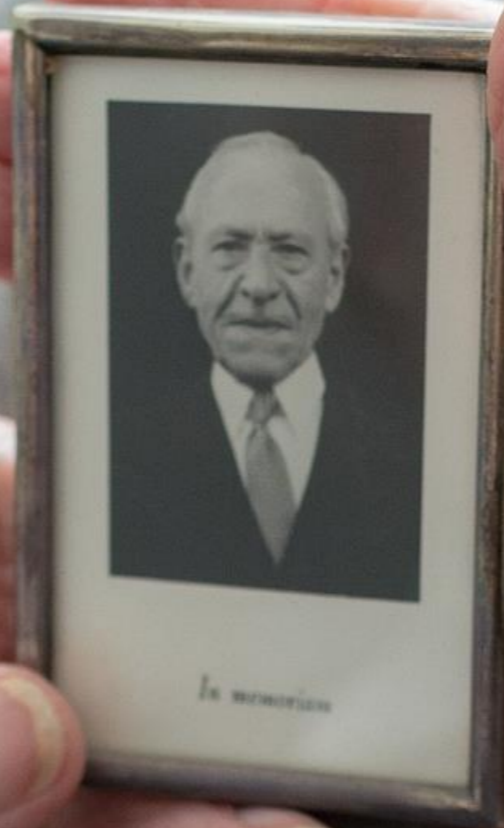
DEATH  
CONNECTS  
US TO  
NATURE

NATURE  
TEACHES US  
TO GRIEVE

PARKS &  
NATURE  
REVEAL  
DEATH & LIFE





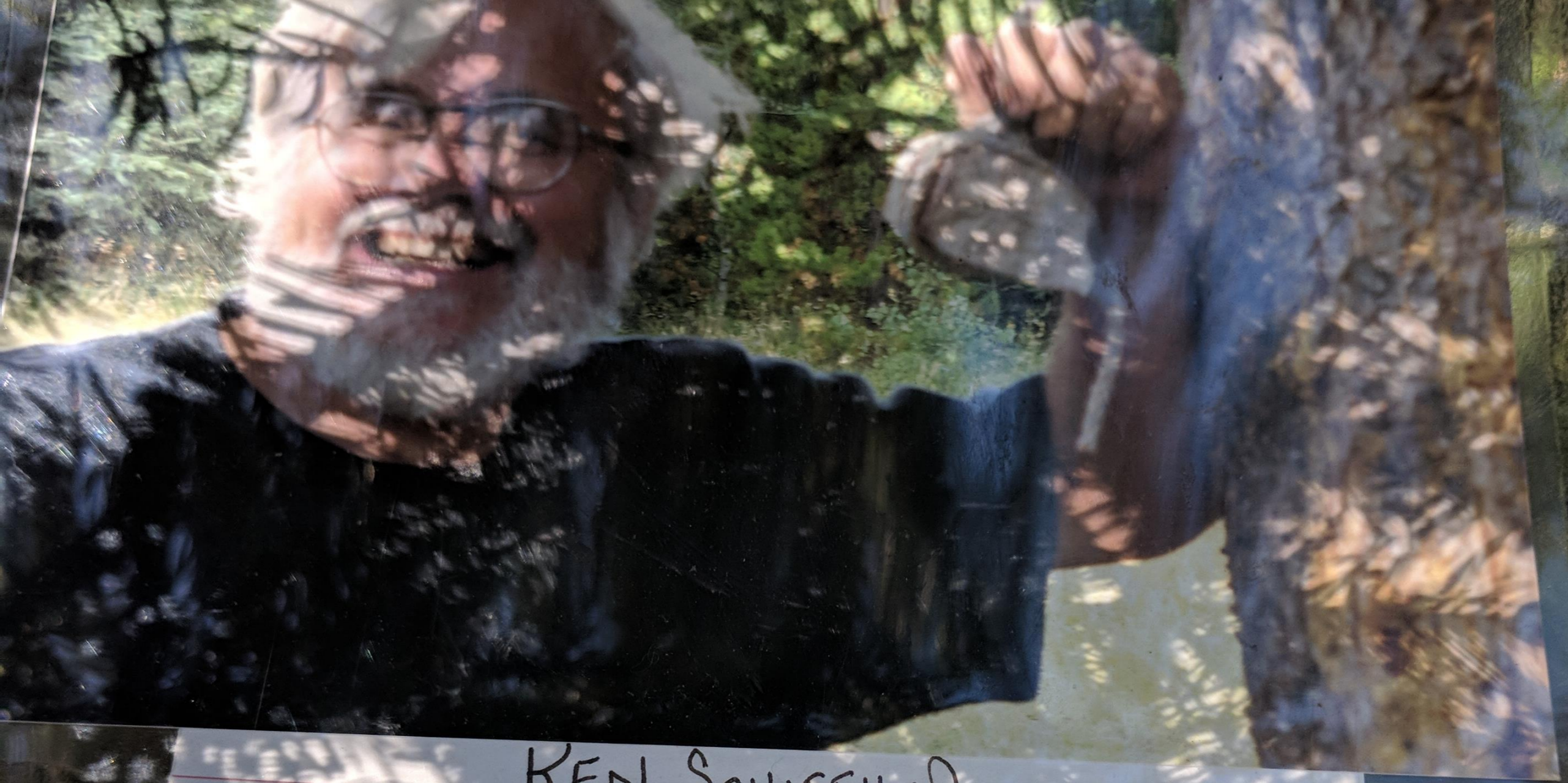






Susan Heidi Matthews





KEN SCHIFFNER

FEB 27, 1948 TO FEB 10, 2018

MY BELOVED TWIN BROTHER, KEN, FELL  
HERE AND DIED ON A VERY COLD -21°C  
AND HEAVY SNOW DAY SATURDAY  
EARLY MORNING WHILE JOGGING IN THE  
WEASELHEAD HE LOVED. HE JOGGED HERE  
EVERY SECOND DAY FOR SEVERAL YEARS  
KEN P.

# FISH CREEK WATERSHED







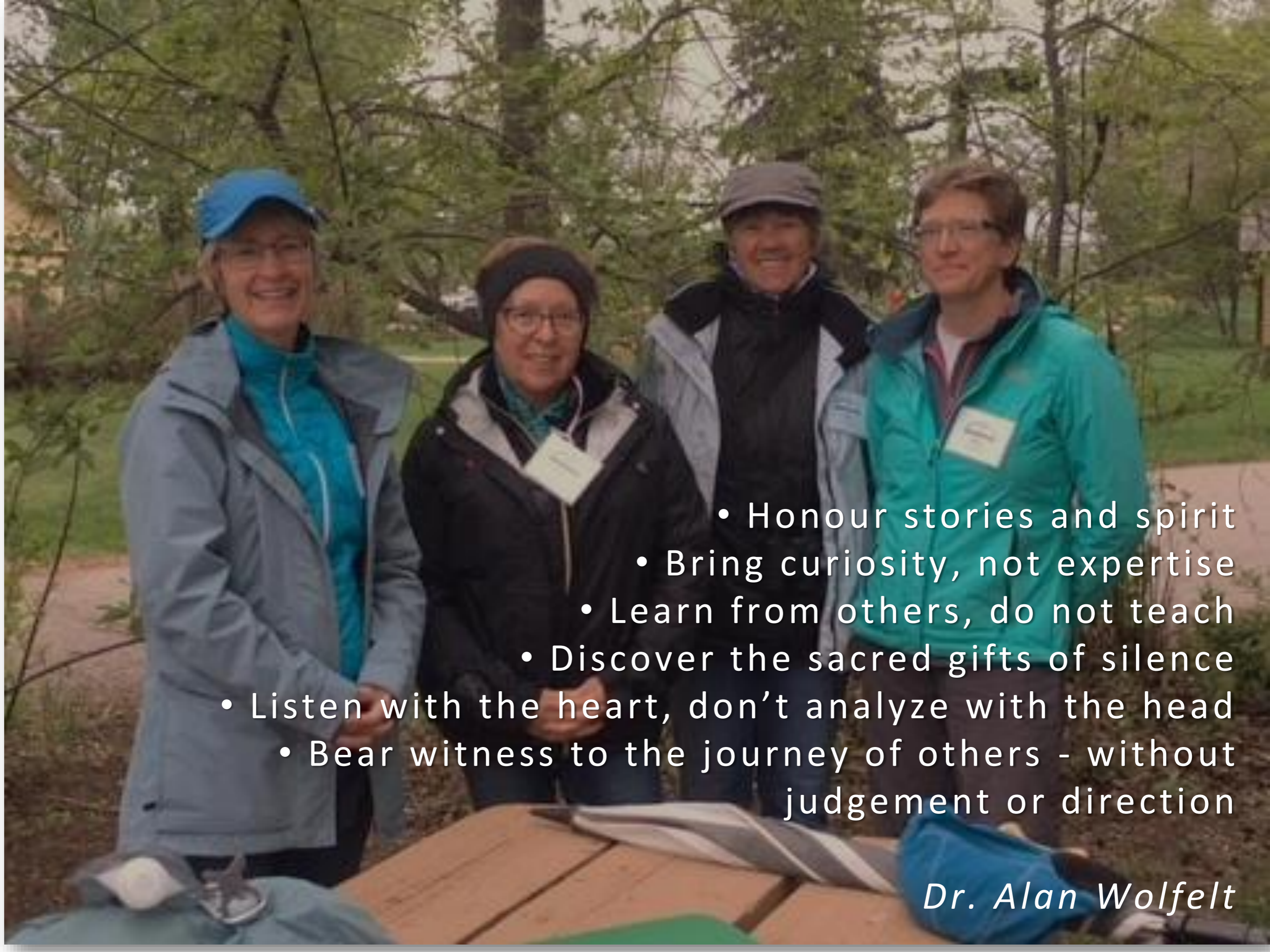
- **Programs – Education and Awareness**
  - **Wellness programs** - connecting people to outdoor activities
- **Stewardship** – supporting the desire of people to give back
- **Volunteerism** - filling gaps in people's lives, opportunities for meaningful work, purpose, connection, belonging, community

*Supporting people through difficult and significant life transitions by creating a supportive community through shared experience*





**“Good Grief”!:**  
**A Grief & Park Companionship Approach**



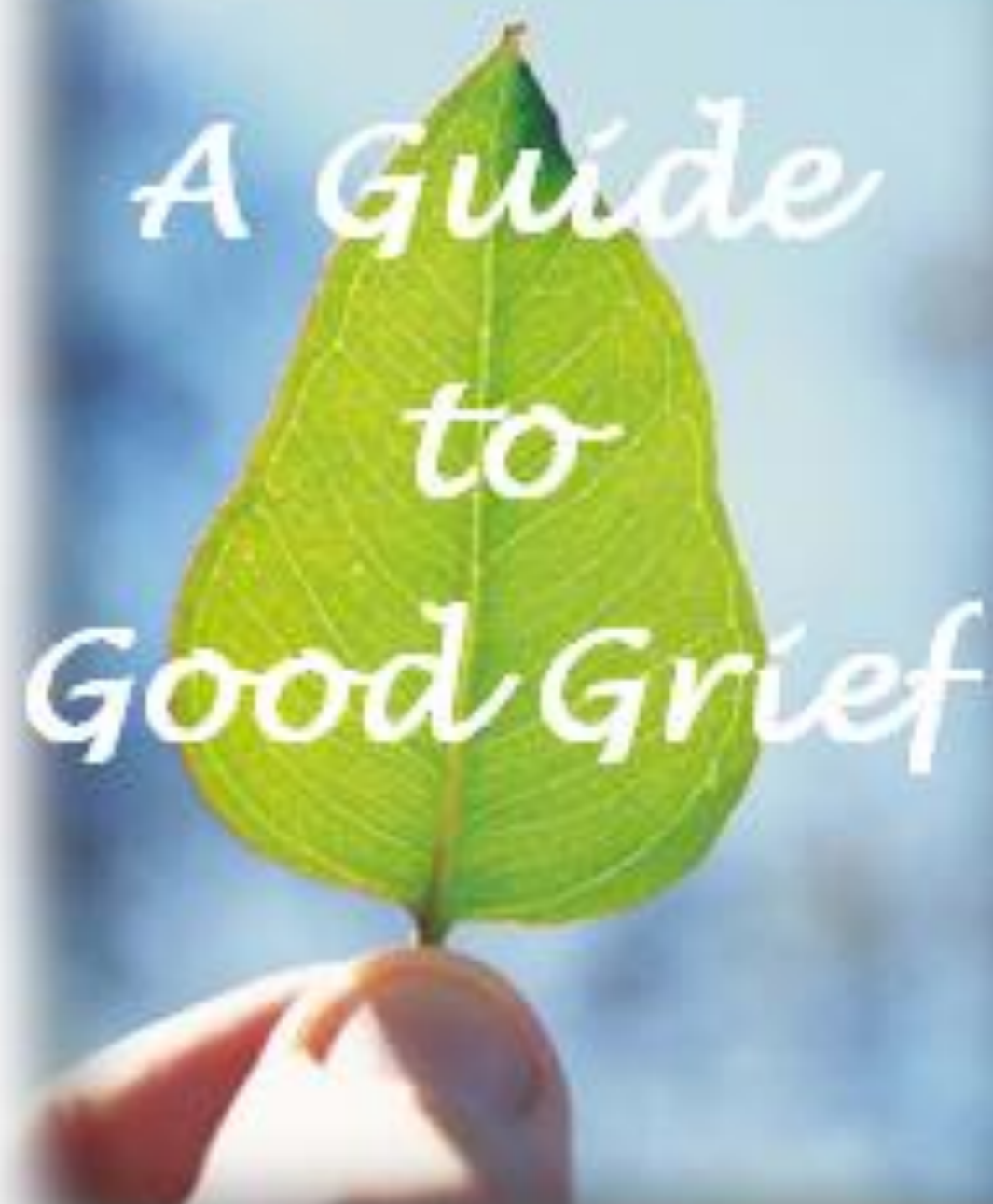
- Honour stories and spirit
- Bring curiosity, not expertise
- Learn from others, do not teach
- Discover the sacred gifts of silence
- Listen with the heart, don't analyze with the head
- Bear witness to the journey of others - without judgement or direction

*Dr. Alan Wolfelt*

# Guiding Principles Workbook



*The Role of Natural Places in Rural Palliative Care:  
Experiences and Processes for Parks Engagement*



# MOTIVATION

- *To push myself to face my grief that I have avoided, to face my anger about my loss*
- *Meet new people on a like-minded journey; people who can maybe help me manage my grief*
- *Learn how feelings and nature mesh*





## HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE GOOD GRIEF TO OTHERS?

- *Finding strength in nature and people with similar circumstances*
- *Experience how nature can help us grieve, and sharing the experience with others*
- *A quiet, gracious walk through nature with gentle and caring companions; being affirmed as I share my experience and receive others' stories*

# BENEFITS

- *Making connections and realizing we are not alone in our pain*
- *Disconnect with the pain and enjoy the moment*
- *Take the time to stop my daily life and focus on my grief*
- *Feeling the healing quality of nature on body, mind and spirit*
- *Being in nature*





# BUILDING AWARENESS

- *Nature reminds us that everything has a life cycle and a purpose, and we are part of it*
- *Observing nature and listening to the forest sounds touched me deeply; it connect me to the circle of life*
- *Walking in nature floods your mind with new and helpful images*

*Nature's cycles (renewal, resiliency) remind me that we all recover in our own way...*

# NEXT STEPS

- *Walk slower, take in the smells, the views. Walk with head up and eyes open.*
- *I will continue to use nature as an ally during times of crisis and grief*
- *As long as I can tie my shoes or strap up the velcro, the never ending walk will continue in the great outdoors*
- *To volunteer...*



“GOOD GRIEF!”:  
WALKING TOGETHER  
THROUGH GRIEF AND  
LOSS

[HTTP://CALGARY.CTVNEWS.CA/GUIDED-  
WALKS-HELP-GRIEVING-FAMILIES-COPE-  
WITH-LOSS-1.3468967](http://calgary.ctvnews.ca/guided-walks-help-grieving-families-cope-with-loss-1.3468967)



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