

MEMORIAL MUSE

Update from the Board

In tough times, as we know from our recent experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are more vulnerable to stress, worry, anxiety and depression. It's important to take care of ourselves and those we know. Be kind.

Death of a friend, family member or even someone we don't know well, can have a significant impact on our mental and physical health. Remember, it's normal to feel stress. Everyone who goes through a traumatic event is affected in some way.

Grieving is a process that typically progresses through stages, from becoming aware of the loss, to feeling and expressing grief, eventually ending with adjustment to the loss.

Grieving can elicit physical symptoms brought on by the stress of grief and life adjustment, such as problems eating and sleeping, headache, tightness in the throat, or body aches and pains. Intense grieving can resemble depression. Long-term grief can lead to depression, but in most cases a person who is grieving does not have a major depressive disorder. If symptoms of depression persist without improvement for more than 2 months during a period of grief, the person should call a doctor.

Read more about grief and learn about access to resources in this issue of our newsletter.

Did you know that since 1966 when our cooperative first set about to save Albertan's money on their funerals that we have helped more than 30,000 members save over \$80-100 million dollars on their funerals? That's pretty good for a small non-profit cooperative owned by its members. Give yourself a pat on the back.



Written by:

**Ms. Terry Geib,
PHEc.**

Board Chair

Terry joined the board of CMS in 2009. In April 2017 she retired as a director for Calgary Co-op after serving 15 years on their board. In addition to Chairing CMS board meetings, Terry does the writing and graphic design work and leads the strategic planning for CMS. Terry works full time as a strategist for The City of Calgary.

Member Stories

Before joining CMS, Sally and her husband had already pre-paid for their funeral arrangements. Each of them pre-paid approximately \$10,000. Sally's husband passed away and his \$10,000 was used. Sally called and asked, "Why would I need a membership with the CMS? I have already pre-paid for my funeral."

Sally was surprised to learn that she could definitely benefit from a CMS membership. She did not know that anyone can request a refund of a pre-paid funeral contract. She was delighted to find out that she could join CMS for a \$40 lifetime membership fee, receive a refund from the funeral service provider she had previously pre-arranged with, and then pre-pay with CMS' contracted service provider. In that way, she would be eligible for CMS member pricing, which can be thousands of dollars less. (Please see our member plans and pricing on our [website](#)). Sally did just that. She received a \$10,000 refund from the original service provider, and then pre-purchased the CMS Calgary member Plan A1 for \$3800.00.

She said thank you for the great savings!

Ask Barb

"I don't want to enter my information into my online member profile, so I have completed a written Guidance Form. What is my next step? Should I send it to CMS?"

The Guidance Form is two-sided. One side sets out your preferences (burial, cremation, etc.) and the other side lists Vital Statistics information about you. Your next of kin will need this information when you pass away and they are making arrangements with a service provider. Put your Guidance Form with your important documents at home and make sure your executor or next of kin knows where it is. Make a copy of it for them if you wish. **Please DO NOT send it to CMS.** Other memorial societies may want you to send your form to them but we do not need it. We want your family to have that information.

The only copy should also not be kept in a safety deposit box at a bank. If your next of kin or executor is not a co-owner of your safe deposit box, they will not



Written by:

**Ms. Barb
Montgomery**

*Membership
Manager*

Barb became the CMS Membership Manager in January 2017 after a 30 year career in hotels and hospitality. Barb's warm and caring personality and attention to detail is appreciated by the entire Board.

[Contact Barb](#)

be able to get access to it immediately. It may take weeks. As a result, they will not know what is on your Guidance Form when they call the service provider

You can find this form, as well as a membership card, on our website. <https://www.calgarymemorial.com/member-forms--card.html> Please feel free to print them off any time you need new ones. We **no longer** use membership numbers, so simply write your name on your membership card. Our service providers have the ability to confirm membership electronically, at time of need, so you will not be required to provide a membership number but you **WILL** need to inform them of the membership. It is not up to them to ask you.

(If you **DO** wish to enter your information into your protected online member profile, please go to our website, click on LOGIN and follow the prompts. Once you have updated your information, you can print it off.)

Grieving in an Atypical World

“The quality and quantity of understanding support you get during your grief journey will have a major influence on your capacity to heal. You cannot—nor should you try to—do this alone.” - Alan Wolfelt

Grief is a highly individualized experience, but receiving support from your community should not be discounted while on that journey. Not only does it allow a platform to work with your grief but it also allows permission for grief to be respected as a necessary part of experiencing loss and living a full life.

Here are some creative suggestions that may become part of our future grieving repertoire.

1. **Virtual support:** Not only can you host funerals on Zoom or other social platforms, there are online grief support groups that have 24/7 chat rooms and support for those experiencing death and grief. [*Check out this one*](#)
2. **Create a community memorial site:** Find a common area that was important to your loved one and invite others to help you build a temporary, or permanent memorial site. An example of an approach to this is a weeping tree. You allow loved ones to tie cloth, ribbon or post



Written by:

Ms. Lyndee Kehler

Director

Lyndee is a Registered Nurse and works as a Director of Care for a supportive living community. She has a special interest in alternative death care and has completed her training as a Death Doula. Lyndee volunteered with CMS in 2020 attending several board meetings and our strategic planning session to

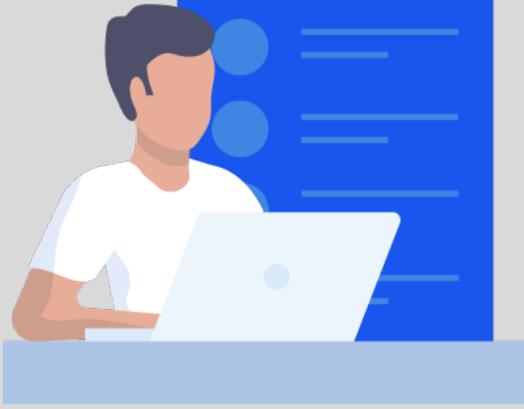
- messages of acknowledgement, love, and grief to a tree. After a certain amount of time you can collect and store the items or revisit the tree and allow the space to remain a communal grief space.
3. **Create a memory train:** One person starts a letter with a memory of the deceased, then they pass it along to the next loved one. This next person reads the first memory, writes their own and brings it to the next person. Once it has made its path through the hands of everyone you could create copies or bind it as a book to share - creating a lifelong memento to reflect, allowing you to keep the stories alive in your family for years to come.
 4. **Ritualize loss:** Create a ceremony or ritual that allows you to honor the dead, and incorporate this into your daily, weekly or monthly habits. Examples include lighting a candle, cooking a favorite meal that your loved one enjoyed, writing a letter, burn incense, or go for a contemplative walk to your loved one's favorite spot.
 5. **Digital or Safe space mural:** Use a digital platform to create a board with shared thoughts and ideas. You could use Google Documents, and give everyone access to add anything meaningful that reminds them of the loved one. Alternatively, create a space in your yard, patio, or on your window where people can drop off items or leave messages.
 6. **Have dinner:** Cook your loved one's favorite recipe together over Zoom or FaceTime together.
 7. **Find meaning:** Stimulate conversation via a communal online blog or vlog. Explore your own ideas of life and death, the meaning behind it all, or the lack there of. Learn more about each other, yourself and your loss.

share her expertise.

We Want to Hear From You

Co-operative Memorial Society is dedicated to continued improvement to best serve the community. The following survey is intended to achieve this. All responses collected are private and non-identifying. The data collected through these responses will be used to best

improve our services over the following fiscal year



[Complete the survey now](#)

Edited by:

Mr. Michael Cacace, Dip.SW, BSW, RSW

Director

Michael was appointed by the Board in 2020 to fill the vacant position. Michael is a social worker with a strong background in working with the LGBTQ2S+ community, and broadly with diversity, inclusion and safety. Michael has held numerous leadership positions in Calgary and Vancouver's non-profit sector. In addition, Michael has experience managing and leading strategic planning and program development, marketing and graphic design for non-profits organizations.

