

Tenille Thompson & Catherine Berris



Speaker Details

Catherine Berris, RLA, RPP, FCSLA, FASLA,
Urban Systems

Catherine Berris is a Landscape Architect and a Registered Professional Planner. She led her own consulting firm for 28 years and has spent 11 years at Urban Systems, an interdisciplinary consulting firm. Catherine has always had a passion for cemeteries. She founded the cemetery planning and design practice at Urban Systems, where she has prepared plans and designs for many municipal and Indigenous cemeteries. Catherine also thrives on bringing more nature into communities. She is now President of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects, where one of her initiatives is climate action because she is very worried about the loss of urban trees.

Tenille Thompson, RLA, BCSLA, CSLA, Urban
Systems

Tenille is a leader in landscape architecture specializing in parks and community master plans, civic spaces, cemetery planning, and green infrastructure. She has led master plans, detailed designs, and construction administration for cemeteries, bringing a deep understanding of industry trends, operational practices, policies, and bylaws. Viewing cemeteries as vital community assets, she designs spaces that balance historical significance and ecological stewardship to support reflection, connection, and long-term sustainability. Tenille is dedicated to the practice and profession of landscape architecture, serving on the board of directors and in various committees for the BC Society of Landscape Architects.

Session Details

Grounded in Nature: Sustainability in Cemeteries

The cemetery (from the Greek origin 'sleeping place') has had a widely varied history including caves, trees, tombs, and ossuaries. Cemeteries have been shaped by cultural and religious traditions, population growth, infectious diseases, and environmental challenges. Today, in the Western world, most cemeteries share more similarities than differences. In this talk, we will explore the role of cemeteries in our communities, their design, and operations in a changing world.

This interactive session will explore how cemeteries can be reimagined to better balance environmental, social, and economic considerations. We will examine historic and global precedents and talk about the potential roles of cemeteries today. We will present information on carbon emissions related to cemetery design and operations and discuss ways for cemeteries to reduce their environmental impacts. Together, we will explore fundamental questions related to how we can maximize the ecological, cultural, and economic values of our cemeteries.



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