

A Will For The Woods



what you'll find inside!

- about the film & filmmakers
- ready to watch! screening guide
- ready to talk! discussion guide
- online resources

Bullfrog Community Screening & Discussion Guide

Roll out the red carpet! Use your film screening of A WILL FOR THE WOODS as a tool to build community and spark discussion about green burial, spirituality, and how we grieve the loss of our loved ones while celebrating the lives they led. This guide offers some background information plus helpful tips & discussion questions for an informative, and rewarding screening. **Good Luck!**

For additional resources, visit awillforthewoods.bullfrogcommunities.com/will_resources

About A WILL FOR THE WOODS

What if our last act could be a gift to the planet? Capturing the genesis of a revolutionary social and environmental movement, A WILL FOR THE WOODS draws the viewer into a life-affirming and immersive portrait of people embracing their connection to timeless natural cycles through the act of choosing a green burial. The film follows musician, folk dancer, and psychiatrist Clark Wang as he prepares for his own green burial, determined that his final resting place will benefit the earth. Clark, a spirited and charismatic advocate, sets out to save a tract of forest with the help of green burial pioneers and the compassionate owner of a local cemetery.



About the Directors



Clockwise from bottom left: Amy Browne, Jeremy Kaplan, Tony Hale, Brian Wilson

Amy Browne grew up in Australia and moved to New York City to study theater at The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, and film at The New School University. Jeremy Kaplan received his B.A. from Boston College in Film and Philosophy and his M.A. in Documentary/Media Studies at The New School. Tony Hale rediscovered his passion for filmmaking while studying Mathematics at Boston College and working at a Harvard University media lab. He is now a freelance editor based in Brooklyn. Brian Wilson graduated from Brown University with a degree in Comparative Literature and History, and works as an editor in New York.

ready to watch!

Here are some ideas and best practices to help make your community screening of **A WILL FOR THE WOODS** a success!

- 1. Publicize Your Event!** This is the most important step because it not only tells the world what you're up to, but it lets the Bullfrog Community team know what your plans are so we can help you publicize your event. Visit <http://awillforthewoods.bullfrogcommunities.com/> to register and get the word out on your **A WILL FOR THE WOODS** screening.
- 2. Visualize Your Goal!** What do you hope to achieve with your screening of **A WILL FOR THE WOODS**? Your goal could be to generate a lively post-film discussion about green burial, the choices and preparations we make for our deaths, and how we choose to grieve the passing of our loved ones. Or, you can simply provide an opportunity for families to watch and learn together.
- 3. Where To Host?** Consider which locations in your area would be ideal for accommodating a community film screening of the size you anticipate: downtown movie theaters, churches and synagogues, town halls, community centers, public libraries, school auditoriums, warehouses at a business and outdoor screenings at parks and playgrounds, and even private homes have been venues for many successful community screenings.
- 4. Find A Partner!** Give some thought to who is already working on this issue in your community. Do you know of groups and organizations who represent the green burial movement, or offer green burial services? Can they help sponsor the event? Spread the word? Speak on a panel discussion after the screening? Some potential partners include: environmental, law, sustainability, and faith studies departments at universities and colleges, hospices, green burial groups, cemeteries, memorial gardens, land trusts, faith-based organizations and institutions, parks, environmental and social groups, and other organizations concerned about the environment and/or involved in the green burial movement.
- 5. Invite A Guest Speaker!** Guest speakers and panels are a great way to encourage discussion and debate after a community screening. When people are engaged and thinking about the issues they will stay engaged long after the screening has passed. Contact local green burial and environmental groups, park directors, representatives from local hospices, land trusts and cemeteries, and/or teachers and professors who have expertise or insight into the issues raised by the film, and invite them to attend and participate in a discussion or Q&A session.
- 6. Engage Your Audience!** Included in this handout is a section called Ready to Act! which is meant to be a hand-out at your screening. It will help your audience know what they can do to educate themselves about key issues raised in the film.
- 7. Spread The Word!** Think about the best methods available to you for publicizing the film screening to people in your community. Sending emails, creating event notifications on Facebook or Meetup, using Twitter, and placing screening announcements in local newspapers and newsletters is a good start. Find the **A WILL FOR THE WOODS** screening poster, discussion guide (includes handout), and press photos on awillforthewoods.bullfrogcommunities.com/will_resources to help publicize your event around town.
- 8. Tell Us How It Went!** Visit <http://awillforthewoods.bullfrogcommunities.com/> to tell us about your event: Where it was held? Who attended? What went well, and what was challenging? Your feedback will help others in organizing their own successful events and will energize Bullfrog Communities as a whole.

ready to talk!

Your audience will be excited to discuss the issues raised by **A WILL FOR THE WOODS**. Here are some questions that will get people talking.

A note from the filmmakers on postscreening discussions

We have found that after a screening of the film, people are often very eager to talk. The conversation tends to encompass conceptual and technical issues of green burial, the people and story of the film, and audience members' personal experiences that people will want to share. We've included FAQs on both green burial and the film to help answer some of the questions we most commonly hear. We've also included discussion questions, and we encourage you to use these, as well as the FAQs, as conversation starters. The film is very emotional for some viewers. You will likely find that some of your audience will want to reflect quietly, perhaps on their own, and others will be moved to speak up and share a story, question, or idea. Most importantly – enjoy this time to gather and discuss.

- 1.** How do you feel about green burial? Did you have any knowledge of or opinion about it before seeing the film, and if so, did watching the film affect your opinion of it?
- 2.** What brought you to the screening today? Was it an interest in environmentalism, end-of-life issues, or something else? Were there aspects of the film or topic that you had not previously considered?
- 3.** Before seeing the film, did you have a sense of your own wishes for what you would like to happen with your body after you die? What about after watching the film?
- 4.** Did the film resonate with any experiences from your own life?
- 5.** What was the emotional impact of the film for you?
- 6.** What elements of the film stood out most to you? Other than the core issues of the film, did other aspects stand out to you? The music, food, dance, relationships, or some other aspect?
- 7.** What was your experience with or opinion of death care professions before seeing the film? Has seeing the film changed or confirmed your perspective?
- 8.** Have you made any funeral plans or thought about what they might be? If so, have you reached out to anyone, and what have the conversations been like?
- 9.** Is death and dying a topic you or your community are comfortable discussing?
- 10.** Is environmentalism a common point of discussion in your household or community?
- 11.** What are the natural spaces like in and around your town or city? Are there parks, nature preserves, natural cemeteries? How accessible are they?
- 12.** What are the cemeteries like in your town or city? Are there trees or other natural vegetation? How much lawn is there? Are they visited frequently?
- 13.** Do you visit any cemeteries where a family member or other loved one is buried? If the person was cremated, what is your feeling about the place or places where the ashes are kept or where they were released?

- 14.** What ecological or social goals do you think could be achieved in your area with green burial?
- 15.** How does green burial align with your traditions?
- 16.** What considerations are important for you in making a disposition choice? Affordability, environmental impact, family traditions or a family plot, cultural or religious practices, proximity to loved ones who will visit, being in a specific place or type of landscape, or some other reason?
- 17.** It should be noted that a home funeral is not an essential aspect of green burial. How do you feel about the tradition and ritual of a home funeral?
- 18.** What do you think will stay with you most from this screening and discussion?

Call To Action

Now that you've seen the film, you may be wondering what you can do next.

Being part of a post-screening discussion is a great way to start. The general lack of conversation around end-of-life options and the stigma of discussing death may be the number one hindrance to the green burial movement. So keep talking! Tell people about green burial and the film, host a screening, or encourage others to host one in their area.

Making arrangements for a green burial, whether through a formal will, research and planning, or even just letting your wish for a green burial be known, is an effective way to help the movement. There is helpful information and planning tools listed under the **Resources** section. If you're curious about ways to be involved with green burial sites near you, know that some have events from time to time, such as native plant and seed sales or giveaways, picnics, bird and nature walks, tree plantings, awareness campaigns, and more. Simply visiting these beautiful, natural sites is yet another way of participating.

Beyond that, we encourage you to join the film's community by following us on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, or signing up for our (periodic) **email newsletters**.

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/awillforthewoods>

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/WillfortheWoods>

Email newsletter list: <http://bit.ly/lmdjZTX> or find it on our homepage: <http://www.awillforthewoods.com>

And please visit our **Call to Action** page: <http://www.awillforthewoods.com/call-to-action/>

We'll be updating it with new tools, resources, information, and ways to spread the word and help the movement.

Resources

1. Green Burial Council, including their database of US and Canadian providers: <http://greenburialcouncil.org>
 2. The GBC's Four Part Green Burial Guide (useful for evaluating providers): <http://www.greenburialcouncil.org/assets/Whatyoucando.pdf>
 3. The GBC's Green Burial/Funeral Planning Guide (useful for reviewing options and letting your wishes be known): <http://www.greenburialcouncil.org/assets/Uploads/GBCGreenFuneralBurialPlanner.pdf>
 4. US: Funeral Consumers Alliance, which has local and regional chapters with their own pages within the site: <http://www.funerals.org>
 5. US: National Home Funeral Alliance: <http://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
 6. Canada: GBC website or the Natural Burial Association: <http://www.naturalburialassoc.ca>
 7. UK: The Natural Death Centre: <http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk>
 8. Australia: The Natural Death Care Centre: <http://www.naturaldeathcentre.org.au>
 9. Local groups: There are also some independent home funeral groups and green or natural burial groups that operate regionally or locally.
 10. Death cafes: In many cities there are now meetups known as *death cafes*, which are usually hosted in a public place open to all and designed to offer a space where death can be openly discussed, often in a casual, positive, or creative way.
11. Books:
- *Grave Matters: A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*, Mark Harris
 - *American Afterlife: Encounters in the Customs of Mourning*, Kate Sweeney
 - *Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death*, Joshua Slocum and Lisa Carlson
 - *The American Way of Death*, Jessica Mitford
 - *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Drew Gilpin Faust
 - *Funeral Rights: What the Australian 'deathcare' industry doesn't want you to know*, Robert Larkins