

Canadian

FUNERAL NEWS



APRIL 2024



Turning over A NEW STONE

GARNEAU GROUP EXPANSION HIGHLIGHTS
THE NEED TO CONTINUALLY EVOLVE

Commemorate

Group Inc.



1-888-URN-SALE

commemorate.com



Personalization available on select products
FREE Canada-Wide Shipping on orders over \$250 (before taxes)



See the **GREENER** side of burial

Vancouver Casket now offers a variety of eco-friendly caskets to suit all your styles and needs.



Natura.

Poplar wood casket with no colour treatment. Eco-friendly woodbar handles and wooden hinges.



Cypress.

Paulownia wood with no stain. White satin interior and pillow.



Willow.

Handwoven willow wicker. Natural and unbleached cotton interior.



West Coast Cedar.

Aromatic cedar. Pendleton blanket and paddle handles.



Juda.

Wooden dowelled solid poplar with no metal. Raw cotton interior. Star of David optional.



Bamboo Shroud.

Bamboo shroud with handles and willow carrier.

VANCOUVER CASKET

VCL

4036 McConnell Dr, Burnaby, BC V5A 3A8

info@vcl-ca.com | Ph: 1-866-826-2275 | Fax: 604-431-0896

www.vancouvercasket.com



Garneau Group Expansion

ON THE COVER:

- 6 Turning Over a New Stone
Garneau Group expansion highlights the need to continually evolve
by *Lisa Johnston*

FEATURES:

- 12 A Day at the Museum
by *Michael Brooke*
- 14 What's New?
by *Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP*
- 18 Anger: Roots and Responses
by *Dr. Bill Webster*
- 24 New Venue, New Vibe
FCSCS readies for Spring Symposium
by *Lisa Johnston*
- 30 OFSA Spring Meeting Planned for May 15
- 35 The Fossores – Part II
by *Todd Van Beck*

REGULARS:

- 36 Upcoming Events
- 37 Buyer's Guide
- 64 Classifieds

Canadian FUNERAL NEWS

"Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened." ~ Dr. Seuss

Publisher | Patrick Ottmann
pat@businessincalgary.com
(800) 465-0322

Associate Publisher | Tim Ottmann

Editor | Lisa Johnston

Advertising | Nancy Bielecki

Art Director | Jessi Evetts

Canadian Funeral News
Suite 1025, 101 - 6th Ave. SW
Calgary, AB T2P 3P4
Tel: 403.264.3270
Fax: 403.264.3276
www.otcommunications.com

CANADIAN FUNERAL NEWS is a magazine dedicated to the advancement of funeral service in Canada. The magazine of Canadian funeral directors is published 12 times per year by OT Communications Inc.

Changes of address should be sent in 30 days ahead of the next issue for delivery to new address. Subscriptions: \$100 per year.
Listings without subscription: \$95 per year. Subscription & listing: \$195/year.
Add \$95 for each branch listing. Please add 5% GST.
Please allow 8 to 12 weeks for subscription delivery. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa.
Publications Mail Registration No. 09931. ISSN 0382-5876.
Second-class postage prepaid at Calgary, Alberta.
Canadian publications mail sales product agreement No. 40012479
POSTMASTER: Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
Circulation Dept. Suite 1025, 101 - 6th Ave. SW, Calgary, AB, T2P 3P4

Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Financé par le
gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

Our phone number only serves one area.

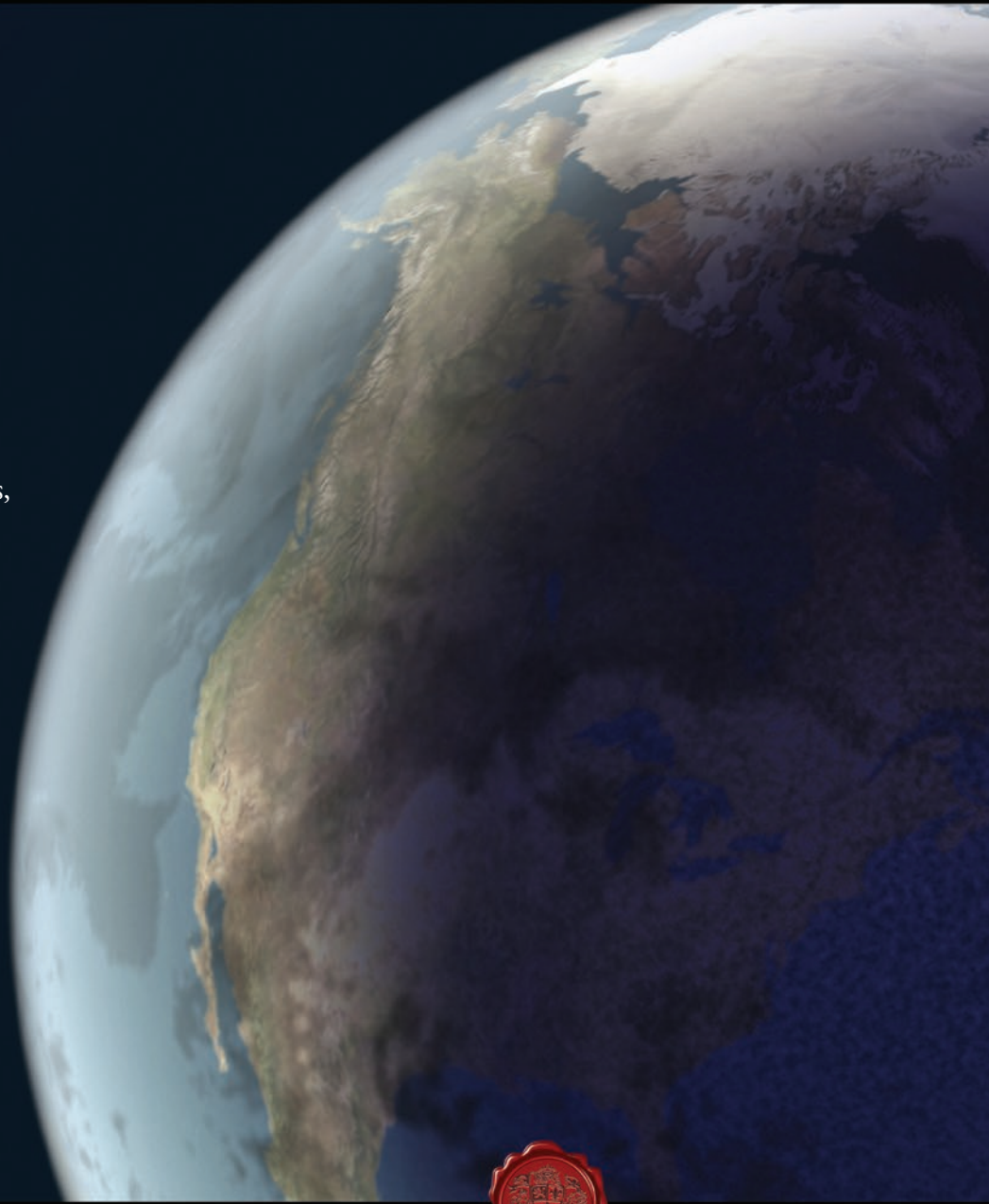
The world is a big place, but we look at it as more of our neighbourhood because we're very familiar with virtually every corner of it. The number of areas we ship and provide services to and from allows a familiarity and understanding of rules, regulations, and procedures like no one else.

And, the best part is that you can contact us from anywhere inside of it, all from just one number;
1-800-268-6736.

Experience you can trust -

It's your call.

World-class resources.
World-class results.



ALLAN COLE
and Son, Alex
Recipient of FSAC's
2013 Award of Merit

MACKINNON AND BOWES LTD.

Signature Services

ANSWERING SERVICES • TRADE SERVICES • LIVERY SERVICES • WORLDWIDE SHIPPING • EDUCATION • CONCIERGE SERVICES

1.800.268.6736 • mackinnonbowes.com





RESPECT

JEAN OTTMANN

FEBRUARY 12, 1930 - FEBRUARY 24, 2024

by Pat Ottmann

It is fair to say the world just doesn't make people like Mom anymore. Over her 94 years on this planet, so much has changed that any attempt at replication would be simply impossible. Reflecting on her life, it was one of selfless giving with extremely few self-indulgences or simple pleasures taken for herself. Rather, it was a life of work and giving to her family first, her church and her community.

At 18 years of age, Mom married Dad. At an anniversary celebration, a neighbour and friend recounted, "We pulled into the yard and it was really just a shack in the bush where they began to build their life together." He nailed the description of their first home, as even in Mom's memory, she could hardly refer to it as a house. There were stories of the wash bowl being frozen solid in the winter; snow blowing under the door to where it needed to be swept out before the old wood stove melted it to water and made a mess. To start a family in a home like this in today's world would be unimaginable. Yet, with Dad at her side, they did just that: they built a family, a farm and a life together.

Raising 10 kids without power in the early days, a little old wood stove for heat and certainly no running water, makes one reflect and admire the stamina and convictions of her beliefs and the selfless act of giving everything she had to her family.

Commitment to her faith. I believe every family member has a memory of the efforts it took to get to church at times. Extreme cold, bad roads, snow way too deep to venture out and yet the effort was made; staying home and missing mass was simply not an option. I suppose some of these things have made us all who we are today and why we scoff at the half-hearted efforts we see in society on various fronts. Whether Mom really wanted to get to mass that bad, or whether she was raising kids

and teaching them not to quit on something they truly believed in, is open to interpretation. There is little doubt as to Mom's commitment to her church and faith, and I assume this was her way of teaching her family its importance to her. Christmas midnight mass followed by a 12-mile ride home in horse and cutter was standard in the early days. It seems hard to imagine the level of commitment involved to be out trekking across the frozen prairie with babies in tow at 2 a.m.....

Work ethic. There was no complaining about work or jobs that needed to be done ... and there were lots. The absolute constant load of having that many kids underfoot makes one marvel at how she just did this day in and day out, never missing a beat. While always telling us how hard Dad worked (and he did), she never looked for any credit or acknowledgment of all the work she did.

Socialite. No matter how many events on the same day ... Mom "made an appearance" as we came to know it. She loved getting dressed up and being part of the community at various celebrations.

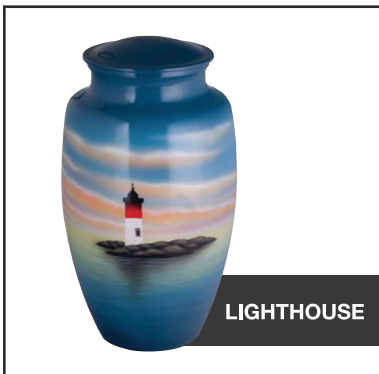
Although Mom enjoyed her years living on the farm, the move to Wadena provided her many new opportunities. Mom loved people. Along with her continued involvement at the church, she began bowling, spent time volunteering at the hospital and joined an exercise group. The ladies in the group became a little community unto themselves. They often went for coffee and celebrated each other's birthdays with cake and get-togethers. She truly loved her exercise friends.

Mom, you will be missed beyond measure. We will cherish the memories and never forget the sacrifices you made for our family.

Until next month... 

Hand Painted Metal Urns

These individually hand painted metal urns are constructed from aluminum, with a 200 cubic inch capacity and threaded lid. The beautiful images depict a range of scenery over 11 unique designs. The artwork is protected with a traditional lacquer method, hundreds of years old, whereby the lacquer is applied using several layers and each layer is sanded before receiving the next, protecting the hand painted images for a lifetime.



Cremation Jewellery
Keepsakes
Memorial Candles
Stationery
Urns



Contact Us for Other Available Designs

Email: info@gravurecraft.com | www.gravurecraft.com | Toll Free: 1.800.668.2954



Turning over A NEW STONE

GARNEAU GROUP EXPANSION HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED TO CONTINUALLY EVOLVE

by Lisa Johnston

The Garneau Group has been serving the needs of Quebec's families for over 40 years. Since its founding by owner Jean Garneau in 1980, the business has grown to comprise two funeral complexes and seven satellite locations in the Chaudière-Appalaches region of Quebec. Today, management falls to Jean's daughter, Marie Eve, who recently oversaw the \$1.9-million renovation to Garneau Group's Claude Marcoux Complex.

"My father started the Garneau Group with three small locations after working several years at his uncle's business," notes Marie Eve. "At that time, he served approximately 300 families per year. He expanded when he bought one of our competitors and renovated the facility to open his first funeral complex in 2008. Ten years later, we opened a second complex. Today, we serve over 900 families a year."

The Garneaus have always been ahead of the curve in answering the needs of their client families, which prompted the recent renovation and expansion of the original Claude Marcoux Complex. Home to the Garneau Group's head office and boasting complete services under one roof – including garages, reception rooms, chapels, a lounge and an indoor columbarium – the expansion significantly impacted all public spaces within the building, resulting in the addition of 13,000 square feet of space.



Marie Eve Garneau



Working together We honour your promises

Deciding to sell isn't an easy decision. But partnering with Arbor Memorial can be.

We are a family-owned and operated company with deep roots in communities across Canada.

These have been difficult times for our industry. We were prepared with a plan, supplies and measures to keep our staff and guests safe. Partnering with Arbor eases the challenges that come with running a business. We provide the peace of mind that comes from knowing your funeral home's legacy and reputation will be preserved.

**Call Paul Scanlan, Senior Vice-President, Business Development, to discuss the unique opportunities of selling your funeral home to Arbor Memorial.
1800-268-1504 ext. 3407**



Arbor
Memorial



Marie Eve Garneau, right, with her late sister Valérie Garneau.



Garneau Group's welcoming Claude Marcoux Complex.

"The Claude Marcoux Funeral Complex is at the heart of the Garneau Group," says founder Jean Garneau. "It is named after the person who believed in me and who completed my training, and who also sold me the company assets in 1980, allowing me to start the Garneau Group."

According to Marie Eve, it was the dwindling inventory in the columbarium that prompted the expansion project. "Of our 2,000 spaces, we had less than 100 left. Expanding the columbarium allowed us to add 833 niches. It's a hugely popular offering for client families as it's attached to the funeral home but has a separate door, allowing access 24-7."

Unfortunately, the only way to gain columbarium space was to expand into one of the complex's two reception rooms. Scaling down to one reception room added additional strains with most families requesting weekend services which led to the redesign of office space into a second reception room.

"It continued to snowball as we took from one place to give to another," laughs Marie Eve, "but in the end, we're so happy with how it turned out. The expansion allowed me to give my staff private offices and increase our storage space, creating a facility that allows us to better serve families."



Jean Garneau, Rollande Roy Garneau and Marie Eve Garneau inside the new expanded columbarium.

Following in her father's footsteps to enter funeral service was not always in Marie Eve's plans. She had set her sights on a career in theatre, teaching or nursing, until her older sister, Valérie, convinced her to re-evaluate her decision. After graduating from Humber College in 2002, she worked alongside Valérie to serve families and eventually, the duo spearheaded the renovation project. But it was shortly after construction began that Valérie's health began to wane. She was diagnosed with multiple system atrophy in 2018 and passed away on November 5, 2023.

"During my sister's illness and following her passing, it was sometimes difficult to find the passion in our work," says Marie Eve. "The renovation was the last thing we worked on together before she had to retire from the business. Through it all, it was hard to see her suffering and she never came to see the finished complex. She was so upset with the way her involvement ended and that she wouldn't be a part of its future."

On top of it all, the family and staff were also dealing with the implications of COVID-19. "There were a lot of delays and at one point we had to stop for a month, as they couldn't get the materials they needed," adds Marie Eve. "In addition, several senior staff retired during COVID and my dad also stepped away from the daily operations. While I still loved my job, there were a lot of challenges to overcome."

Seeing the beauty of the finished complex helped to reignite Marie Eve's passion, in addition to stepping into a new role that brought her back to one of her earlier career aspirations: teaching.

2024 FSAC SUMMIT & EXHIBITOR SHOWCASE

Better Together

JUNE 11 - 12, 2024
WINNIPEG, AB

FSAC ASFC
Representing Deathcare Professionals
Across Canada



SPEAKER
Tina Varughese



SPEAKER
Sébastien Sasseville



SPEAKER
Eddie LeMoine



SPEAKER
Caleb Wilde



SPEAKER
Wayne Lee



SPEAKER
Marc Verbenkov



PANELIST
Barbara Kemmis



PANELIST
Bradd Tuck



PANELIST
Trevor Charbonneau

Together with our partners CFTA, MFSA and WCCA - we invite you to join us for a jam-packed two days of learning & networking. Explore the latest from exhibitors, cemeterians, and fellow deathcare colleagues from across the country! We are truly Better Together and we can't wait to see you there!

Event includes hybrid registration options, as well as French Translation through Wordly.

For early bird registration or to learn more about exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities, visit:
www.fsac.ca/2024summit

In partnership with



Brought to you by our
Title Sponsor:





Marie Eve Garneau teaches the next generation of funeral directors at Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy.

“It was an opportunity that I never expected, but I received a call from a local school to teach funeral service education starting in early 2024,” says Marie Eve. “Today, I teach about 15 hours a week while still working full time at the funeral home. I have to say that the students have relit my spark for funeral service. When you work with people who are just starting and they are so enthusiastic about our profession, it really pushes you back up. They not only challenge our thought processes but also remind us of the value we provide every day.”

The Garneau Group has also benefited from having a connection to the next generation of funeral professionals. “I feel pretty lucky as the school is only 15 minutes away from our newly renovated complex, so many of my students work for me part time,” says Marie Eve. “I often hear people say they have a hard time hiring, but we haven’t had that problem. I feel I have both hands in the cookie jar right now.”


Marie Eve also has support from her staff and extended family. Besides her dad, Jean, helping with weekend funerals and her mom, Rollande, performing accounting tasks, she is joined by her husband Owen St.John, brother-in-law Joël Philibert, and nephew Raphaël Philibert, making it a true family affair. Only time will tell if her own children follow suit.

Due to the heavier workload with her teaching position at Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy (CNDF), Marie Eve has stepped away from some of her previous board and association work which included several years serving with the Funeral Ser-

vice Association of Canada (FSAC). Community and sector involvement have always been a family priority. Her dad served previous roles as president of FSAC and the Corporation des Thanatologues du Québec (CTQ) and Valérie was the first woman to head the CTQ board of directors in addition to serving one year as the Canadian representative on FIAT-IFTA.

“It’s important to participate in these roles because our family believes so much in this profession,” says Marie Eve. “If we can help any of our peers or share our knowledge to serve others, we are happy to do so. My dad has always been the type of person to say, ‘When you’re alone, you go much faster, but when we’re together, we’ll go much farther.’ And also, it’s the best way to know what is happening. If you want to be involved, you have to put yourself out there.”

Although rituals and service options have changed in the 20-plus years since Marie Eve has been licensed, much has stayed the same: the need to serve families to the highest capability. A promise that will continue for the Garneau Group at the newly expanded Claude Marcoux Complex as they look toward further growth in the future.

“It is always a guess when you tackle a large project like this,” concludes Marie Eve. “You have to take a chance and hope this will be for the best. Of course, you wonder with rituals changing and being in the midst of a recession if you are investing all this for nothing. But I believe this was for the best, especially now that I’ve seen the finished outcome and how happy people have been with the new facility.” 

Ocean

AH614

Ocean Keepsake AH614K



Earthen Sky

AH612

Earthen Sky Keepsake AH612K



Earthen Sky & Ocean full sized urn - \$148.00 + HST Keepsakes - \$48.00 + HST
Add them to your Selection Room for 2024
Order online today at www.cfcsupply.com or call us at 1.866.917.7589



Michael Brooke

A DAY AT THE MUSEUM

by Michael Brooke

If you grew up near southern Ontario or had a chance to visit this part of Canada, you might have set foot in the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). I confess it's been decades since I've visited, but what recently drew me back was an exhibit called *Death: Life's Greatest Mystery*.

The installation came via Chicago's Field Museum. It was brought to the ROM in October and has provoked a reaction or two. I had an opportunity to talk with a front-line staffer who told me the response to the exhibit has been mixed. This is not surprising as the topic of "death" can be fraught with emotion. While some people felt triggered by the exhibit, others found it eased their fears. My takeaway: the exhibit was extremely well done and sparked a few ideas I'd like to share.

By the time you read this, the exhibit will have moved to another museum, but let me take you through some of the more notable parts that struck me as genuinely worthwhile.

Upon entering the installation, visitors were presented with five critical questions:

1. What is death?
2. What will happen to my spirit?
3. How will my death affect others?
4. Do I have to die?
5. What will happen to my body?

The exhibit presented a number of religious and cultural ideas seeking to answer these questions. It was beautifully and thoughtfully presented. But what added to the experience were several interactive kiosks that asked visitors to contemplate some genuinely profound questions.

The first kiosk asked, "How do you define death?" Three scenarios were presented, and it was fascinating to read the

One of the most unusual parts of the exhibit was the opportunity for visitors to experience first-hand what dead bodies smell like. It's one thing to explain in writing the science of how bacteria break down tissues; it's quite another to lift a flap and take in the actual smell. I can 100 per cent confirm they nailed it. Note: I don't recommend this idea.

results. For example, one question asked: if doctors stopped someone's heart for 30 minutes during surgery, did the patient die? Most exhibit goers (70 per cent) indicated, "No, the patient did not die."

One of the most unusual parts of the exhibit was the opportunity for visitors to experience first-hand what dead bodies smell like. It's one thing to explain in writing the science of how bacteria break down tissues; it's quite another to lift a flap and take in the actual smell. I can 100 per cent confirm they nailed it. Note: I don't recommend this idea.

As I strolled through the multitude of ways different societies dealt with issues of death, dying and spirituality, I realized that the installation was also veering into another taboo topic: religion. Despite the potential minefield this could have created, the exhibit was deeply respectful.

The second kiosk I encountered struck at the heart of what it means to work in the death-care field. The main question was one that everyone eventually contemplates: "How do you

want to be remembered?” I liked that the kiosk stated, “There are no wrong answers. Choose an answer that is right for you.”

There were three questions, and while I remind you this was not a scientific survey, it does give some indication of how the majority of attendees felt.

Question one asked, “Would you like a lavish memorial or a simple one?” Approximately 25 per cent of responders indicated they wanted a lavish one, while 75 per cent said they preferred a simple memorial.

Question two reflected this discrepancy. It asked, “Do you want many people at your funeral or just a few close friends and family?” Almost thirty per cent responded, “A lot of people.”

The final question asked, “Do you want a faith-based ceremony or a secular one?” Approximately 70 per cent chose secular.

Near the kiosk, visitors were presented with a biodegradable pod holding a body. As the body decomposed, it nurtured a tree affixed to the pod. It’s one thing to see this concept online; it’s another to catch it in real life. The pod, called Capsula Mundi, was a prototype from Italy.

The topic of cremation was deftly, if not humorously, handled by using a chicken. Cremation was presented along with the idea of taking cremains and turning it into a diamond. Alkaline hydrolysis, only available in select provinces, was featured with something genuinely experimental – promession. This procedure involves taking a body and freeze-drying it in liquid nitrogen. From here, it is vibrated at very high temperatures to produce powdered remains. I sense that I speak on behalf of a number of folks when I say that, thankfully, promession is still a theoretical procedure.

Another intriguing aspect was the weaving of science into the exhibit. A massive tardigrade was featured at 4,000 times the actual size. Tardigrades – also known as water bears or moss piglets – are genuinely the stuff of nightmares, but they do put death into perspective. Did you know there are 1,300 species of tardigrade, and they have been called the most resilient creatures on earth? They can survive dehydration, volcanoes and outer space.

Towards the end of the exhibit, there was a little sign featuring a QR code and the words “Emotional Check-In. How are you feeling? For support with grief, scan the QR code.” It was

a thoughtful touch and something I can see funeral homes implementing.

The last two parts of the installation were genuinely hands-on. The first featured a large video that beautifully showcased the power of memory. It asked visitors to reflect on those who had passed, recalling specific memories like the sound of their laugh or their special recipe. Users were prompted to place their hands on part of the exhibit to illuminate a tree of life.


The final piece of the Death exhibit concluded with an opportunity to leave a mark by taking a sticky note and filling in the last part of the sentence: “Before I die, I want to_____.” The responses ranged from heartfelt to truly bizarre.

So, you might be wondering, why did I take you on a journey through an exhibit that has already left the building? The answer is that funeral homes can learn a lot from museums. Presentation and curation are critical to a museum’s success. How things are carefully explained and showcased means that complex topics can be approached and, hopefully, understood better.

I remember the first trip I took to the ROM back in 1974. It’s hard to believe that was five decades ago, but I clearly remember the dinosaurs and priceless collections of artifacts from ancient civilizations.

I am not suggesting that you turn your funeral home into a museum, but I wonder if you can further draw upon its history to elevate your customer’s experience. The previous funeral home I worked at featured several religious objects that I am pretty sure both informed and sparked a conversation or two. Curated items, thoughtfully explained, can add a great deal to elevate experiences.

About halfway through the exhibit, I interviewed a young woman named Amanda. I was interested to know what initially drew her to the exhibit. “I had someone close to me pass away,” she explained. “After this, I have become obsessed with this subject, and I guess we all wonder what happens after we die.”

While you might not have an opportunity to see this exhibit in your hometown, nothing stops you from borrowing the idea. Perhaps you can work with your local museum to help people search for answers to life’s biggest questions. 

Michael Brooke is both a writer and former publisher. He now turns people's memories into magazines. Contact Michael at mbrooke@timeformystory.com.



Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP



WHAT'S NEW?

by Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP

That's a loaded question! Are we talking about new products here? Consumer trends? Industry trends? Perspectives? Let me take a broad swipe across all of those topics from a Canadian, Australian, Kiwi and American point of view.

There has been a noticeable consumer migration from "traditional" funeral brands and services to some new industry players over the past few years. In some areas, it began with a lower cost cremation culture inching and then crowding its way into the traditional market. At the same time, in other areas, the migration began with a new purpose-built facility, right in line with the needs of the traditionally minded community. "If you build it, they will come" proved to be true.

Did you catch it? I dared to use that pesky "T" word. You know, traditional. A small handful of folks have put a lot of effort into getting an entire generation of death-care professionals to avoid or even forget the term traditional, be it for a funeral or family.

Now, I am observing a new migration pattern. Since the pandemic ended, I've met a number of firms that averaged, say, 10 calls a month before the pandemic that are now enjoying 40 calls a month. Perhaps enjoying isn't the right or best word.

Quadrupling your business sounds cool at first until you have a full house and are trapped in a facility that was designed for three services a week – modelled back in a simpler time when the bodies were only held for three days before their services.

Today, when you find yourself in that same building with 10 calls in the previous week, it is more stressful than enjoyable. To complicate matters, your current guests average over a week in care, you need more staff and storage, and you are spending more time rearranging the cooler, in traffic and at the crematorium than with your family and those families in care.

Today, we are being bombarded by green messaging, be it at conferences, in print and online. Green alternatives to funerals

and burials are being crammed down our throats. Don't get me wrong. I love Mother Earth, Gaia, the environment; by any name, I am a fan of nature. It's just that this green migration isn't being driven by a massive consumer demand. There is no green wave.

Let me rephrase that. It seems there are a handful of folks, mostly the green conference and webinar speakers, driving this trend. Ask yourself this, how many traditional customers walk in, at need, seeking data or proof behind your greenest package claims? Anyone, Anyone?

Worse than the small numbers, or perhaps more importantly, there isn't a lot of green to be earned in going green. Not for me, not for my customers, not for the municipalities. Not yet anyway.

It is the traditional customer where our real green comes from and where our green ethos needs to be visible. There you go again, Jeff, saying "traditional." What or who exactly is a "traditional" customer?

Good question. To me, the "traditional" customer is anybody predisposed to buy products and services from us. They prefer to gather and hold ceremonies and perform rituals. They like flowers and food. They like music and storytelling. They like our help. They like wakes and layouts and taking the body home for a few days. They would even like to have a sleepover at the chapel if they could. Let's agree that we aren't talking about the low-cost crowd or the "stop oil" crowd.

We are talking about the high-maintenance and "in a hurry" crowd. That's right, much of that migrating traditional clientele are in search of three ingredients: facilities that are friendly to their specific cultural rituals; people willing to work within their timetable; and products aligned more with their values.

What do I mean by friendly facilities? Here's an example. Globally, I have observed a trend of families participating on

Finding grace at the end.

At Imperial, we have the privilege of supporting funeral homes as they guide their families through the hardest moments of their lives. It is our deep honour to meet these moments and to offer each funeral director and family our care and compassion. Life is a journey. We help ensure that it ends where it began — with empathy.



SERVING WITH COMPASSION SINCE 1913.

THEIMPERIALGROUP.CA

Grief

the unwelcome journey

Dr. Bill Webster has written a new 40-page booklet designed for people in the early days of grief after bereavement. "Grief: The Unwelcome Journey" is an ideal resource to include in a stationery package or as a personalized token of your support to your families.

After a mere three months, the booklet is already in second edition in the U.K., and has been described as "... a masterpiece, covering all aspects of grieving in a most practical and helpful manner." (J. West, West & Coe, London)

Dr. Bill will introduce this product to the Canadian market in the fall of 2023, at less than the cost of a sympathy card.

To receive a complimentary copy for your consideration, please email Dr. Bill Webster (info@griefjourney.com) with your name and funeral home details.

Visit www.griefjourney.com for more grief support resources.

a deeper level with witness cremation, ritual bathing, dressing, hairdressing, cosmetizing and scattering their departed family members. The reasons are many and include changes in migration patterns, ethnic diversity, more home death and a feeling of wanting to be more connected to their roots and more involved in final filial care.

Ask yourself, how do you accommodate ritual witness, bathing, dressing and casketing requests?

Grief experts worldwide agree that participation in rituals, writing eulogies or creating tributes with slide shows is a healthy part of grieving. People cannot embalm their own loved ones, only we can. So, let's start family participation after embalming ends.

Expat communities tend to retain certain elements from the death culture back home. In Chinese cultures everywhere, it is not uncommon for the sons to wash the remains of their father three times. Many Asian families place rice, notes, coins or a pearl in the mouth of the deceased. In the Latter-Day Saints community, ritual dressing is the norm. In the South Asian community, a ritual bathing using milk, yogurt, ghee and honey may be performed followed by a family dressing.

I've had the pleasure of participating with families and focus groups around the world who have provided "hands-on" help in the final care of their relatives.

It is quite interesting to me that while working with people across ages, races and religions, their perspectives on ritual, ceremony and participation were nearly the same. They definitely knew that taking part in the service and care of the remains was healing, and they felt they were a part of something special. Many had conversations with their mothers and sisters as they applied cosmetics and styled their hair, and the stories of special memories replaced tears with gratitude.

Were there things the participants didn't like? Of course, and they too can be broken down into three categories: facilities, staff and products.

For many, the facilities were described as too cramped, outdated or just plain gross. Dirty castors, chipped tabletops, stained sheets and worn-out head blocks leapt into the vision of many clients I spoke with while remaining invisible to the staff.

Talk about an easy fix! Carve out a new space wide enough to rotate a dressing table with a person on both ends and long enough to have a casket in the room at the same time. About 23 square metres and a little plumbing and presto.

The most common staff complaints could be easily solved with training. Some people were described as unrehearsed because they did not know the layers, front from back, how to tie knots or the placement of garments. Well, they appeared unrehearsed because they had never actually been trained on donning these complicated ritual garments.


Sometimes they had been trained and were very knowledgeable, but they lacked a single ingredient: a gentle touch. Being unaware of what appears rough or ham-handed can easily leave impressions ranging from uncaring to just plain mean in the broken hearts of observers. Never forget that we are in show business. Whoever puts on the best show gets the best business.

Finally, let's go to the product arena (i.e. the body). This element generated the most conversation and seemed to have the deepest impact on focus group discussion. The number one complaint was that their loved ones were just too stiff or hard. Their squared and flattened bums, calves and elbows came in second. Their grey pallor or heavy makeup came in third. Gobs of glue and cotton over incisions and chemical odours finished the list. All of these experiences and conversations reinforce the age-old question: what do customers want?

The ugly truth is many firms rely too much on refrigeration, restricted cervical injection and some pretty dangerous chemicals in their clinical care suite these days. They are definitely producing outcomes out of sync with what the traditional folks we defined earlier want.

Over-hard, grey, multi-point injections and chemical smells are really quite easy to solve. They are interrelated and easily and economically avoidable with earlier embalming, using rational quantities of less toxic chemicals and bypassing the cooler.

You will be surprised just how green embalming can be while using smarter chemicals, conscious water stewardship and following a rational solid and liquid waste plan. Have you compared the pile of biohazardous waste, empty boxes and PPE from a person's last day in a hospital to the pile you created in the embalming room? It's about 1/10. Nobody is begging for green health care either, so why are we? The traditional families who are choosing our services and then sometimes defending their choices need to know and understand their choices aren't "ungreen."

Is it time to take control of the migration in your marketplace? Perhaps a better way to frame this is do you want to invest your time, money and energy in promoting green funerals (at 1/5 of the revenue and 1/10 of the audience) or do you want to invest your time, money and energy in your facility, staff and products and capture those traditional families? 

Jeff Chancellor serves as director of education, training and research for Eckels and welcomes your opinions.



AFSA

96TH AFSA AGM & CONVENTION

celebrate, educate, & connect

DEERFOOT INN & CASINO, CALGARY, AB

 25 April	LINDA EDGECOMBE Suppliers Night
 26 April	AWARDS GALA Government Speakers
 27 April	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



REGISTER NOW



Dr. Bill Webster

ANGER: ROOTS AND RESPONSES

by Dr. Bill Webster

“I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take it anymore.” These words, written by novelist Paddy Chayefsky, were made famous by Howard Beale (played by British actor Peter Finch) in the 1976 movie *Network*. Beale was a TV news anchor who abandons the teleprompter script, and lets out all of his frustrations about the world in which he lives.

“I don’t have to tell you things are bad. We know things are bad – worse than bad. Everybody’s out of work or scared of losing their job. Shopkeepers keep a gun under the counter. Gangs are running wild in the street and there’s nobody anywhere who seems to know what to do. It’s like everything everywhere is going crazy. We sit in our houses, scared to go out, and all we say is: ‘Just leave us alone.’”

“Well, I’m not gonna leave you alone. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs, and go to the window. Open it, stick your head out, and yell: ‘I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not gonna take this anymore!’” (Adapted from original speech, which you can watch on YouTube.)

In the movie, people all over the country responded and did just that!

This speech feels just as relevant to the world we live in today as it did in its release nearly 50 years ago. People are upset, angry and mad as hell about many situations – national, local and personal. They have every right to protest because circumstances in their world seem beyond their control, and they feel helpless.

Anger is usually an emotional reaction, it’s rarely a cognitive one. Think about it. In an emotional moment, we say something in an angry outburst. Sometime later, when we think about it, we regret the things we said impulsively.

I am not saying that we don’t have the right to be angry. Someone described anger as a “hedge against humiliation” which is how I understand Beale’s outburst in the film. But anger can be cathartic and it can be destructive. While people may be justified in their anger, it does not warrant venting that wrath on people who least deserve it. That’s the problem with anger ... it often gets misdirected.

What people rant and rave about is often not the real reason for their reaction. More often than not, what really infuriates them is the feeling they are powerless to change their situation.

Often, professionals like funeral directors or counsellors become the focus of people’s anger because, despite their best efforts, they can’t give their clients the one thing they want the most: namely the return of their loved one and the way things were before.

So, when you are confronted by an angry person, consider the following steps:

1. Reacting in kind always makes things worse. To respond in a similarly aggressive manner surrenders control over what happens next. So, remove yourself and your ego from the situation. At all times, maintain dignity and respect. Be aware of your facial expression and posture. For most of us, this probably means biting your lip while controlling your own natural human responses.

2. Practice your body language for such situations. Make this a “staff exercise” with role plays. Try to adopt a non-threatening and understanding posture and show little emotion. Create the impression that you are relaxed, even though your insides may be churning.

3. Listen carefully for clues. Find out what the person feels, wants and what exactly their problem is. Be empathetic. Nod or shake your head appropriately. Ask as many questions as you can. This forces the person out of the right (emotional) brain, where anger is ignited, into the left (logical) brain, which will result in a more rational and calm response.

Listen to what is being said. For example, if someone says, “I feel so angry,” you can ask, “What do you feel angry about? Who has made you angry? When did you start feeling angry? How does this make you feel?” By the time they have answered all the questions, they will have diffused their anger and may even feel you are the most understanding person they ever met.

4. Develop a plan to resolve the problem. Allow the person to be part of the solution, so they think it is their idea.

“What can we do to resolve our problem?” is a great approach because it’s not their problem or solution. Instead, we are working together to make it our solution. You might begin the conversation by saying, “Would it be an idea to...?” and help create solutions and options.


People often feel embarrassed after an angry outburst so give them a way out, an action to take to help them save face.

Remember, anger is a reaction to a sense of powerlessness, so the more you can empower the person to make a decision or come up with a solution, the more you will defuse the root cause.

“What can we do to resolve our problem?” is a great approach because it’s not their problem or solution. Instead, we are working together to make it our solution. You might begin the conversation by saying, “Would it be an idea to...?” and help create solutions and options.

A metaphor that helped me get a perspective on how to handle anger is that a professional person should be like a lightning rod. When lightning strikes, it can cause great damage and destruction. Anger is the same.

But if we can “conduct” that anger ... allowing it to strike but then redirecting it to the “ground” where it can be safely dissipated, we do people a great service.

Always remember, the rational, objective person has the upper hand. Remember too, that even this angry individual, if you handle it well, could be a future customer. For by dealing wisely with difficult people, you can turn someone who could be a bitter enemy into a grateful friend. 

Dr. Bill Webster is the director of the Centre for the Grief Journey, and can be reached at www.GriefJourney.com, and on Twitter @drbillwebster.



DIESSE UNIFORMS

Brand yourself with style and quality. Diesse Uniforms recognizes the importance of a company’s image, through professionally dressed personnel. Contact us and experience high quality Canadian made apparel, service and value.

www.diesse.ca
info@diesse.ca

2399 Cawthra Road #25 Mississauga, ON
905.896.0074

Mens and Ladies suits, morning stripe separates, coats, shirts, shoes, gloves & accessories.

2024 AFSA Annual Conference

April 25-27, 2024 - Calgary, AB



A complete line of cremation urns in brass, aluminum, wood and porcelain. Contact Brad Marshall for access to our online ordering website.

Brad.m@summit-memorials.com
306-717-6649

New customers save 20% on their first order

Commemorate Group Inc.
1-888-URN-SALE
commemorate.com
LoveUrnS AUTHORIZED RESELLER



cfhc online

Social Media Programs For Funeral Homes

Content Development • Moderation

• Promotion • Strategy • Video

Call (613) 863-2521

www.cfhconline.com

Canadian College of Funeral Service

CCFS is enthusiastic about the opportunity to support the 2024 AFSA Annual Conference and connecting with our colleagues.



Manufacturer and Supplier
Burial Vaults & Cremation Alternatives
Columbarium | Private Mausoleums
Memorial Gardens
1-800-232-7385

Visit us online www.albertawilbert.ca

We welcome all 2024 delegates!



2024 AFSA Annual Conference

April 25-27, 2024 - Calgary, AB



Funeral Service Education

- Funeral Service Diploma
 - Funeral Director Certificate
 - Embalmer Certificate
- Mount Royal University
Calgary, Alberta
mru.ca/Funeral



Robert Anderson Funeral Services Inc.

Service From The Heart
115-190 MacAlpine Crescent
Fort McMurray, AB T9H 4A6
Phone: 780-790-1220



After Care Service, that:

Stops junk mail & phone calls to the deceased
Helps locate life insurance policies & survivor
pension benefits

Special AFSA registration page at:

www.canada-bereavement-registry.ca/afsa

1-877-565-5515

info@canada-bereavement-registry.ca

*A deceased person will receive approximately
100 items of junk mail during the first year
following their death*



4121 - 17th Ave. SE Calgary, AB
Tel: (403) 235-3602 • Fax: (403) 235-1968
From the Pierson family and staff
Many thanks to all those who contribute
to the good work of AFSA.

HOWARD DISTRIBUTORS

4550 Lougheed Highway
Burnaby, B.C. V5C 3Z5
Tel: (604) 291-6474
Fax: (604) 291-0652
Toll Free: (888) 291-7444
Contact: Don Worrall
Howard Distributors would like to
welcome all delegates!

MORTUARY LIFT™ COMPANY

A Lifting Experience.

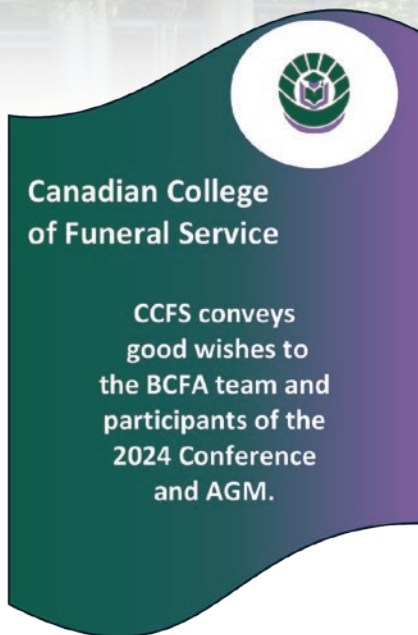


THE ULTIMATE 1000 LIFT™

127 Cottage Grove Avenue S.E.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403
800-628-8809 • 319-364-4910
www.mortuarylift.com

2024 BCFA Annual Conference

April 30 - May 2, 2024



Free after care service that:
Stops junk mail & phone calls to the deceased
Helps locate life insurance policies & survivor
pension benefits

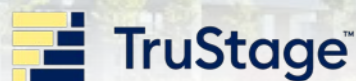
Special BCFA registration page at:

www.canada-bereavement-registry.ca/bcfa

1-877-565-5515

info@canada-bereavement-registry.ca

*A deceased person will receive approximately
100 items of junk mail during the first year
following their death*



TruStage Life of Canada, the leader
in final arrangements & preplanning
solutions is proud to have served
Canadians for 50 years.

We continue to offer unmatched
business solutions and remain
committed to growing your business and
exceeding expectations.

Contact us:

John W. Welsh

The Welsh Agency & Executor Protection
General Agency of
TruStage Life of Canada
1-888-579-2233
john@johnwelsh.com

Bernie Perri

Director, Sales & Experience
Preplanning Solutions
TruStage Life of Canada
Bernie.Perri@TruStage.com

Or

Visit us on the web:

www.trustage.ca

HOWARD DISTRIBUTORS

4550 Lougheed Highway
Burnaby, BC
V5C 3Z5

Tel: (604) 291-6474

Fax: (604) 291-0652

Toll Free: (888) 291-7444

Contact: Don Worrall

Howard Distributors would like to
welcome all delegates to Vancouver!

CFNAPR2024

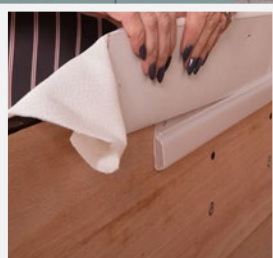
STARMARK®

Presentation means everything.

Enhance your Identification Viewings and Private Farewells with the Chaise Bed Viewer.



Chaise Bed Viewer
Cherry Mahogany
Additional colors available



J-Channel Interior

Allows for interiors to be easily positioned every time and eliminates interior fraying.



Roller Bed System

Positioning the insert is simplified and easy with the interior roller bed system.



Hinged Foot End Door

Conveniently provides access for easy insert removal.



Touch Up Kits

Touch up kits are available to keep your Chaise Bed Viewer looking new.

Pair With



Wood-based

The **Bed Viewer Insert** includes an adjustable overlapping shroud interior and leak resistant liner.



The **Foot Cover** is designed to provide a gentle and dignified way to soften the appearance. Simply place beneath the shroud interior.



Scan to watch an instructional video

Contact us for more information at (888) 366-7335 or sales@starmarkcp.com.

Copyright © 2024 Starmark. All rights reserved. Specific portions of Starmark products may be covered by one or more U.S. patents. To learn more visit starmarkcp.com/patents.

NEW VENUE, NEW VIBE

FCSCS READIES FOR SPRING SYMPOSIUM

by Lisa Johnston

The Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan (FCSCS) is revamping some key components of their upcoming Spring Symposium, scheduled this year for May 23 & 24 at the Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre. Located steps away from Saskatoon's international airport, the new venue will allow easy access to those travelling into the city for the popular event.

"We made the change from a convenience perspective while trying to cut down costs for licensees so they don't have to pay for parking downtown," says Kim Eberts, assistant registrar and compliance officer, FCSCS. "The Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre has ample parking, it's close to the airport for our presenters and offers a free shuttle back and forth to the terminal."

The lineup of guest presenters this year features Poul Lemasters, Maria Markatos, Dominick Astorino, Todd Reinholt and Christina Walton.

"Poul Lemasters will kick things off on Thursday morning followed by Maria Markatos, a representative from the Financial and Consumer Affairs



Christina Walton

Schedule of Events (subject to change)

Thursday, May 23, 2024

8:00 am – 8:45 am	Registration
9:00 am – 11:00 am	Poul Lemasters
11:00 am – 11:15 am	Coffee Break
11:15 am – 12:15 pm	Marie Markatos, FCAA
12:15 pm – 12:30 pm	Regulatory (TBD)
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Dominick Astorino
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Coffee Break & AGM Sign In
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	FCSCS AGM
6:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Reception Prior to Banquet
6:30 pm	Banquet & Awards



Poul Lemasters

Friday, May 24, 2024

8:00 am – 9:30 am	Todd Reinholt
9:30 am – 9:45 am	Coffee Break
9:45 am – 11:15 am	Christina Walton
11:15 am	Wrap Up



*Direct from Canada's Premiere
Supplier of Memorial Products*



All NEW customers receive 20% off their first order!

Helping Families Honor Their Loved One

TO REQUEST A COPY OF OUR CREMATION PRODUCTS CATALOG FEATURING OUR COMPLETE SELECTION OF URNS IN ALUMINUM, BRASS, PORCELAIN AND WOOD OR TO REQUEST ACCESS TO OUR URN WEBSITE CONTACT BRAD MARSHALL

BRAD.M@SUMMIT-MEMORIALS.COM

306 717 6649

Authority who will discuss some potential revisions to section 91 of our act,” says Eberts. “We are having a return visit from Dominick Astorino, who was a popular presenter last year, and then on Friday morning, Todd Reinholt will be discussing how to create ambience at a funeral home while grief specialist Christina Walton will cover the topic of mental health.”

New this year is the addition of a banquet dinner – a more formal event that will feature the presentation of student and long-term service awards. The aim is to shorten the AGM component (Thursday afternoon) and reunite licensees later in the day for a sit-down dinner, creating more opportunities for funeral professionals to mingle while celebrating the accomplishments of others.

For those unable to attend the symposium in-person, all education sessions will be offered online, allowing licensees to acquire their needed CEU credits from the comfort of their home or office.

Both the Saskatchewan Crematoria Council (SCC) and the Saskatchewan Funeral Service Association (SFSA) will be hosting in-person annual general meetings following the Spring Symposium, while SFSA has also scheduled a golf day and trade show to coincide with the event (see sidebar for more details).

For more information on this year’s Spring Symposium, please visit www.fcscs.ca. 



Todd Reinholt

SFSA | SFSA Plans Trade Show, Golf Tournament and AGM to Coincide with Spring Symposium

SFSA PLANS TRADE SHOW, GOLF TOURNAMENT AND AGM TO COINCIDE WITH SPRING SYMPOSIUM

The newly revamped Saskatchewan Funeral Service Association (SFSA) will be gearing up its membership drive with a number of fun and interactive activities to coincide with this year’s Spring Symposium.

Golf is first on the agenda with a 1:30 p.m. shotgun start on Wednesday, May 22, at Greenbryre Golf & Country Club. Details about a non-golf activity are yet to be released, but everyone (whether golfing or not) is invited back to the clubhouse for a reception that evening.

“That is where we will be kicking off the fun,” says past SFSA president John Schachtel. “The golf will consist of 12 holes with a hole-in-one competition and numerous vendor games and activities to make it an entertaining afternoon. Then we’ll have a comedian, Kelly Taylor, for the evening and we are hoping to have 100 people for the dinner reception.”



John Schachtel

Our associates celebrate lives. We celebrate our associates.



IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A REWARDING CAREER THAT ALLOWS YOU TO SUCCEED BY HELPING OTHERS, YOU HAVE FOUND IT.

As a member of the Service Corporation International (Canada) ULC team, you will join more than 1,800 dedicated individuals throughout Canada who provide caring assistance to families in need and help them plan ahead to create meaningful, unique services as special as the lives they represent.

BENEFIT OPTIONS

- Excellent income potential
- Health care, dental, vision and life insurance plans
- SCIC Registered Retirement Savings Plan
- SCIC Deferred Profit Sharing Plan
- Short- and long-term disability
- Career advancement opportunities

For information, please contact Ian Cascadden at
604-806-4117 or Ian.Cascadden@sci-us.com.

**Great
Place
To
Work®**

Certified
SINCE 2020
CANADA™



SCI-Corp.com

Dignity®
MEMORIAL

DignityMemorial.ca

SFSA | SFSA Plans Trade Show, Golf Tournament and AGM to Coincide with Spring Symposium


www.sfsaonline.ca

The following day, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., SFSA is hosting a supplier showcase, allowing for symposium delegates to spend time viewing the profession's latest and greatest products and services. A president's reception will follow FCSCS's AGM on Thursday afternoon, creating a relaxing atmosphere for licensees and suppliers to come together in a more social setting.

"As an association we are looking at working closer with FCSCS to ensure we are all in the same boat and paddling the right direction," says Schachtel. "We have to help each other as these are not good times. The profession is encountering a number of challenges. People are retiring and there are no

new people to replace them and if they do find people, funeral homes often need two people to replace the one who was leaving. That's the reality of today's profession."

SFSA's AGM will follow Friday's education sessions and include lunch for all registered guests. All SFSA activities will be taking place in Galaxy A, a room located nearby the education sessions.

Membership in SFSA is open to everyone involved in funeral service, including suppliers. Several perks are included for the \$20 annual fee, including the opportunity to engage with colleagues while helping to shape the future of funeral service throughout the province. 

SFSA | Message from SFSA President Trevor Watts

www.sfsaonline.ca

MESSAGE FROM SFSA PRESIDENT TREVOR WATTS

The Saskatchewan Funeral Service Association (SFSA) is a group of elected licensed funeral directors and embalmers who work diligently for our profession and the families we are honoured to serve. We also communicate with our governing body, the Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan (FCSCS), and work closely with other industry representatives. As champions of the funeral service profession, SFSA stands as a unifying force and committed advocate. Our mission is to promote professionalism, champion financial support for those in need, facilitate collaboration among our diverse membership, and elevate standards. Through education, resources and relentless advocacy, we aim to empower our members to provide compassionate service and support grieving families during their most challenging moments.

For 2024, we will be hosting another three-day event and have booked a golf event at Greenbryre Golf & Country Club on May 22, the trade show on May 23 and the AGM on May 24, in conjunction with FCSCS's Spring Symposium at the Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre.

Since our last AGM, the board of directors has been working diligently to amend our membership from an owners/managers group to an association with additional membership options including funeral home staff and supplier partners. We sent our funeral homes and allied suppliers information on the new membership categories and fee structure in our January membership drive and renewals, and we are looking forward to growing our membership base with this new structure.

The board has also put together several member benefits ranging from group cellular rates and access to legal representation



Trevor Watts

that is well-versed with our provincial legislation. In January 2024, SFSA launched our website, www.sfsaonline.ca. and throughout 2024, we plan to develop social media. We will also begin some advertising across the province with local area media outlets that will be focused on promoting the funeral service profession and the role we have within our communities.

I want to express my gratitude and thanks to our board of directors for all their hard work as they volunteer their time to this association and to all the funeral professionals in our province who serve families every day. On behalf of our SFSA board and membership, we wish our colleagues across the country a happy, healthy and prosperous year.

~ Trevor Watts, president, SFSA

HOW HUMILITY BOOSTS YOUR ONLINE INFLUENCE

IS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA HELPING OR HURTING YOU?

by Jeff Mowatt

Ever receive one of those holiday newsletters from a friend or relative summarizing their family's news of the year? "Roger is now managing the eastern division at work. Sarah graduated from elementary school. And we had a fabulous vacation in Cancun, Mexico." I've no doubt the senders were well intended. To me though, many come across as self-absorbed bragging. Unfortunately, the same may be true of your social media marketing.

While attempting to post fun, interesting social media tidbits with customers and prospects, you may in fact be sowing seeds of resentment and disconnection.

I'm not suggesting that you stop posting online. Heavens, if you're running a business and communicating with customers, social media marketing is a vital tool. But what if rather than bragging about our brilliance, success and popularity, we instead use what I call the humility advantage?

What if we also posted humorous bits about our failings and foibles?

Of course, you want customers and prospects to view you and your colleagues as experts in your chosen field. That's why my customer service training programs are about being perceived as your customers' trusted advisor. I'm not suggesting posting an-



Jeff Mowatt

nouncements about failed projects for customers. But on top of our successes, what if we also demonstrate that we are human and don't take ourselves too seriously?

The problem with trying to come across as brilliant, successful and popular is it makes you unrelatable. Every mature adult entrusted to make buying decisions on behalf of their organization knows that no one is perfect. When your social media marketing posts also reveal your less than perfect life, you demonstrate that you're authentic. Authenticity builds trust. And trust builds businesses, careers and relationships.

So, in addition to posting corporate success stories, consider sharing a morsel of personal news with some self-deprecating humour. "Enjoyed Cancun, Mexico. Well, mostly the restrooms. Turns out Montezuma is seriously vengeful. Hate that guy!" Lighten up and laugh at yourself a bit. People love it. And they'll want to get to know you better.

That's the *humility* advantage. 

Hall of Fame business speaker (and mediocre golfer) Jeff Mowatt has been training teams for over 30 years. To engage Jeff for your conference or team meeting, call 1-800-JMowatt or go to www.JeffsBusinessTips.com.



OFSA SPRING MEETING PLANNED FOR MAY 15

The Ontario Funeral Service Association (OFSA) is inviting all funeral professionals to attend this year's spring meeting, scheduled for May 15, 2024 at the Hilton Garden Inn Toronto Airport/West Mississauga. Packed with information, education and networking, the occasion marks the perfect opportunity for Ontario's funeral profession to come together under one roof.

With a theme built around connecting and sharing, OFSA executive director Karen Ayres encourages everyone to attend.

"I encourage everyone to join us because regardless of the agenda, connection is the most important thing," says Ayres. "I have been with OFSA for six years and I can attest to the value of being together in person. It is all about uniting with like-minded people. The speakers are a key part as they provide the insights that inspire a new way of thinking, but it's the conversations that continue long after that are the most important part of professional development."



Jody Carrington

“This year, we have invited the Children’s Grief Foundation of Canada to join us and will have some fun building awareness and potentially raising some funds,” says Ayres. “It will be a great way to learn more about their cause while engaging everyone in the room.”


The spring meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. with a members only general meeting before the doors open to allow entry to all participants. Following the business portion, keynote Dr. Jody Carrington will energize the room with her infectious humour and insights as she tackles the topic of Building a Foundation of Authentic Relationships.

According to Carrington, people are not born with the ability to repair ruptures; they have to learn how to do this to build strong cultures. Such relationships are the foundation of a

successful company, team or community, and Carrington will present her own unique take on what it means to master the art of reconnection.

Other guests will include Jim Cassimatis, BAO CEO/registrar, and updates from the coroner’s office. Attendees will be also be participating in a roundtable discussion on industry trends and hot topics, and OFSA will launch its new Member HR solution with partner Peninsula Canada.

“This year, we have invited the Children’s Grief Foundation of Canada to join us and will have some fun building awareness and potentially raising some funds,” says Ayres. “It will be a great way to learn more about their cause while engaging everyone in the room.”

For those arriving early, there will be a social held at the hotel the evening before the meeting to allow funeral professionals to further connect. For more information on the spring meeting, please visit OFSA’s website at www.ofsa.org or its Facebook page. 

Presenting
GENERATIONS™
Sustainability by Batesville*

Featuring
3 new casket
models

Shown: Promise™
282684
*Actual product may vary from photographic representation.

Take a closer look!

**Honor a life,
sustain the next.**

For those who have passed, the last statement of their footprint on earth lays a path to a better future. Introducing Generations™, a line of sustainable caskets exclusively from Batesville®.

By choosing a Generations casket, the family honors their loved one by making a commitment to those who follow, sharing one last gift to the planet. It’s a way to give back while looking ahead, preserving a better tomorrow for this generation, and the next, and the next.


© 2024 Batesville Services, LLC

BEREAVEMENT AUTHORITY OF ONTARIO NAMES JIM CASSIMATIS AS CEO/REGISTRAR

Jim Cassimatis has served as interim chief executive officer and registrar of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) since December 2022. The BAO board of directors is pleased to announce he will continue in the same role on a full and substantive basis, effective February 16, 2024.

His confirmation to the position followed an extensive six-month, national search led by a special committee of the board of directors. He was selected following the thorough vetting process of more than 70 original applicants.

“The board of directors is thrilled to see Jim Cassimatis’ continuance as chief executive officer and registrar confirmed,” says Leith Coghlin, chair of the BAO board of directors. Coghlin adds, “Jim’s experience in government and his steady and thoughtful leadership over the past year were well received by consumer interests and our regulated sectors.”

Cassimatis joined the BAO in 2021 as its director of operations following a 32-year career with the Ontario Public Service. He was an assistant deputy minister for the last nine years in a variety of roles and ministries. A collaborative and solutions-oriented leader, he has a track record of building capacity and growing staff in the organizations he has led. He has had roles in finance, infrastructure and information technology planning, policy development and analysis, consumer protection, communications and client operations. Cassimatis has an honours BA in public policy and administration from York University and a master of public administration from Dalhousie University.

“I’m delighted by this news of course,” says Cassimatis. “I thank the board for its due diligence and commitment to its responsibility in the search process. It will continue to be my pleasure to work with the board on constantly improving our information and protection services for grieving families, who are the consumers of the bereavement sector. I also look forward to leading and collaborating with our dedicated hard-working staff, who are responsible for the achievement of many goals of the BAO during the last year in particular.”



Jim Cassimatis

Cassimatis adds, “The professionals we licence have been a key part of our achievements as they continue to consistently comply with regulations and the law, with many telling me that they appreciate our attention to the tiny minority of licensees who require greater scrutiny on behalf of families across Ontario.”

FUNERAL SERVICE FOUNDATION

CANADIANS AMONG RECIPIENTS OF FUNERAL SERVICE FOUNDATION ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIPS



Over the last several months, the Funeral Service Foundation (FSF) has awarded US\$165,000 in academic and professional development scholarships to worthy recipients in the United States and Canada.

Twenty-three funeral service students earned academic scholarships ranging from US\$2,500 to \$5,000. Thirty-six professional development scholarships were awarded to funeral professionals and funeral students to attend major conferences. Additionally, 119 students at four ABFSE-accredited institutions participated in foundation-supported NFDA Arranger Training seminars.

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS FALL CLASS 2023

Each year, the foundation awards academic scholarships to students excelling in coursework in funeral service education programs at ABFSE- and Canadian-accredited institutions. Awarded in two cycles and paid directly to institutions, the scholarships offset the costs associated with tuition, fees, books and supplies.

“We believe that a strong academic foundation is the hallmark of a strong career – whether it’s your first calling or you have found it meaningfully later in your career,” says foundation chair Mark Krause. “By creating opportunities for students of funeral service, the foundation hopes to invest in the future of the profession that has meant so much to all of us.”

Canadian Recipients:

Foundation '45 Scholarship | US\$5,000

- Kyrstal Cousins, Channel-Port aux Basques, Newfoundland and Labrador (Canadian College of Funeral Service)
- Lauren Esdale, West Kelowna, British Columbia (Canadian College of Funeral Service)
- Alexandra Kaske, Mississauga, Ontario (Humber College)



Kyrstal Cousins



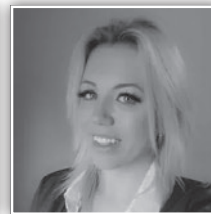
Lauren Esdale



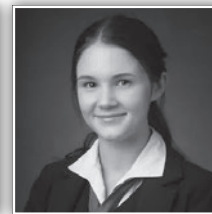
Alexandra Kaske



Parry Roy



Casandra Free



Makenzie Hawkes

Harry Pontone Memorial Scholarship | US\$2,500

- Parry Roy, Calgary, Alberta (Canadian College of Funeral Service)

Memorial Classic Scholarship | US\$2,500

- Casandra Free, Regina, Saskatchewan (Canadian College of Funeral Service)

Shipley Rose Buckner Memorial Scholarship | US\$2,500

- Makenzie Hawkes, Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canadian College of Funeral Service)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIPS – SUMMER AND FALL 2023

Professional development scholarships offered by the foundation provided opportunities for funeral professionals or students of funeral service to attend national events to further their careers to the next level, igniting their passions and purpose. Each scholarship covered registration fees, hotel stay and included a travel stipend.

OUR PROFESSION | *Canadians Among Scholarship Recipients*

www.funeralservicefoundation.org



NFDA International Convention & Exposition scholarship recipients.

2023 NFDA International Convention & Exposition Scholarships

Closing out the 2023 convention season, the foundation was honoured to provide 21 scholarships to licensed funeral directors to attend the NFDA International Convention & Exposition in Las Vegas, Nevada from September 10-13. The Canadian recipients were: Krystle Balance, Cropo Funeral Chapel, Winnipeg; Bridget Halfyard, Pierson's Funeral Service, Calgary; and Cyrise Hall, Forest Lawn Funeral Home and Cemetery, London, ON.

Dozens of academic scholarships are awarded annually in two application cycles. Scholarships range from US\$2,500-\$5,000 and are open to full-time or part-time students in good standing who are enrolled in ABFSE- or Canadian-accredited institutions/programs. Candidates must be attending classes and actively pursuing a degree in funeral service at the time of application. Academic scholarships are also available for U.S. and Canadian military veterans.

To learn more on how to apply for scholarships, visit <https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/scholarship-opportunities/>.

UPCOMING SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Certified Celebrant Training


Ten Funeral Service Foundation scholarships will be awarded for Certified Celebrant Training, hosted by NFDA and offered in partnership with Insight Institute. Open to those verifiably affiliated with at least one funeral home, the training will be held at NFDA headquarters in Brookfield, Wisconsin, from June 19-21, 2024.

Applications for Certified Celebrant Training will close April 15 at 11:59 p.m. CT. All applicants will be notified of their status by the end of April.

National Emerging Leaders Program

The Funeral Service Foundation is proud to sponsor the NFDA National Emerging Leaders Program. Created to attract, develop and retain transformational leaders, this strategic early-career leadership program is designed to give talented people the skills, tools, support and opportunities they need to succeed in their business and community.

National Emerging Leaders Program participants will have the opportunity to be mentored and network with other funeral service professionals and leaders outside of funeral service as they sharpen their skills.

Applications for the National Emerging Leaders Program will close April 15 at 11:59 p.m. CT. All applicants will be notified of their status by the end of April. 



Todd Van Beck

THE FOSSORES

PART II

Editor's Note: Todd Van Beck was a friend and valued contributor to *Canadian Funeral News* for over 25 years. In honour of Todd's memory and his passion for the profession, we will continue publishing the articles he shared with us prior to his death.

by Todd Van Beck†

The vocation of funeral service has deep historic roots. This article is about fossores in ancient Christianity. From the beginning, Christians revered their dead and as this story tells, the Christian community designated special people to undertake the responsibility of caring for the dead.

The cemetery management system of the fossores authorized them to sell niche spaces in the catacombs before need (the earliest example of pre-need). The fossores could sell these spaces either to a living person or persons for their own eventual burial or to the family and friends of the deceased on an at-need basis. Examples of these pre-needs and at-need transactions and purchases are innumerable as the evidence of such is stated clearly on the epitaphs and graffiti on the catacomb walls to this day.

No trace of such transactions appear before the latter half of the fourth century AD, or later than the first quarter of the fifth century AD. For example, in the catacomb of St. Cyriacus, two women bought from a fossore named Quintas a double catacomb space near a martyr's grave – which was considered prime entombment property.

Interestingly, the fossores also were skilled artisans. Because of the high-quality frescoes located within the catacombs, there is ample evidence the fossores knew how to paint and paint well. Within the sepulchres are frescoes of great intricacy that give vivid details of the fossore at his artistic work.

Among the representations of fossores on the catacomb walls, one of the best known is that of the fossore Diogenes. This fresco, which was seriously damaged in a foiled attempt to remove it from the wall, depicts Diogenes with his grave-digging pick over his right shoulder, and a sack on his left shoulder, while in his left hand he carries a staff with a lantern attached. The inscription reads: DIONGENES FOSSORE, IN PACE DEPOSITUS, OCTABV CALENDAS OCTOBRIS – the Fossore Diogenes, interred in peace the eighth day before the calendar of October.



In the catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter, there are two frescoes. One depicts a young man with a closely shaven beard, a short tunic, a belt around his waist, and bare legs and feet. He is excavating the rock with his pick and a lamp is hanging by his side. The other depicts an older man in a long tunic, not at work, holding a lamp which is affixed to a long handle ending in a sharp point. The sharp-pointed instrument is a pick, and recently a fossore's pick was discovered in the catacomb of St. Callixtus. It was extremely oxidized but still recognizable.

The fossore's lantern was used not only to guide them at their work digging graves, but it was also used to guide the early Christian visitors throughout the maze of tunnels and

continued on page 64

UPCOMING EVENTS | 2024

www.otcommunications.com/events.html

UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

ALBERTA FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION (AFSA)

AGM & Conference

April 25-27, 2024

Deerfoot Inn & Casino

Calgary, AB

BRITISH COLUMBIA FUNERAL ASSOCIATION (BCFA)

Annual Conference & AGM

April 30 – May 2, 2024

Westin Wall Centre, Vancouver Airport
Richmond, BC

CANADIAN COLLEGE OF FUNERAL SERVICE (CCFS)

Alberta Graduation & Awards Banquet

April 27, 2024

Deerfoot Inn & Casino

Calgary, AB

CREMATION ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA (CANANA)

Cremation Innovation Convention

September 11-13, 2024

Fairmont Chicago Millennium Park

Chicago, IL

FUNERAL AND CREMATION SERVICES COUNCIL OF SASKATCHEWAN (FCSCS)

Spring Symposium

May 23 & 24, 2024

Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre

Saskatoon, SK

FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (FSAC)

Summit & Exhibitor Showcase

(In partnership with CFTA, MFSA and WCCA)

June 11 & 12, 2024

RBC Convention Centre

Winnipeg, MB

INTERNATIONAL CEMETERY, CREMATION & FUNERAL ASSOCIATION (ICCFA)

Convention & Expo

April 10-13, 2024

Tampa Marriott Water Street

Tampa, FL

ICCFA University

July 19-24, 2024

Emory University

Atlanta, GA

Fall Leadership Summit

October 15-17, 2024

The St. Anthony Hotel

San Antonio, TX

NATIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION (NFDA)

Professional Women's Conference

April 28-30, 2024

The DeSoto

Savannah, GA

Embalming & Restorative Arts Seminar

May 2 & 3, 2024

Pittsburgh Institute of

Mortuary Science

Pittsburgh, PA

Leadership Conference

July 29 – August 1, 2024

Ponte Vedra Inn & Club

Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

International Convention & Expo

October 20-23, 2024

New Orleans, LA

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CEMETERY AND FUNERAL PROFESSIONALS (OACFP)

Cremation Symposium

April 16 & 17, 2024

Best Western

Cornwall, ON

Trusted Advisor Training and Certification

May 15, 2024

Capital Funeral Home

Ottawa, ON

OACFP @the Jays

June 4, 2024

Charity Golf Day

June 17, 2024

Richmond Hill Golf Club

Richmond Hill, ON

Educational Conference and Trade Show

October 8-10, 2024

Caesars Windsor Hotel & Casino

Windsor, ON

ONTARIO FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION (OFSA)

Spring Meeting

May 15, 2024

Hilton Garden Inn

Toronto Airport West

Mississauga, ON

AGM & Education Conference

September 16 & 17, 2024

Westin Trillium House

Blue Mountain, ON

SASKATCHEWAN FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION (SFSA)

Golf Tournament, Trade Show & AGM

May 22-24, 2024

Greenbryre Golf & Country Club

Saskatchewan Inn &

Conference Centre

Saskatoon, SK

SASKATCHEWAN CREMATORIA COUNCIL (SCC)

AGM

May 24, 2024

Saskatchewan Inn &

Conference Centre

Saskatoon, SK

SELECTED INDEPENDENT FUNERAL HOMES

Annual Meeting

September 25-28, 2024

Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa

Lake Buena Vista, FL

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD BY CALLING 1-800-465-0322
OR EMAIL THEM TO INFO@OTCOMMUNICATIONS.COM

WANTED IMMEDIATELY LICENSED FUNERAL DIRECTOR/EMBALMER

Ferguson Logan Montague Funeral Home in Montague, PE, is looking for a self-starter, friendly, compassionate family-orientated Funeral Director/Embalmer willing to start as soon as possible. Offering \$60,000 a year, with up to 18 weeks time off, plus health and dental benefits.

**Please forward resumé to
loganlogcabin@gmail.com**

SEEKING LICENSED FUNERAL DIRECTOR/ EMBALMER

C.L. Curry Funeral Home in Antigonish, NS, is looking for a licensed funeral director and embalmer to join our team. Assistance available in securing accommodations, if required.

**Inquiries/resumés can be directed
to info@clcurry.com**



TODD VAN BECK | *The Fossores – Part II*

www.toddvanbeck.com

continued from page 35

passages which made up the territory of the underground catacombs. Early Christians were frequent visitors to the burial sites of their dead, particularly for religious ceremonies and the anniversaries of the death of their loved ones.

The oldest fresco, which portrays two fossore, came from the latter half of the second century. It is in one of the Sacrament Chapels in the catacomb of St. Callixtus. The figure represented is pointing toward three eucharistic scenes, probably to indicate another of their duties, namely to exclude unauthorized persons from taking part in the liturgical celebrations in the catacombs which commemorated a martyr's death.


The final chapter in the vocation's history of the fossore is brief. It took approximately 60 years for the role of the fossore and the use of the catacombs to come to an end. By 350 AD, burial within the catacombs had become extremely rare and burial ceased altogether following the sack of Rome in 410 AD. Persecutions of the Christians ended and as the fate of the catacombs deteriorated, so went the fate and function of the fossore. In the sixth century, the catacombs were ruined by the Goths, and later, they underwent extensive destruction by the Lombard invasion. The memories of the fossore and his work were temporarily forgotten. The last mention of the fossore was recorded around 426 AD.

Following the destruction of the catacombs by the Lombards, Pope Paul I and later Pope Paschal I completely abandoned them and had the holy relics of the martyrs transferred to the Vatican.

Eventually, the entrances to the catacombs caved in and the concealed memories were forgotten until they were rediscovered by chance in 1578.

The movement from the catacombs to actual cemeteries was rapid. The church quickly designated suitable ground for burial and this earth was made sacred by the religious rites of consecration. Following the widespread use of the catacombs, Christian cemeteries consisted mainly of family vaults outside the walls of cities. Due to health concerns, the church followed Roman sanitary practices, taking full responsibility for the burials to take place outside the city walls. However, in the year 258 AD, the church defied Roman burial law and reinterred both the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul in the newly formed vaults which remain today under St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.

At the close of the fourth century, when the Christian persecutions came to an end, open air cemeteries emerged, and during this same period, the movement began to take the body to the church proper for the funeral. Hence, from the fourth century until the middle of the 20th century, the Christian trend was for both church burial and church funerals. Over the past 50-plus years, this ancient trend has decreased steadily.

The work and ministry of the fossore in early Christianity is a link to the work and mission of the modern funeral service profession today. 



TruStage™ Preplanning Solutions

Formerly Assurant Life of Canada

We're proud to be a part of TruStage™, an enterprise powered by the belief that a brighter financial future should be accessible to everyone.

We've grown stronger and scaled higher through our evolution from Assurant Life of Canada to TruStage Life of Canada. And our commitment to your business gains remains unmatched.

- A Canadian legacy grounded in decades of service
- Professional training, coaching, and support
- Market-first innovations
- Industry-leading preplanning and enhancement products
- Solutions that meet your client financial and emotional concerns



Distributor Spotlights

Scan the QR code to connect with a team that can help your customers better plan for tomorrow.


tinyurl.com/DistributorSpotlights

www.trustage.ca

IMPRESSIONS

Imprint Collection




STERLING
OVAL PENDANT 



STERLING
HEART PENDANT 



ELLIPTICAL
HEART PENDANT
- 925SS 

ELLIPTICAL
OVAL PENDANT
- 925SS 



TEAR DROP PENDANT
- STS 



REMEMBRANCE TABLET
- STS 



CIRCLE
PENDANT
- STS 



HEART PENDANT
- STS 



PAW PRINT PENDANT
- 925SS



HEART
PENDANT
- SS 



PASSAGE HEART PENDANT
- STS 



DIAMOND CUT EDGE
ROUND PENDANT
- 925SS



ETCHED SWIRL
PENDANT 



LOTUS
PENDANT
- STG 



CIRCLE PENDANT
- STS 

