

# Canadian

FUNERAL NEWS



FEBRUARY 2021

## MAID IN THE FUNERAL HOME



Michelle Fisher



Kevin Owens



Roberta Ripplinger



Jerry Roberts

SERVING FAMILIES IN THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

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~ Dr. Seuss*



MAID in the Funeral Home

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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: \$92 per year.  
Listings without subscription: \$94 per year. Subscription & listing: \$184/year.  
Add \$92 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  
We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publication Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

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Pat Ottmann

## COMMUNICATION

by Pat Ottmann

*"To point with pride, view with alarm and occasionally recommend."*

We have never had so many levels of communication and yet so much miscommunication along the way. Communication breakdown/overload are the terms bantered about amongst the experts in this field. Communication has always been a struggle but the introduction of new technology has certainly added to the challenges however you perceive them. The technological bandwidth has increased thousands of times over and yet the human mind appears to have about the same operating capacity as always.

The art of communicating used to have a couple components: to listen effectively and understand; and to articulate your message and write it in a manner that is understood. It is fairly simple stuff, yet even at its base level, it presents challenges.

Now then, let's add in the levels of so-called communication that we all live with today. The sheer volume of messages that most of us receive is overwhelming to a point where I believe a good many people just ignore them. So, how has this helped/improved our ability to be understood and to understand what is going on around us and within our workplace? Are we moving forward or backward? And what is the manner in which we need to look at this to truly improve?

I can only imagine the funeral director who is sitting with a family making an arrangement as their phone continually vibrates in their pocket. Calls, texts, news notifications. What level of attention do you think the family is getting from that director? What level of communication is that director giving back as the distractions mount?

Not so many years ago, some of the biggest firms across the land would have a morning meeting that communicated plans for the day with respect to the services being held. Day after day the group of directors and support staff would conduct services for families all the while being present in the task (nothing vibrating in the pocket) and dedicating themselves to the family they were serving. Funerals were held, families were served and business ran every bit as successful, and maybe more so, than it does today.

The folks that make the cellphones and the programs that run on them are frankly smarter than the general population by a long shot. They understand the human condition and the instant gratification that these little machines provide the mind. It is out of a '60s book where millions of minds are controlled from a central office turning people into a robot of sorts.

So, regardless if you love these things or hate them, let's get back to communication and whether they help or hinder. When did we become so poor at communicating that we need to instruct constantly and control constantly in order to achieve anything? How does a family you are serving feel when the cellphone is more important than they are?

Emails are a close second. While the tech folks have become brilliant at filling your mailbox, they seem to have their hands tied when it comes to keeping the junk out of the inbox. This technology has added to what one can only call bad manners at best and many other names at worst.

We have become a society that will only communicate if we feel like it, which is ultimately a total breakdown and one I fail to understand.

If anyone was hoping for a solution at the end of this I am sorry to disappoint. The big tech world has taken over and will continue to take every minute of our life that we allow. Awareness is a start, including a little self-reflection as to how we conduct and communicate with business and family. I can think of few things that will kill conversation more than ignoring the person in front of you while giving full attention to a phone notification.

As we fight every day to add value to the funeral service, perhaps this is one area that needs attention. A million-dollar renovation to the facilities will easily be overshadowed by an ignored communication, or the inability to be present to the family in the room.

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# MAID IN THE FUNERAL HOME

SERVING FAMILIES IN THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

by Lisa Johnston

Passed by the House of Commons and now under Senate review, Bill C-7 proposes to expand access to medical assistance in dying (MAID) to persons with no foreseeable death. The legislation would replace Bill C-14 which formally legalized assisted dying (for those with a foreseeable death) on June 17, 2016.

Over the years, MAID has attracted many proponents and opponents, and Bill C-7 has been no different. While some feel the changes in legislation could put vulnerable citizens – including the elderly – at risk, others disagree saying proper precautions will be in place. When it comes to the death-care profession the debate also continues: should funeral homes avoid assisting MAID families for fear of upsetting certain demographics or is it an opportunity to better serve families in the continuum of care?

“Currently within Bill C-14, MAID is an end-of-life option for someone who is already dying,” says Michelle Fisher, manager of the Provincial MAID Program. “MAID is an empowered decision which allows an individual to have some control over how



Michelle Fisher

“MAID is an empowered decision which allows an individual to have some control over how their death will be experienced by them and their families,” says Fisher.

their death will be experienced by them and their families. Patients experience comfort and relief in the knowledge they are eligible for MAID, whether they choose provision or not.”

Bill C-7 will expand MAID to those who have an irremediable and grievous condition that greatly shortens lifespan and quality of life, but only the person with the condition can make the decision to proceed with MAID.





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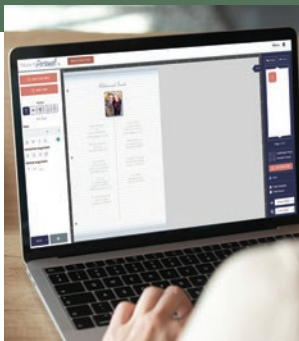


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Roberta Ripplinger

“We are a funeral home that is open to supporting families who are struggling to find an appropriate and comfortable place where MAID deaths can occur,” explains Ripplinger.

“In order to be eligible for MAID, capacity must be present which means the patient understands what their options are and consequences of their decision. Safeguards are in place which protect individuals who may not have capacity including those with mental health conditions or disabilities, dementia or brain injury,” says Fisher. “In Saskatchewan, the Provincial MAID Program collaborates with a geriatric psychiatrist to determine capacity if necessary.”

MAID deaths have been increasing year over year, and Fisher says Canada is expecting a 30 per cent increase if Bill C-7 is approved. As many people choosing MAID do not want to die at home or in a hospital, they are looking for alternatives – which may include the services of a funeral home.

“When someone dies at home, the room they died in is forever altered,” says Roberta Ripplinger, a licensed funeral director at Speers Funeral and Cremation Services in Regina, SK. “It won’t just be the guest room; it won’t just be the dining room; it will be the room where mom died.”

Proactively promoting a wide range of death-care services to the community, Ripplinger says Speers is honoured to help MAID families – and is prepared to take it one step further in their future business plans.

“We are a funeral home that is open to supporting families who are struggling to find an appropriate and comfortable place where MAID deaths can occur,” explains Ripplinger. “While this is currently not taking place at the funeral home, we are considering establishing a permanent space large enough for families to gather in a pleasant environment for their final goodbye. While we are still debating on the location of this room, it is my feeling that perhaps it would not be within the walls of the funeral home but instead in a different Speers-owned facility.”

Fisher says funeral homes offering a designated space for MAID provision is a unique opportunity; however, she is unsure where funding would be obtained. Currently, there is no cost for a MAID death as it is part of the Canadian health-care plan, which also means there is no allotment for a rental space or funeral home fees.

Kevin Owens, owner of Evergreen Cremation Centre on Vancouver Island, thinks he has the solution – charging families for the rental of the visitation room.

“I received a call from a lady who was dying of cancer, asking if I could assist because she did not want to die in her daughter’s home where she was living,” says Owens. “She also didn’t want to go to the hospital as she figured that was a place for people to get better and she did not want to take up a bed. When she phoned me to see if the funeral home was an option, I said, ‘absolutely.’ This is what funeral service is all about – helping families deal with death.”

The family appreciated using the comfortable living room-style visitation space, arriving 30 minutes before the doctor to have a proper goodbye. Owens says although he charged the family for the rental of the room, they did not have to pay for the transfer of the deceased to the funeral home.

One of the biggest obstacles for funeral homes considering MAID has been the promotion of the service. Due to its sensitive topic, MAID is not publicly advertised.

“Establishing an awareness in the community regarding our readiness to be supportive is difficult,” states Ripplinger. “We have made Saskatchewan Health Authority’s leadership aware we are supportive and open minded to assist families, and we also realize that MAID families are probably going to have

“When she phoned me to see if the funeral home was an option, I said, ‘absolutely.’ This is what funeral service is all about – helping families deal with death,” says Owens.

different emotions, questions and feelings. I have often said there are five stages of grief but for those who have experienced a MAID death, I believe there is a sixth stage – bewilderment. How a family copes with that depends on how much education they received about MAID and how much communication there was between the medical attendees, the family and the dying person. It also depends on how well the goodbye process went and we know we can help with that if given the opportunity.”

Having assisted MAID patients through her work at the funeral home and with plans to help more in the future, Ripplinger took her knowledge to a higher level by recently completing the end-of-life doula course through Douglas College.



Kevin Owens

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Jerry Roberts

“Regardless of how the decedent has passed, our commitment to providing families with expert guidance, service and care remains consistent,” says Roberts.

“When I helped my first MAID patient in the fall of 2017, I did not really know much about the process,” says Ripplinger, “but when I went out to meet with the lady I was filled with compassion and sadness. Over three visits with her, I ended up doing a lot of end-of-life doula work. After that experience, I became more interested in learning about MAID which led me to the course as I felt it would marry itself well with my role with Speers by giving me the opportunity to encourage more meaningful final days.”

While many funeral homes would like to open their doors to MAID services, some are hesitant, not wanting to upset certain cultural or religious groups. Ripplinger says Speers believes the benefits far outweigh the criticism – and education is a key.

“We invite questions and the opportunity to have discussions,” says Ripplinger. “Just like we are open to all cultures within our community and different types of rituals, we also embrace MAID, feeling this small part of our community is just as valuable.”

Owens agrees, “Everyone has the right to their own opinion and it is not a right-or-wrong situation. If groups or individu-

als no longer come to my funeral home because they know I am helping MAID families, I am fine with that because there is still everyone else waiting to be served.”

Other funeral homes are shying away from MAID, worried about the toll it might take on their staff. However, Fisher says while it is hard to say goodbye to the patient it is also a profoundly powerful experience.


“Patients facing death have taught me more about living than I could ever teach them about dying,” says Fisher. “Families and patients provide us incredibly profound perspective and grace. They teach us to live in the present, to not wait for the tomorrows. MAID is contradictory to the foundations of health care – to heal, to save and to do everything we can. I will always remember a patient saying to me, ‘Trying to keep me alive is where you are doing the harm.’ While end-of-life care is difficult, the team supports the work through debriefing and expertise of the program’s social worker.”

Owens believes funeral professionals are trained to deal with MAID deaths. “There is a separation gap and most of the time, we don’t know these families well. It is something that is set up in advance and yes, you are bringing death into the funeral home but you also have to remember the family is relieved their loved one is no longer suffering.”

With funeral homes across Canada, a number of Arbor Memorial branches have assisted with MAID deaths, and the company is continually exploring how to best serve families making this sensitive and difficult decision.

“At Arbor, we know that no matter the circumstances, the death of a loved one is exceptionally tough,” says Jerry Roberts, vice president of funeral service at Arbor Memorial. “Regardless of how the decedent has passed, our commitment to providing families with expert guidance, service and care remains consistent.”

“We respect that choosing medically-assisted death is a deeply personal decision. The way that our team of highly-trained and dedicated professionals serve those who have made this decision is similar to how we support any family with an imminent need. We work closely with them to find meaningful ways to celebrate and memorialize the lives important to them.”

In the end, that is all one can ask of their funeral professional – to be there at the time of death to offer guidance and support – and in 2021 that may include an increasing number of MAID families. 



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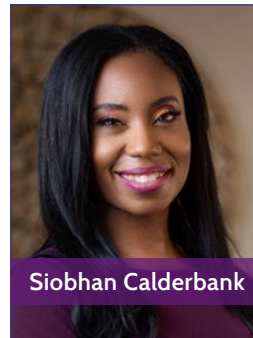
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Todd Van Beck

# THE FUNERALS OF THE CANADIAN PRIME MINISTERS

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD - PART II

by Todd Van Beck

## Wednesday, June 10, 1891 – The Day of the Funeral

Ottawa was buzzing with excitement. Every hotel in the city was filled to capacity, and every train that arrived brought more and more people who wanted to see and participate in the funeral rituals for Sir John A Macdonald.

The doors of the Canadian Senate Chamber had not closed throughout Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. On Wednesday morning alone, it was estimated that over 20,000 people had filed by Macdonald's open casket.

At 11:00 a.m., the governor general of Canada arrived along with the Canadian cabinet and other dignitaries. At 11:30 p.m., Sir Charles Tupper (a future prime minister of Canada) came forward and laid a huge wreath directly to the left of the head of Macdonald's casket. On the ribbon was written this message: "With Profound Sorrow, Our Country Weeps – Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States."

At 1:00 p.m., the funeral procession had been organized and the journey to St. Albans Church began. The funeral procession included: the Dominion Police; the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards; the Governor General Foot Guards; the 63rd Battalion of Rifles; reverend clergy; Col. S. Maynard Rogers (undertaker); honorary casket bearers; the funeral coach carrying the remains of Sir John A. Macdonald; active casket bearers; floral carriages; mourners coaches; political and civic officials; consulate representatives; the mayor of Ottawa; political clubs; private carriages; and citizens and interested people on foot.

At 1:40 p.m., the funeral procession halted at the Daly Avenue entrance of the church and was greeted by the Rev. Bogart and Archdeacon Charles Lauder. Both clergymen were dressed in black cassocks with white surplices and green stoles.

As the casket was carried by the casket bearers down the cen-

tre aisle of the sanctuary, 11-year-old Robert Gorniuly sang "Of Lord Most Holy" and "Now the Laborer's Task is O'er."

Only 600 invited guests were admitted to the sanctuary. A 40-member choir lined up in the side aisle and sang John Stainer's famous hymn "Sevenfold Amen" and William Bennett's "Nunc Dimittis in F."

The funeral service for Sir John A. Macdonald lasted 30 minutes and when the benediction was read, the pipe organ began to play the "Dead March from Saul" by G.F. Handel as the invited assembly exited the sanctuary.

Now the funeral procession travelled to Ottawa's Union Station where a highly-decorated funeral train furnished by the Canadian Pacific Railway would convey Macdonald's remains to Kingston for final burial on Thursday. The funeral train left Ottawa and arrived in Kingston, Ontario at 9:00 p.m.

Upon arrival, the former prime minister's remains were immediately placed in a funeral coach belonging to William M. Drennan and taken straight to Kingston City Hall to rest for the night. Interestingly undertaker Drennan was also serving as the mayor of Kingston at the time of Macdonald's death and funeral.

Once inside the magnificently draped Kingston City Hall, the remains were placed on a catafalque trimmed with heavy folds of cashmere boasting large ostrich feathers on all four corners. Sir John A. Macdonald's remains would lay in state throughout the night and it was estimated the entire population of Kingston filed past his open casket.

## Thursday, June 11, 1891 – The Day of the Burial

By 6:00 a.m., it was estimated by the Kingston Police that over 10,000 people had already congregated around city hall. The



The grave of Sir John A. Macdonald.

crowd was so thick that Drennan had difficulty positioning his funeral coach at the front entrance of the building. Throughout the day, people continued to file past the open casket of Sir John A. even though the temperature outside and inside city hall was intense.

At 11:30 a.m., the train conveying Lady Macdonald and her family arrived along with numerous Canadian political dignitaries.

At 2:30 p.m., Drennan and his funeral staff began the arduous task of loading one flower wagon after another with floral tributes to be taken ahead of the funeral procession to Cataraqui Cemetery. In the end, 13 wagons of floral tributes went to the graveside of Sir John A.

It was precisely 3:00 p.m. when the final funeral procession began. As it left city hall, whistles and bells from the numerous trains in town and bells from a dozen churches in Kingston began sounding impressive and loud salutes to this Father of Confederation.

The Dominion Police lifted the casket and carried it to the grave, located on one of the hills in the beautiful Cataraqui Cemetery. Next Archdeacon Thomas Bedford-Jones read the committal service as the casket was hermetically sealed by the undertaker.

Waiting down in the grave to receive the casket was a solid wooden case made of polished oak complete with six silver handles. Into this strong outside enclosure, Sir John A. Macdonald's remains were gently lowered. After the committal service was completed, each mourner took a shovel of dirt and

tossed it on the top of the oak case as a ritual of finality and farewell. By 4:00 p.m., the grave had been closed and covered with a profusion of flowers.

### About the Undertakers:

#### S. ROGERS & SONS/GEORGE H. ROGERS

For decades, generations of Ottawa families were served in funeral service by the firm known as S. Rogers, then S. Rogers & Sons, and then finally George H. Rogers Funeral Directors.

It was in 1867 that Samuel Rogers opened an undertaking business on Nicholas Street in downtown Ottawa. Throughout the history of the Rogers family of funeral directors, the firm oversaw the funerals of Canadian prime ministers John A. Macdonald and Robert Laird Borden.

Samuel Rogers was born in Devonshire, England in 1822 and came to Canada in 1850. He first settled in Toronto working as a cabinetmaker, moved to Montreal, returned to England for some years and then returned to Canada, making Ottawa his permanent home.

In 1883, a news article written about the undertaking firm of Samuel Rogers said: "Mr. Rogers latest purchase is a magnificent hearse. It is one of the best and most expensive in the dominion. Mr. Rogers now boasts three of the finest hearses on the continent. A large staff of assistants is employed, so as to be ready for prompt attention to orders by night or day.

"Everything required for the 'pomp and pageantry of woe,' down to the smallest minutiae, can be obtained at Mr. Rogers' establishment on Nicholas Street, a few doors south of Rideau Street."

Samuel Rogers had two sons. The eldest, George H. Rogers, operated a funeral company under the name George H. Rogers. When he died in 1919, business was carried on by the third generation with George Harold Rogers, operating well into the 1940s before closing its doors.

Samuel's younger son Col. S. Maynard Rogers continued the company known as S. Rogers & Son which was the firm that conducted the funeral for Canada's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald.

The three generations of Rogers funeral directors and undertakers are buried at the famous Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa. For several years, there were two Rogers funeral homes in Ottawa. **C**



Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP



## PLAN B

by Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP

Imagine what you would do if you were blessed with three months of normal call volume in two weeks. Exciting prospect isn't it?

Now let's imagine that half of your staff, including your top arranger and top embalmer, suddenly went on medical leave. Would you have enough backup staff to cope? Compound that with the knowledge that they will be gone for an entire month and when they return they will be carrying an oxygen bottle and have lower energy levels. Are you prepared?

Now imagine that the usual process for getting documents is protracted to two weeks. Would you have the space and resources to keep up with the needs of the mounting volume of deceased guests? Are you getting stressed yet?

Imagine that now you are unable to acquire several of the popular urns and caskets the families have ordered and the gloves, masks and gowns needed for the team to safely serve are out of stock. Could your business survive?

Shall we heap on a little more adversity? What if all of these situations occurred at the same time? Could you survive?

Recently I had the opportunity to be immersed in exactly that kind of situation. A busy firm lost half of their team due to COVID-19. Some were actually infected while some were self isolating because immediate family members were infected. The health department, registrar and other members in the value chain were short-staffed too and many were working from home. To top it all off, the cemeteries and crematories were short-staffed and limiting hours of operation too. A perfect storm.

Ben Franklin said it well: "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." COVID-19 has no doubt created a greater awareness of the level of preparedness or lack thereof in our businesses and our profession as a whole, yet the pre-Christmas wave of COVID deaths caught many firms by surprise.

Contingency planning at first glance appears to be a complicated and arduous process. It doesn't have to be. The first step is assessing what may happen. If we ask ourselves "what will happen if...?" we can then answer two important questions: what will we do in response and what can we do in advance to be prepared?

Why by surprise? Because even though we have known about this pandemic from the media for over a year now it was happening somewhere else. "That's New York; that's not our little city." Sun Tzu said something similar to Ben Franklin: "Plan for what is difficult while it is easy, do what is great while it is small." So may I ask you, do you have a plan for when the wave of deaths comes to your community?

Contingency planning at first glance appears to be a complicated and arduous process. It doesn't have to be. The first step is assessing what may happen. If we ask ourselves "what will happen if...?" we can then answer two important questions: what will we do in response and what can we do in advance to be prepared?

It is a good idea to rank potential risks based on the likelihood or probability they will really occur. All events are not created equal. There is no contingency plan that can deal with every single potential risk so you need to figure out which events will be most likely and which will affect the company most.

A small fire isolated to the showroom will rank lower than the entire funeral home burning down. A single staffer getting



## | JEFFREY CHANCELLOR

COVID-19 will rank lower than half of the team being out of commission. Once the areas that are essential to the organization's survival have been identified put them at the top of the list.

Storage solutions for decedents are just as important as maintaining cash reserves to support overtime costs and extra help but they are often forgotten. On several recent regional conference calls with emergency services, coroners, hospitals and funeral homes, a huge gap in vision was revealed. The gap being a vision of choosing capacity versus flow through. "The hospital morgues are at capacity!" "We need to bring in refrigerated trailers!" were the battle cries from the bureaucrats.

"We need faster releases and faster medical certificates!" was the battle cry of the funeral service providers. In all of the calls there was a common thread. The bureaucrats and civil servants do not know what we know – that human beings are a perishable commodity. Storage makes things worse for them and us.

Storage just delays the process and we have to move people twice instead of once. Who pays for all the extra labour? It sure isn't the bureaucrats! Let's compare the cost of a refrigerated trailer, extra transportation and extra products due to delayed care compared to the cost of brining in clerical staff to support the documentation. A couple of clerks to do paperwork for busy doctors is cheap. Not one region had that perspective.

During each call there was a stunned silence from those outside of death "care." They had not considered that families have been separated and the sense of urgency to be reunited was huge to these unfortunate people. They had not considered that most COVID victims are whisked away from the ICU with airways strapped to their faces; chest tubes, IV lines and IV bags tossed in as they are hastily stuffed into a body pouch and rushed off to a freezer.



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Storage solutions for decedents are just as important as maintaining cash reserves to support overtime costs and extra help but they are often forgotten. On several recent regional conference calls with emergency services, coroners, hospitals and funeral homes, a huge gap in vision was revealed.

The refrigeration time, the fluids and the straps are causing major changes in the decedents. Immediate release and transfer into care allows us to deal with these complications quickly and improves outcomes dramatically. It's the difference between seeing mom compared to seeing a disfigured, swollen, skin-slipped mom.

So, what is your plan B? Are you stocking up on supplies, training backup staff, sourcing storage and transport solutions and building the necessary relationships with the medico legal leaders to educate them on their role in making things better?

In my recent immersion, we enjoyed a 10x10 cooler, four transfer cots and four dressing tables to carry the volume. We averaged 12 to 15 transfers per day and had an average of 80 remains in care daily. It was neither fun nor pretty but unlike the bureaucrats, we could not work from home.

When the wave reaches your town, I believe the simplest solution is to think like we did in the old days. Put the decedents and the families first. Transfers from the bed to the embalming table will eliminate the need for refrigeration and will reunite families more quickly. That is a much kinder approach than storage. It's greener too. Increasing flow through by having rapid document release and transferring directly off the ward is more impactful in a healing way than increasing capacity. It reduces risk of infection too by reducing the number of times a remains is handled.

In my recent experience it is cheaper too. The hospital staff are better able to concentrate on care and we are better able to keep up with the volume. Compare the cost of bringing in cooler trailers, double moves of the deceased and extra products to get the job done with adding an extra clerk at the hospital and an extra embalmer on staff.

A year ago, we didn't know as much as we know today. We did not fully understand how to respond to the virus in death


care. Fear was the guiding principle as we let bureaucrats craft the policies for care. Ralph Waldo Emerson said the antidote to fear is knowledge and we have learned a lot in the past year. We can reduce our risks as we perform our important service to the community by streamlining process, improving communication and using the right stuff.

I would strongly suggest to all readers with eldercare homes and hospices in the area to stock up on the right stuff. Get body pouches, casket covers, sheets, towels, PPE, trash cans and trash bags, cremation boxes, urns and lots of embalming chemicals. You are going to need a lot of absorbent powder and disinfecting sprays. Some powders do not cremate well and some sprays are hard to be around due to their nasty and dangerous fumes.

You are going to be spending a lot of time in the clinical care suite, cooler and vehicles. Choose your products carefully! There will be a lot of edema and a lot of decomposition coming your way. If there is one thing to add to your arsenal it is Rescue Packs. These convenient eight packs are easy to lift and contain enough products to get the job done.

There is no sensitive way to say it save be prepared for a wave of extra-large guests. In one day during the early part of the wave, we transferred 11 guests into care, the smallest being 140 kilograms and the largest being 320 kilograms. The larger folks succumbed first. Consider that means extra help in lifting, oversized products and extra cremation time.

Before the wave reaches your community, I would suggest investment in lifts, slides and add a Surgically Clean Air unit for the prep room and meeting spaces. Although these items have a heavy price tag, you don't need to worry – your extra volume will no doubt leave enough margin.

After spending several weeks at 12 hours a day to keep up with COVID-19 may I ask you, what's your plan B? 

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



Dr. Bill Webster

# IT'S COMPLICATED!

by Dr. Bill Webster

To say, with 2020 vision, that the last 12 months have been “challenging” is probably the understatement of the century. The year we hoped would be defined by joy was increasingly documented by grief.

In the year 2021, we will face new challenges, including mass immunization, economic recovery and rebuilding of suspended community services due to the priority of COVID. But equally challenging will be dealing with the inevitable grief that will confront the entire population over all we have lost. And I fear there may be a “delayed reaction.”

Admittedly we are seeing issues here and now. In a recent conversation with a medical friend, he exclaimed, “There are so many mental health issues, depression and despair out there ... and I can't get a psychiatrist to make an appointment for patients for six to nine months.”

But as often happens in any crisis, people don't always feel the impact of all that has happened immediately, and it is later that the real reaction hits home.

Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 until her death in 1901. She and her husband, Prince Albert, had nine children before he died in 1861 at age 42. Recently, on the 200th anniversary of Albert's birth, the Royal Collection Trust published Victoria's handwritten diary offering a first-hand account of her overwhelming grief. It took 10 years until Victoria could bring herself to write about the day the love of her life died. “I have never had the courage to attempt to describe this dreadful day,” she records.

The Queen turned mourning into the chief concern of her existence in the years that followed Albert's passing. For the rest of her reign, she wore only black. The prince's dressing

Certainly, losing a loved one is one of the most distressing and, unfortunately, common experiences human beings face. Normally, people have a period of sorrow, with an overwhelming emotional response. But gradually over time these feelings ease, and it becomes possible to come to terms with our loss and begin to move forward.

room was maintained exactly as before, and her servants were instructed to bring his shaving gear and hot water every day as they had when he was alive. After the first year, her mourning came to be viewed by many in Britain as obsessive, and public unease arose about the Queen's state of mind.

Certainly, losing a loved one is one of the most distressing and, unfortunately, common experiences human beings face. Normally, people have a period of sorrow, with an overwhelming emotional response. But gradually over time these feelings ease, and it becomes possible to come to terms with our loss and begin to move forward.

But for some, in particular situations, their feelings of loss are debilitating and don't improve even after a considerable period of time passes, if ever. Today, Queen Victoria might be diagnosed with complicated grief, sometimes called persistent, complex or chronic bereavement disorder. Complicated



Think about it. Many of the rituals of grieving, adapting and integrating – which are essential elements of the grief process – have been postponed or cancelled. Funerals have been restricted in numbers and many have not been able to have the funeral they wanted.

grief is like being in an ongoing, heightened state of mourning causing prolonged acute grief. In simple terms, for whatever reason, the person gets “stuck” in their acute grief, unable to move into, far less through, the integration process.

All of us have experienced loss in 2020, some admittedly more than others. Some have been able to cope with the situation and ride the storm with relative ease. Others have been in complete denial (another complicated grief reaction which sadly has present and future consequences as we have seen).

But, of course, many have been right in the thick of things, whether as front-line workers or as families directly dealing with COVID-related issues. People have died in frightening numbers, often without loved ones having an opportunity to say goodbye as they would have liked. One way or another, what we have been through in the last year, for the most part, has been traumatic, and for every action there is a reaction.

Now that we can see the glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, some might think that surely the end is in sight. Unfortunately, grief does not work like that. People usually seem to cope well in the initial stages of a situation, but it is often shock and adrenalin that enables them to get through the crisis. However we have been impacted by the pandemic, most of us have done what we needed to do – and got on with the realities of 2020.


Even though we can see the “beginning of the end” of this

crisis, my concern is the effects will begin to set in. How will people be able to find “closure” (or whatever word you prefer to describe how people come to terms with or reconcile whatever crisis they have faced)? “Now that” will sadly become “now what?”

Think about it. Many of the rituals of grieving, adapting and integrating – which are essential elements of the grief process – have been postponed or cancelled. Funerals have been restricted in numbers and many have not been able to have the funeral they wanted.

What are we doing to make it easier for these families and individuals to have celebrations of life when the crisis is over? Those of us who have the privilege of supporting grieving people must be alert to the possibility of delayed grief due to bereavement overload, whereby people who have simply been overwhelmed by all that has happened to them might find it more difficult to work through their own process.

Think of it like baggage. If you carry too much around, like Queen Victoria, you’re not going to make your destination. But most of us are not going anywhere soon, so maybe this would be a good time to begin to unpack.

I plan to offer some constructive articles on how we can support people in these coming months. Next time, we will look at challenges of COVID grief ... and how to conquer them. 

Dr. Bill Webster is the director of the Centre for the Grief Journey, and can be reached at [www.GriefJourney.com](http://www.GriefJourney.com), and on Twitter @drbillwebster.

# EDUCATION ONLINE - ANY TIME - ANYWHERE

## FSAC ACADEMY SETTING THE TONE FOR FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

by Lisa Johnston



Ashley Montroy

In mid-October, the Funeral Service Association of Canada (FSAC) relaunched their education platform with the goal to allow funeral professionals to access online learning opportunities at any time and on any device. Open to funeral professionals across the country, learning in the modern age is just a click away on the FSAC Academy website.

The online education platform, built exclusively by FSAC for Canadian funeral professionals, replaces an antiquated platform that no longer worked on smartphones or Apple products. Instead of the previous static PowerPoint presentations, the new education platform is dynamic and interactive, bringing new and innovative courses to FSAC members and non-members alike.

“Although COVID-19 has changed the way people are looking at taking educational courses, this initiative began long before the pandemic,” says FSAC board member Ashley Montroy, co-chair of FSAC’s professional development committee. “Our plan was to always take the education side of FSAC much further and bring in new courses. However, when I started working with the old platform, I realized it needed to be updated

before we could do what we wanted to do. As a result, we have built a brand-new vision for FSAC’s education platform.”

Montroy explains the new platform is compatible with all devices and allows for automatic certification. Long gone are the days of calling into the office to register or waiting for certificates to be distributed in the mail. Courses can be taken online immediately, allowing participants to learn what they want where it works best for them.

“They browse the courses online, they register for courses online, they pay online, they complete the courses online, they download course resources and they print or save their own certificates,” adds Montroy. “It is a truly dynamic platform and very different than what FSAC had before.”

Currently 12 courses are offered – some revised and some brand new – with more set to be added over the next few months. Courses range from 45 to 90 minutes and cost \$99 for both members and non-members.

“Our plan is to bring in more certification-type programs which may also be longer in duration to give a multi-hour or multi-day course,” explains Montroy. “We want a full library with topics like technology, marketing, restorative arts, mental health and more.”

The new portal was built with supplier partners in mind, many of whom are eager to share their unique skills with funeral professionals. Whether a supplier, community organization, post-secondary instructor, professional speaker or funeral director, those interested in sharing their expertise with the bereavement world are invited to contact FSAC. Course submission is now open and proposals will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis – with the presenter earning 25 per cent commission every time a funeral profession (member or not) takes the course.

To make the platform accessible to all Canadian funeral professionals, FSAC has also been working with provincial associations to have the courses approved for continuing education credits. To date, all provinces have come on board with the exception of Ontario and Quebec.


“Ontario is a tough one because they just changed their continuing education legislation,” notes Montroy. “Currently, only the two provincial associations and the two schools are able to offer online courses. In all of my years of teaching on both sides of the border, I have never seen education restricted to inside one province or state. However, with the pandemic, funeral professionals need to be able to learn new skill sets in order to adapt, without restrictions. I hope that as a national association, we will be invited to the table for Ontario education and included as an education provider for Ontario.”

Through FSAC Academy and during COVID-19 restrictions, thousands of funeral professionals from coast to coast can continue learning new skills or maintain licensing requirements.

“I think the funeral profession is changing dramatically and it has been for years,” says Montroy. “COVID has escalated that so there is even more change happening. Right now, funeral directors and funeral professionals need education and unfortunately it cannot always be in person. Therefore, it has to be totally accessible any time of day or night. It is what FSAC really needed to do to ensure funeral profession-

als – whether members or not – have the knowledge to advance their businesses.”

Montroy continues, “Sometimes it is not just about taking a course for their licence credits. There are a lot of skills funeral directors can learn in a quick hour course over lunch – from social media marketing to mental health in the workplace – that would actually benefit their business and improve their resumé. It will also help all those who don’t get to in-person events because it is too hard to get away from their business or because they weren’t selected to attend the conference.”

FSAC Academy can be used by any funeral establishment across Canada. This includes licensed funeral professionals, non-licensed funeral staff, students or other interested parties entering the profession. Current courses include such topics as Ethics for Funeral Directors; Speciality Chemicals and Embalming; FCSCS Legislative Awareness; Coping with Grief of Victims of Crime; Managing Workplace Stress; and Transforming the Decomposed. For more information, visit [www.fsacacademy.com](http://www.fsacacademy.com). 

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# CROSSING BORDERS

## THREE CANADIANS RECEIVE FUNERAL SERVICE FOUNDATION ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS

by Lisa Johnston



Daniel Baxter



Alastair Miller



Natasha Aych

Offering two rounds of academic scholarships every calendar year, the Funeral Service Foundation (FSF) – located in Brookfield, Wisconsin – presents 24 awards ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000 USD. In 2020, three of those scholarships transcended borders, landing in the hands of Canadian students.

“Education will grow and equip the next generation of funeral service professionals in Canada,” says Allan Cole, president of Toronto-based MacKinnon and Bowes and chair elect of FSF. “To have the ability to provide bursaries, scholarships and awards for promoting funeral service education is a tremendously positive opportunity for Canadians.

“I’m very proud that this year I am the chair elect – the first time a non-American will serve in this capacity – for the Funeral Service Foundation,” says Cole. “This charity provides a tremendous amount of money for these things to be possible, and the fact they have seen fit to include Canada as part of their community is absolutely magnificent.”

Canadian recipients receiving 2020 scholarships included Alastair Miller (\$5,000), Natasha Aych (\$2,500) and Daniel Baxter (\$2,500).

“This is a great honour and accomplishment for the three recipients,” says Roger Girouard, president and program director for the Canadian College of Funeral Service (CCFS). “Natasha is a student in the funeral director/embalmer program with CCFS in New Brunswick. Alastair and Daniel are students with British Columbia Funeral Association’s program which is in collaboration with CCFS. Natasha, Alastair and Daniel are well-deserving recipients who exemplify the passion and energy they have for the profession. CCFS is proud of their accomplishment and honoured they have chosen a career in the funeral service profession. They earned the scholarship on their own accord through their character and dedication.”

Girouard continues, “The monetary scholarship not only assists them financially with their tuition fees, but also recognizes their effort and encourages each of them to continue their professional development. Our college does encourage our students to apply to the FSF scholarship program every year and it is exciting to know that some take that opportunity with enthusiasm. The FSF demonstrates their generosity by supporting the profession through their various scholarship programs – and must be commended for their great work and support in giving back to the profession, and in supporting aspiring students.”

After working as a transfer driver where he received an inside view of funeral service, Alastair Miller enrolled in the BCFA funeral director and embalmer apprenticeship program. Learning about the scholarship opportunities from the program instructors, he decided to apply and encourages other funeral students across Canada to do the same.

“I will be using the scholarship to pay my tuition so that I can graduate without debt,” says Miller, who is in the first year of the program. “When I did a BA at UBC, I racked up a lot of student debt, which impacted me for a number of years. This time around, I’m grateful to have a scholarship that will help me graduate debt-free. Even if you don’t think you’ll get it, just apply. Believe in your worth and others will see it too.”

Fellow B.C. student Daniel Baxter says he received a calling to the funeral profession following the unexpected death of a friend, but ignored it for three years before deciding to enrol in the September intake with the BCFA program.

“As one of the older candidates in the program, I felt I offered a unique perspective to share which I thought might give me an advantage over other [scholarship] candidates,” says Baxter. “The scholarship has eased [the financial] burden so I can focus my energies on my studies. Financial stress can be a distraction. Knowing that over half of my next year’s tuition is already paid for has lifted some of the pressure so I can focus on learning.”

New Brunswick student Natasha Aych says she also applied for a scholarship to help ease the financial burden. “My goal is to make it through school without having to take out any student loans. After having worked full time for several years, I was able to pay my first year’s tuition up front and was hopeful to find an apprenticeship that would be willing to supplement a portion of my second-year costs, but now with the scholarship I will be able to pay the tuition regardless of my apprenticeship terms.”

Aych adds that finishing school with no debt also provides the opportunity to begin investing in the long-term goal of owning a funeral home. “My dream is to provide a funeral home focused on pre-need eco-friendly arrangements where death isn’t a taboo subject and where folks can create their ideal funerals.

“Overall, the scholarship has meant peace of mind for the immediate future and hope for the long term.... Mostly, though, it’s been such an encouragement to me and has really confirmed that I am on the right path.”

Since opening its doors to Canadians in 2018, eight Canadian


students have been merited academic scholarships totalling \$21,000. In addition, Canadians have received five career development awards, two virtual NFDA convention scholarships, three U.S. Professional Women’s Conference scholarships as well as multiple scholarships to the Canadian Professional Women’s Conference. The grand total of everything combined: \$30,000 USD.

According to FSF executive director Lee Wiensch, collaborations and networking are cornerstones within funeral service that transcend borders.

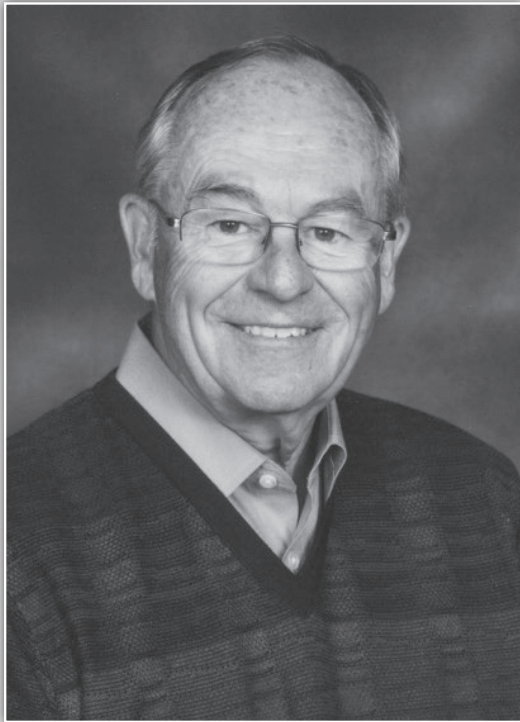
“The foundation serves all of funeral service and our work is a natural bridge to bring together funeral service professionals from the U.S. and Canada,” explains Wiensch. “Ensuring that funeral service professionals on both sides of the border have access to quality education lifts up the entire profession and helps us all do our best work to safely and compassionately serve families and communities.”

Students enrolled full or part time in Canadian-accredited institutions (or ABFSE-accredited institutions in the U.S.) and actively taking classes are eligible to apply. Paid directly to the institution, scholarships range from \$2,500-\$5,000 USD and can be used toward tuition, fees, books and supplies. Those who have applied in the past, but have not received a scholarship, are encouraged to reapply.

“Supporting the next generation of resilient, adaptable and compassionate leaders is central to our mission of investing in people and programs to strengthen funeral service and lift up grieving communities,” adds Wiensch. “No matter if a student is pursuing funeral service as a first, second or third career, our goal is to make education accessible. Funeral directors have been serving families and communities for generations amidst a continually evolving professional landscape, and the profession is always looking to attract the best and brightest to carry the important work forward. We don’t want the costs associated with pursuing an education to prohibit a talented practitioner from entering the profession.”

In October 2020, the FSF board of trustees also voted to extend eligibility for FSF grants to include Canadian not-for-profit organizations. The projects submitted by Canadian organizations must meet the same criteria as those for U.S. organizations, which require an impact of national scope and significance. Grant criteria and applications can be found at <https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/grant-seekers/grant-information/>. 





# IN MEMORIAM

PAUL J. MULLEN

**A**fter struggling with dementia for many years, Paul J. Mullen – former owner of A. Millard George Funeral Home with 50-plus years of service – died on Saturday, December 12, 2020 in his 77th year.

Paul started working at the A. Millard George Funeral Home in 1965 and became partners with Millard in 1971. In 1993, following Millard's death, he became the sole owner and retired in 2015 after serving over 50 years in the profession.


Paul was the proud father of Peggy Keeton (Steve) of Surprise, AZ and Dave Mullen (Christie) of London; stepfather of Kimberly Bonnet (Mark) of Ottawa and Cory Price (Lucas) of Toronto; cherished grandfather to Brandon, Madison, Carson, Avery, Natalie, Denise and Payton; dear brother of Jane Bernier; and uncle to two nieces. A cherished friend of Ruth Woods and Ron McIntyre, John Donohue and David Todd, Paul will also be missed by Lynne Mullen and many others.

He was extremely proud of being a member of the Masonic order. He was a past master of St. John's Lodge No. 20 A.F. & A.M., a member of the London Lodge of Perfection, a 33rd degree honorary inspector general of the Supreme Council, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Canada, member of the Mocha Shrine and past grand senior deacon and past grand senior warden.

Paul started working at the A. Millard George Funeral Home in 1965 and became partners with Millard in 1971. In 1993, following Millard's death, he became the sole owner and retired in 2015 after serving over 50 years in the profession.

Visitation was held December 16, 2020 at the A. Millard George Funeral Home. A private funeral service – with friends invited to watch live from the comfort of their homes – took place on December 17, 2020 at the funeral home. Interment was scheduled for Kincardine Cemetery.

As an expression of sympathy, donations may be made to the Shriners Hospitals for Children or Wesley-Knox United Church Memorial Fund.

Online condolences, memories and photographs can be shared at: <https://www.amgfh.com/condolences/newcondolence.aspx?id=174525>. 



Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

# EXPLORING THE NATURAL COMPLICATIONS

by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

I often say that when words are inadequate, have a ceremony. However, right now is a challenging time to fully make use of ceremonies that help grieving families.

The novel coronavirus has brought almost the entire world to a standstill – except grocery workers, health-care providers and, as you well know, your profession. Funeral homes and other death-care organizations are needed now more than ever. Tragically, not only are more people dying and more dismayed families in need of especially compassionate and capable care, but humankind is suffering from a pandemic of grief.

At this critical moment, you occupy a critical role. We need you to lead. You have the opportunity to use this pivotal time to educate and inspire the families you serve as well as your communities about why excellent death care and meaningful funerals are so necessary when someone loved dies. Yet at the same time, given the current restrictions, you must also be creative and persistent about finding new ways of doing funerals. It's a challenge, to be sure – but one I believe you can meet.

## THE “WHYS” OF THE FUNERAL

As you know, we have funerals for many essential reasons. For thousands of years, in addition to offering a way to respectfully dispose of the body of someone we love, they have been a means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts and feelings about life and death.

The triangle graphic captures the purposes of the funeral ceremony. It puts the simplest and most fundamental reasons on the bottom and works its way up to more esoteric yet significant reasons. Let's review each “WHY,” then let's consider how COVID-19 is interfering ... and what you can do about it.

### **Reality**

It's hard to truly accept the finality of death, but the funeral helps us begin to do so. At first, we accept it with our heads, and only over time do we come to accept it with our hearts.

Unfortunately, the pandemic is wreaking havoc with this “WHY.” Many can't visit family members who are dying (of COVID-19 or any cause) in the hospital, distant family members can't travel to be near, and spending time with the body has also become more complicated. It's much harder to acknowledge the reality of the death when you never see the person who died.

You can help families with this “WHY” by encouraging them to view the body if at all possible, even if only a few people can be in the room at a time. Tele-viewings are also an option. And while it's not typically done in recent times, this is a circumstance in which it is appropriate to take photos of the body to share with family members if they request them or if you believe the photos would be helpful to them. And finally, holding an immediate service, even if it has to be held online, will also help families with this “WHY.”

### **Recall**

Funerals help us begin to convert our relationship with the person who died from one of presence to one of memory. When we come together to share our memories, we learn things we didn't know, and we see how the person's life touched others.

Families aren't able to get together right now, however, so ensuring they have other means of gathering and sharing memories is something you can do to help with this “WHY.” In addition to offering online memorials, be creative and innovative. For example, what if the obituary suggested that the family would like to receive notes containing special memories?

### **Support**

Funerals are social gatherings that bring together people who cared about the person who died. Funerals are in remembrance of the person who died, but they are for the living. The funeral is a special time and place to support one another in grief.

But how do people support one another when they can't gather together? Like many of us, you've probably had a crash course in technology alternatives over the past few months. Video meetings are so much better than no gathering at all, and you can help facilitate this. Also, encourage the family to begin to plan a larger memorial service to be held later on. This will be an essential part of helping grieving families affected by the pandemic support one another, and you can take the lead and be a part of the solution.

### **Expression**

When we grieve but don't mourn, our sadness can feel unbearable, and our many other emotions can fester inside of us. Mourning helps us heal, and the funeral is an essential rite of initiation for mourning. It helps us get off to a good start and sets our mourning in motion.

Because mourners can't gather for funerals right now, they're being deprived of a special, sacred time of expression. Funeral elements such as the presence of the body, meaningful music and the eulogy facilitate the expression of feelings – and those elements are absent right now. Perhaps the best way for you to help families meet this need is to offer some education about the importance of expressing their inner thoughts and feelings (grief) outside of themselves (mourning). In fact, I hope you are routinely educating the families you serve about all of these "WHYs" of the funeral, because that is where the true value lies.

### **Meaning**

Did the person I love have a good life? What is life, anyway? Why do we die? There are no simple explanations, but the funeral gives us a time and a place to hold the questions in our hearts and begin to find our way to answers that give us peace.



Without a funeral ceremony, there isn't an event that helps families embark together on this search for meaning. Instead, their grief experience tends to be more chaotic and unanchored. Many people end up feeling lost and alone. One way you can help with this "WHY" during this time is by making sure families who are so inclined are connected to a religious or spiritual leader in their communities.


### **Transcendence**

Funerals have a way of getting us to wake up – to think about what we truly care about and how we want to spend our precious remaining days. Ultimately, funerals help us embrace the wonder

of life and death and remind us of the preciousness of life.

This "WHY" of the funeral is the most esoteric, but it is ultimately the most important. A good aftercare program may be the best way for your funeral home to help families work on this need over time, especially in cases when a meaningful ceremony wasn't possible.


Perhaps the most important overall lesson you can impart to grieving families at this unprecedented time is that a funeral or memorial ceremony will transform their grief journey. It's best to have a small service (in person, online or a combination) right now, and a larger service when the restrictions are lifted. If even a small service right now isn't possible, then it's absolutely essential to have a memorial service as soon as possible. Please teach families that it's never too late to have a ceremony, and more than one ceremony is even better in complicated loss situations.

COVID-19 has brought death and grief to the fore in ways not seen in generations. You are in the spotlight, and people are eager to listen and learn. I truly believe that now is a rare opportunity for you to educate, lead and renew our cultural understanding of and respect for excellent funeral experiences. As Simon Sinek says, "People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it." So, use this time to teach people the "WHYs" ... and watch what happens. 

Dr. Alan Wolfelt is an author, educator and grief counsellor. Recipient of the Association of Death Education and Counseling's Death Educator Award, he presents workshops to bereaved families, funeral home staff and other caregivers, and teaches courses for bereavement caregivers at the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he serves as director. He provides training to cemetarians and funeral directors on the "WHY" of both meaningful funerals and permanent placement. To contact Dr. Wolfelt, email [drwolfelt@centerforloss.com](mailto:drwolfelt@centerforloss.com) or phone 970-217-7069. To explore additional resources related to meaningful funerals, visit [www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com)

# CANADIAN COLLEGE OF FUNERAL SERVICE 2020 GRADUATES

With COVID-19 social-distancing restrictions in place, the Canadian College of Funeral Service (CCFS) was unable to host in-person graduation ceremonies. It is hoped graduates will be celebrated in the

future with the 2021 graduating class. CCFS would like to congratulate all graduates for their accomplishments. (Editor's note: B.C. held a virtual graduation with coverage in the December edition of CFN.) 

## ALBERTA

**Jenna Barron** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Crystal Bonnard** – Funeral Directing

**Jill Cole-Hulley** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Dionne DeGraw** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Shelby Kiteley** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Stephen Logan** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Elesha Lyle** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Scott McLeod** – Funeral Directing

**Shalea Prevost** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Nolan Roshuk** – Embalming

**Colleen Sekura** – Funeral Directing

**Sin Yip Wong** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Jazlyn Woodman** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Julia Wright** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

## MANITOBA

**Elizabeth Abercrombie** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Reita Adams** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Jesse Allard** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Mathew Cormier** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Amy Doerksen** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Lauren Dueck** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Colleen Flynn** – Funeral Directing

**GINETTE GOULET** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Quinn Hunter** – Funeral Directing

**Tina Schall** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

## NEW BRUNSWICK

**Erin Jay** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Natasha Thibodeau** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

**Shawn Williamson** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

## NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

**Robert Cole** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Curtis Francis** – Funeral Directing

**Sue Ann Johnson** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Rebecca Warren** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

## SASKATCHEWAN

**Hayden Cappelle** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Crystal Martens** – Funeral Directing

**Heather Scherle** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Lauren Weafer** – Funeral Directing & Embalming

**Taylor Wilson** – Funeral Directing & Embalming



Pam Moss


## BCFA ANNOUNCES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The board of the British Columbia Funeral Association (BCFA) is proud to announce the hiring of Pam Moss as the association's new executive director.

Moss is no stranger to funeral service in Canada. As a funeral celebrant, she has been invested in the funeral profession for almost a decade, partnering with independent and corporate funeral providers in the Toronto area and, more recently, the Okanagan Valley. This experience has led her to provide support to many professionals across the country. Moss has contributed to the profession through coaching, seminars, conferences and webinars, and was a guest speaker at the last BCFA joint convention with the Funeral Service Association of Canada (FSAC) in Kelowna.

A part-time instructor in the funeral director program at Humber College, Moss has presented advanced planning and executor seminars in partnership with funeral homes in the Okanagan and the Kootenays. Her "Caring for the Caregiver" presentation has been gratefully accepted over the years by community groups throughout the Okanagan.

Prior to this, Moss was the executive pastor at a church in the Greater Toronto Area for over a decade. After spending 18 years in the GTA, Moss moved to Kelowna in 2017 with her husband Trevor and 12-year-old daughter Lauren.

Moss' education, experience and personal grief journey makes her passionate about the funeral professional's role in society. With competence, confidence and passion, BCFA believes she will be a strong voice and a true leader for the association. 


## CANA'S 2021 CREMATION SYMPOSIUM POSTPONED

In light of the recent resurgence of COVID-19 across the United States and the world, the CANA 2021 Cremation Symposium has been postponed to February 9-11, 2022. CANA's board of directors made the decision that it is no longer viable to move forward with the event as originally scheduled for February 10-12, 2021 at the Linq Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Association leadership and staff hoped to find a path through these uncharted times to design a safe and successful event, but circumstances make postponement unavoidable at this time.

"Obviously, this is a disappointing decision," says Barbara Kemmis, CANA executive director. "Everyone was looking forward to getting together and we wanted to do everything we could to move ahead. But these difficult times meant we had to make a difficult decision. There is a path back to gathering and a new normal, but we must be patient."

Until then, CANA plans to expand its commitment to offering essential information that engages death-care professionals and allows them to connect safely at a distance. Whether it's through timely webinars and conference calls or online education sessions, quality online communication is more important than ever before.

Until then, CANA plans to expand its commitment to offering essential information that engages death-care professionals and allows them to connect safely at a distance. Whether it's through timely webinars and conference calls or online education sessions, quality online communication is more important than ever before.

The association is currently developing a new program of events, including the Art & Science of Cremation: Crucial Conversations Virtual Series, premiering March 24, 2021 and continuing through to April 14, 2021. To stay updated on this and other association offerings, visit the CANA website at <http://www.GoCANA.org>. 

## UPCOMING EVENTS 2021

### ALBERTA FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION (AFSA)

Conference & AGM  
April 29 & 30, 2021  
Virtual Event

### ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Funeral Directors & Service Convention  
September 15-19, 2021  
Delta Fredericton  
Fredericton, NB

### CREMATION ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA (CANA)

Art and Science of Cremation: Crucial Conversations Virtual Series – Ceremony and Arrangements  
March 24, 2021

Art and Science of Cremation: Crucial Conversations Virtual Series – Crematory Operations  
March 31, 2021

Art and Science of Cremation: Crucial Conversations Virtual Series – Management, Human Resources  
April 7, 2021

Art and Science of Cremation: Crucial Conversations Virtual Series – Pre-Need and Aftercare  
April 14, 2021

Annual Cremation Innovation Convention  
August 11-13, 2021  
Seattle, WA

### FUNERAL AND CREMATION SERVICES COUNCIL OF SASKATCHEWAN (FCSCS)

Spring Symposium  
May 13 & 14, 2021  
Virtual Event

### FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (FSAC)

Conference & Trade Show  
June 8-10, 2021  
Virtual Event

Professional Women's Conference Canada  
November 12-14, 2021  
Toronto, ON

### NATIONAL FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION (NFDA)

Professional Women's Conference  
April 16-18, 2021

Advocacy Summit  
April 21-23, 2021  
Washington, D.C.

Embalming & Restorative Art  
May 20 & 21, 2021  
Pittsburgh, PA

Leadership Conference  
August 1-3, 2021  
Charleston, SC

Ryder Cup Bucket List Adventure  
September 21 & 22, 2021  
Brookfield, WI

International Convention & Expo  
October 17-20, 2021  
Nashville, TN

### ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CEMETERY AND FUNERAL PROFESSIONALS (OACFP)

Special Webinar  
Emotional Intelligence for the Bereavement Sector  
Presenter: Melanie Carr  
February 25, 2021

Professional Women's Virtual Symposium  
March 4, 2021

Crematorium Operators Certification and Training  
March 29 & 30, 2021

Webinar  
The Conversations You're Not Having  
Presenter: Mike O'Farrell, CICEA  
April 15, 2021

Charity Golf Day  
August 16, 2021

Educational Conference & Trade Show  
October 5-7, 2021  
London Convention Centre & DoubleTree by Hilton  
London, ON

### ONTARIO FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION (OFSA)

Mid-Year Meeting  
May 2021  
Hilton Garden Inn  
Toronto Airport West  
Mississauga, ON

Educational Conference and Trade Show  
September 20-22, 2021  
Queen's Landing  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

### SELECTED INDEPENDENT FUNERAL HOMES

Spring Management Summit  
April 28-30, 2021  
Homewood Suites by Hilton  
Charleston Historic District  
Charleston, SC

Annual Meeting  
September 22-25, 2021  
Grand Hyatt  
San Antonio, TX

### WESTERN CANADA CEMETERY ASSOCIATION (WCCA)

Annual Conference  
September 8-10, 2021  
Deerfoot Inn & Casino  
Calgary, AB

## CANCELLED/ POSTPONED EVENTS

### CREMATION ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA (CANA)

Cremation Symposium  
February 10-12, 2021  
The Linq  
Las Vegas, NV

### FUNERAL SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (FSAC)

Caribbean Cruise  
February 14-21, 2021

## Succession planning isn't just about what you're leaving behind—it's about what lies ahead.

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OR EMAIL THEM TO [INFO@OTCOMMUNICATIONS.COM](mailto:INFO@OTCOMMUNICATIONS.COM)



## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: GENERAL MANAGER - WOODLAWN MEMORIAL PARK

Located in Guelph, Ontario, Woodlawn Memorial Park's Board of Directors is recruiting a visionary leader who executes all aspects of their responsibilities with excellence. The General Manager is responsible for the overall administration and direction relating to the physical appearance and condition of Woodlawn Memorial Park's grounds and facilities. This includes a variety of general administrative and supervisory duties, such as: planning, budgeting, managing activities of direct reports, overseeing maintenance and beautification of grounds, and ensuring that all facilities are structurally and mechanically sound and are maintained in a safe condition. The position requires your professional judgment and initiative to establish effective policies, practices and systems, alongside managing personnel and the approved budget. The work requires a close cooperative relationship with staff on the executive team. A superior level of tact and courtesy is essential with Woodlawn clients, funeral homes, architects, engineers, contractors and

vendors/suppliers. The position is often called upon to resolve difficult administrative and operational problems and/or issues, applying considerable latitude and your own independent and professional judgment.

The position reports directly to the Board of Directors (BOD), and has the following positions as direct-reports: Grounds Superintendent, Administrative Assistant and Accountant.

### Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Understanding of charitable and not-for-profit operations
- Understanding of the governance requirements of a Board of Directors
- Ability to read and understand financial statements
- Sensitivity with grieving families of all faiths, exhibiting patience and compassion
- Excellent written and oral communication skills; must be able to read, write and speak English fluently
- Maturity and integrity in dealing with all cemetery matters
- Impeccable trustworthiness with management of funds and confidential information
- Leadership and organizational skills
- Understanding of funeral and cemetery industry
- Demonstrated ability to manage projects related to grounds, facilities management, capital construction, etc.
- Ability to communicate effectively, tactfully and persuasively with internal and external contacts

- Basic computer skills, basic office equipment, proficient in typing
- Creative problem solving, abstract thinking and the drive to go the extra mile for employees or clients in countless ways

### Valuable Experience and Education

- A bachelor's degree or equivalent experience directly in the cemetery/funeral space or related space
- Experience in property management and/or grounds/park maintenance
- Considerable experience in a direct supervisory role

### Compensation

The following are key elements of the position's remuneration package:

- 85K-100K, commensurate with experience
- Generous group health and dental benefits
- OMERS Pension

Applicants who are interested in more information or in applying, should forward a cover letter and current resumé in confidence to:

[woodlawnopportunity@gmail.com](mailto:woodlawnopportunity@gmail.com)

**Overseen by the Guelph Cemetery Commission, but operating independently, the successful candidate will be employed directly by Woodlawn Memorial Park. Woodlawn Memorial Park is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes anyone qualified to apply. Only those selected will be contacted for an interview. No phone calls please.**



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## SEEKING LICENSED FUNERAL DIRECTOR/ EMBALMER OR 2ND YEAR APPRENTICE FUNERAL DIRECTOR/ EMBALMER

Chapel of Memories Funeral Directors, Port Alberni, BC on Vancouver Island is looking for a Licensed Funeral Director/Embalmer or second-year Apprentice Funeral Director/Embalmer.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

- Performs on-call responsibilities including: taking first calls, talking with families, answering questions, providing initial details and conducting transfers
- Supervises and cares for the deceased in a respectful manner while performing a variety of tasks such as: verifying identification, obtaining authorization for embalming, embalming, dressing, styling hair and/or applying cosmetics and preparing cremated remains
- Arranges and conducts funeral and memorial ceremonies in a professional, organized and caring manner consistent with company policies and procedures
- Arranges for the interment or cremation of human remains
- Ensures adherence to all applicable professional, municipal, provincial and federal licensing authority, regulations and rules
- Prepares and accurately completes documents and online entries related to services, cremations and maintenance

### MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Completion of or currently enrolled in a dual degree training program at an accredited mortuary college or technical school specializing in funeral and mortuary science as required by province law
- Must meet all licensing requirements in applicable province as required by law
- Must have proficient computer skills and business writing skills
- Current province-issued driver's licence with an acceptable driving record
- Good communication, problem solving and ability to multitask and set priorities
- Detail oriented
- Ability to work evenings, weekends and be on call as per the requests for services and families

**Please send resumé to  
Margaret.Vatamaniuck@  
dignitymemorial.com**





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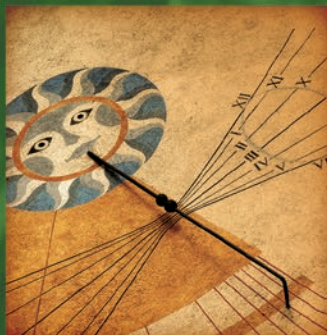
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