



The S112 model installed at Union Cemetery for the City of Calgary.

Full Steam Ahead

KMI Columbaria forges partnerships with funeral homes

By Lisa Johnston

Located in scenic and peaceful Kimberley, B.C., KMI Columbaria specializes in columbaria and cemetery structures. Well known among cemeterians for their high-quality projects, the company will soon become a household name with funeral homes across the country as they introduce a unique approach to the memorialization of cremated remains.

“What we have been trying to do this past year and will really focus on a lot in the coming year is funeral homes,” says Derek Maher, general manager and part owner of KMI. “Funeral homes tend to think of cremation, and have for a number of years, in a negative way because they lose revenue from it. Now Canadian funeral directors are starting to look at it a little bit differently. What we do is work with funeral homes, who either maybe have a stake in a local cemetery or

work with a local church or municipality, and have the funeral home actually purchase the columbarium to go into the cemetery. That way, the funeral home will pay the cemetery a small percentage for being able to put it on their property. The funeral home gets a lot of revenue from the columbarium and once it is full it is passed on to the city or church.”

Maher adds, “This is sort of a win-win situation for both of them – funeral homes will generate some revenue from the cremation and the municipality will generate some revenue while also servicing the people in their community.”

As with all new concepts, Maher says that funeral directors are slowly catching on to the concept and are beginning to see the benefits of purchasing a columbarium – something that once was traditionally reserved to a cemetery.

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Queen's Park Cemetery Wagon Wheel Design.

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ing to come around,” says Maher. “We were recently at the NFDA in Orlando and it was the first time we brought a full columbarium to the conference. At first the funeral directors would not come over or even talk to us because they did not see the point or correlation. But once we started to talk to them, you could see the wheels turning.”

Since the conference, Maher says that funeral directors have started to seek out KMI and have been calling the office for more information. As Maher says, “They are starting to understand the benefits of it and that cemeteries and funeral homes can work together. And with my background – being a funeral director, being a cemeterian, and now being a supplier – it allows me to speak on all those different levels.”

A fourth-generation funeral director who has worked across the country and even in Japan, Maher made the jump to cemetery management after taking a position with the City of Calgary in 2003. During his tenure with the city, he increased cemetery revenue from \$1.2 million per year to \$4 million and also became acquainted with a company called KMI Columbaria, then owned by Harry Steinwand.

“Right away I saw the merits of their projects,” says Maher. “I saw the huge benefits compared to everything else that was out there on the market and what I had in our cemeteries at the time.... It was kind of one of those things that I liked the company so much that I came to work for them and now bought part of the company.

Along with Steinwand, Maher shares the ownership reigns with Allan Diemert and Wendy and Mark Fynn. However, while the ownership conglomerate has recently expanded, Maher says that clients can still expect the same high quality projects and dedication to service that has led to KMI’s success for almost 15 years.

“KMI Columbaria builds the best columbarium on the market,” says Maher. “We are unique because we can do any size or shape for our clients. One of our catchphrases is ‘making concepts a reality’ so we really work with our clients to see what they envision. We don’t come to them with a catalogue and tell them to pick one.... That is really one of our strengths – we can do a custom project but not at a custom price. We provide the best quality columbarium on the market that is totally maintenance free. You will never have any issues with it.”

Maher explains that all the owners are hands on and will do any task from sales to design to installation. “Part of bringing on the new owners and having them work here on a day-to-day basis is that we want to continue to be able to provide the service to our clients that we have in the past as we continue to grow. Our company is growing and we want

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Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Rochester NY.

to be able to continue to meet the needs of all our clients.”

In addition to a high-quality product that includes non-deteriorating materials with aluminum interiors and granite exteriors, Maher says KMI has a distinct focus that keeps the company grounded.

“There are a lot of companies out there that tend to dabble in a lot of everything. We focus on what we do very well and that is columbaria.”

While KMI Columbaria installs columbaria in every corner of North America, their design inspiration occurs in scenic Kimberley, B.C. Maher says the peaceful setting is home to where they build the projects and they could not be in a better location.

“We like being here because of the people and the surroundings,” says Maher, who explains that they would have to ship granite and aluminum to wherever they are located. “It is peaceful and we have good people to draw upon in this community.”

In addition, KMI is close to two of their funeral home cli-





ents – McPherson’s Funeral Services in Cranbrook, B.C. and Snodgrass Funeral Homes in High River, Alta. KMI has designed and installed several columbaria for both funeral homes who have partnered with cemeteries in their communities. They hope to bring on more funeral homes in the next year and expect their business to double in 2009.


“We just want to continue to grow and continue to be able to serve the profession,” says Maher. “I am very passionate about it. I have seen many cemeteries in the past that have had to replace structures in their cemeteries that have deteriorated. We really want to get the point across that you don’t have to go through that – it is not only bad for the cemetery or the funeral home, it is bad for the families. We really try to educate people, whether it is funeral homes or cemeteries, that one, we should work together and two, buying something cheap is cheap and in 10 or 15 years when it has to be replaced, it is going to be horrendous for everyone involved.”

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concept
to reality



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