

Improvements to Gardiner's Cemetery

Gardiner's Cemetery, situated on County Road 10 just north of the Township Office, is getting a face lift!

For those who may not be aware, Millbrook/Cavan United Church's association with Gardiner's Cemetery dates back almost two centuries to the original Methodist Church, which was originally on the cemetery grounds. However, after a new church was built the connection between the Church and the cemetery became less obvious to the point that many today are unaware of the past association.

During the past several years, the increase in cremation has created a difficult financial situation for many rural cemeteries. The current cremation rate is averaging 60 - 65% of the death rate in Canada, and in this area, it is quickly stretching to 70%. For many rural cemeteries, Gardiner's included, the only option for cremated remains interment has been a full-size traditional cemetery plot - an inefficient use of cemetery space and an option which no longer meets public needs.

As rural cemeteries struggle with adequate numbers of volunteers, revised legislation, and increased operating costs, it has become vital to develop a plan and program that meets the needs of the people as well as providing the necessary revenue to support cemetery operations.

Based on evolving requirements, Gardiner's Cemetery Board presented a proposal to the Millbrook-Cavan United Church congregation to modernize cemetery operations. The Cemetery Board's vision was to provide additional options to enable members of our community to be able to choose their community for their final resting place. Their goals included:

- improving the condition of the cemetery grounds,
- implementing processes and procedures to ensure compliance with legislated requirements for cemetery operations,
- offering services and options not currently available in the immediate area and,
- providing a plan for the Cemetery Board to become, and remain, self-sustaining for the future.

The major components of the sustainability plan included the installation of columbaria units to hold cremation urns, allotting areas for cremation burial graves, and scattering gardens.

Our congregation was honoured to support the Cemetery Board in its transformation. We are very pleased to report that the concrete foundations for the columbaria were installed last fall and the columbaria themselves were installed in mid-March.

The columbaria look spectacular and fit the esthetics of existing monuments. Although the landscaping surrounding the columbaria is yet to be completed, the scattering gardens prepared, and walkways and a concrete bench yet to be installed, the Cemetery Board is very close to fulfilling their original vision for this transformation. Well done!