

iLoveCreston September 2017 issue

FINAL on August 15

### Cemeteries in our Creston Valley

Forest Lawn Cemetery is a remarkable community icon that maintains a special place in the fabric of our community, our individual lives and our family histories. My father passed away in 1973 and 44 years later my mother was recently laid to rest beside him. I know firsthand the importance of Forest Lawn Cemetery to our community. Through professional management and long term planning, I believe we can optimize this valuable community resource for generations to come.

Since its incorporation in 1905, the Town of Creston has owned and operated the Forest Lawn Cemetery located in Erickson. The Town of Creston also owns and operates the Pioneer Cemetery, which is closed to new plot sales (although family members of lot owners are occasionally interred here). For clarification **interment**, as a general definition, can take a variety of forms: burials, entombment in a mausoleum or inurnment of cremated remains in a columbarium niche.

Creston and the surrounding RDCK rural areas are striving to operate a sustainable cemetery system, while increasing options for interments and enhancing the Cemetery's landscape and amenities. This goal requires finding ways to: improve cemetery service delivery; implementing practices that set the service on a path towards financial self-sufficiency; and, developing a perpetual care fund that can meet the long term maintenance requirements of the Cemetery. With this end in mind, a lot of great work has been done over the last few years.

- ✓ In 2014, a Cemetery Master Plan was undertaken. This Plan serves as a guiding vision for our two local cemeteries, providing direction on how to best manage the business and financial aspects of the service.
- ✓ In 2015, a Cemetery Select Committee was established, with a membership that includes representatives from the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), the Town of Creston and members of the community at large.
- ✓ In 2016, a standard operating procedures manual was developed by our Cemetery Consultant with active input from staff.
- ✓ Coming shortly in 2017, a Forest Lawn Cemetery Development Plan will be presented to Council and participating RDCK Electoral Area Directors, and subsequently will be made available to the community.

The Forest Lawn Cemetery Development Plan was prepared by a consultant firm recognized as a leader in the cemetery industry; Lees and Associates. This Plan recommends seven (7) new “principal elements” to prioritize at Forest Lawn Cemetery:

1. Upgraded Main Entrance
2. Memorial Walk
3. Green Burial Areas (Phased)
4. Gathering Space
5. Future Cremation Garden
6. Expanded Burial Area
7. Scattering Area

A public information meeting will be held to explain the details of each of these proposed cemetery improvements.

If all of the elements noted above were implemented at once, it is estimated the current price tag would be approximately \$1.3 million. As such, the Cemetery Select Committee supports an approach of phasing in these improvements, with strong local support and community participation, over multiple years. For me, it is essential that we commit to a path that sees our Cemetery develop in ways that best address the needs of our community; honouring those that have passed on, and providing a sense of comfort to those who visit there.

If you have other topics that you would like me to comment on, please contact me:

Don't hesitate to contact me by: Visiting me at my office in Town Hall (238 - 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue North);

Email me at [ron.toyota@creston.ca](mailto:ron.toyota@creston.ca) , or

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