

An Interview with Mike Holmes By Rick Bunzel, ACI

I have to admit that after watching a few episodes of Holme's Inspection that I wasn't a big fan. I had to keep reminding myself that this was Reality TV and most home inspections are boring to the TV viewer. TV producers will cherry pick from hours of video to get the juiciest sections to create a show that captivates the audience.

In prep for my interview with Mike Holmes I went over his background and I have to admit my opinion of Mike changed. Mike started his first construction company when he was 19. In 2001, he rose to media fame with Holmes on Homes which ran for 7 seasons and broadcast worldwide. In 2006, he started the Holmes Foundation to promote young people to get into the trades and assist the impoverished who have had bad renovations. In 2009, He started the show Holmes Inspections and Mike Holmes Inspections.

Can you tell us how the inspection side of your business came about? *The number 1 complaint from home owners during the 7 seasons of Holmes on Holmes was poor home inspections. After we did 4 different shows that had to address issues missed by home inspectors we came up with the idea of basing a show around it and Holmes Inspection was created.*

Is there such a thing as a perfect home inspection? *Absolutely - most aren't done correctly - most inspections don't have the knowledge to do good inspections. The number one step is better education 2. Having the proper background is key. We need to upgrade industry. Home inspections should be more thorough and cost more. Most inspector don't charge enough for there work. I think home buyers should recruit an inspector before they start looking. Take the Realtor out of the loop. Re-evaluate the how it done. Buyers buy on impulse. Consumer education is key. Charge the right amount of money. The fees for a home inspection should start at \$1,000. Inspectors should have tools to look into walls and pipes. On most inspections I do I use my IR camera and snake camera. When inspectors see renovations they should be checking with the building departments to see if permits were pulled and approved.*

As the owner of a multi-inspector company, what do you do to ensure the highest quality inspections? *Any inspector we consider must have a background in construction and completed at least 1,000 inspections. We then send them into our training program which includes getting Level 1 IR Certified. We then observed them for 20-30 inspections before they go out on there own. We also have relationships with plumbers, electrician, HVAC and roofers that we can call in on issues where we need to go further. We can afford to do this because our basic inspection start at \$595 for a 2,500 sqft. home and the enhanced inspections (with IR inspection) start at \$925.*

Most home inspectors perform visual inspections, you routinely go beyond that, why? *On the show we are usually going in after the home is purchased and issues are present.*

Is that realistic in real estate transactions? No, not realistic. However IR and snake cameras can see issues into walls which helps.

Do you encourage your inspectors to join professional organizations? Which ones? Yes - there are three in Canada. I encourages my guys to join all of them (the Canadian Association of Home Inspectors, American Society of Home Inspection, and the Ontario Building Inspectors Association.)

How do you feel about HI licensing? Totally necessary - licensing brings a minimum level of education and certifications are also key. I would like to see a national license for Canadian HI's.

Many home inspectors feel Holme's Inspection's is disparaging to home inspectors in general and promotes your own company, how do you respond to them? Holmes on Holmes had the same issue. Contractors now appreciated the visibility - I was raising the bar and became a voice of the industry. The same thing is happening here. I am highlighting the fact that there are inspector out there don't look deep enough to identify issues that affect peoples lives. Home Inspectors will come around just as contractors came around.

How do you like being a media star? - I appreciate being in the position to educate people on what's right whether its how a home should be constructed or how it should be inspected. We are doing some good things here; Skills Canada, Building initiatives and our Holmes Foundation work.