

# THE ILA: 60 YEARS IN THE MAKING

By Jim Girvan

All photos: ILA Library

In April of 1958, a group of sixteen gentlemen, all connected to the logging industry, met in Rutland and formed the Okanagan Logging Association as a body independent of any others in the province. Several Okanagan area loggers and truckers joined, Harold Hildred was elected as President and the initial membership fee was \$10.

The objectives of the Association were to promote the interests of those engaged

in logging, to protect members against unfair practices, to reform abuses in the industry, to seek freedom from unlawful extractions and to disperse accurate information to its members. The mandate spoke to the difficult circumstances that loggers faced at those times, circumstances that have not changed that much in the ensuing 60 years.

By 1960, however, membership grew from outside of the Okanagan area and

to reflect the growing area of representation, the name was changed to the current Interior Logging Association.

In the first few years of existence, the Association was focused primarily on trucking issues related to weight restrictions and licensing that were so unfair to loggers that they could no longer sit and do nothing about it. One of its members, Cecil Philpot, elected to spend two weeks in the Kamloops jail rather than pay an





overload fine. This act of defiance galvanized the fight for ILA members and membership grew.

Through the early 60s, the ILA pushed hard against the Department of Commercial Transport on road weight restrictions that were causing undue hardship for many ILA members. The politics of the situation became clear,

however, when overload restrictions were imposed on Interior roads when the government cited logging trucks as the cause of highway damage. However, as noted by ILA Publicity Director Harold Hildred, “Now that there is an election here, trucks don’t damage roads anymore.”

In 1962, the ILA approached the Department of Commercial Transport, but this time regarding truck licensing fees. In a brief presented by President Peter Dyck, the ILA noted that the quarterly system of truck licensing causes problems for many logging truck operators

given their seasons of work. The dispute was eventually settled with changes made to the licensing scheme.

At the 10th Annual Convention in 1969, the growing rift between the major licensees and the contractors was clearly articulated. President William Schneider noted that skyrocketing lumber prices were not being reflected in the prices paid to loggers and truckers. “It is important that the large companies realize that some of the extra profits being realized at this time should find their way into the contractors’ pockets so that they can stabilize their positions and acquire new equipment needed to ensure efficiency of operations,” he said in his address to delegates.

It was also at this time that the ILA recognized the need to address the issue of recruitment into the logging sector and worked with Canada Manpower and the Interior Lumber Manufacturers’ Association with the objective of setting up training programs to encourage young people to enter the workforce. By 1970, two new logging schools were opened in Prince George and Kelowna. These early steps in education and training remain a core component of the ILA mandate today.

1970 also saw the ILA push back on attempts by the IWA to organize contract loggers. In a speech to more than 100 delegates at the 12th Annual Convention, President Bob Lind noted “being forced into a position where the parent company signs the logging contractor and trucker into an agreement with the IWA is a violation of human rights and the Bill of Rights.” History shows that the IWA was never successful in their attempts.

By 1972, the ILA had more than 1,000 delegates at its 13th Annual Convention



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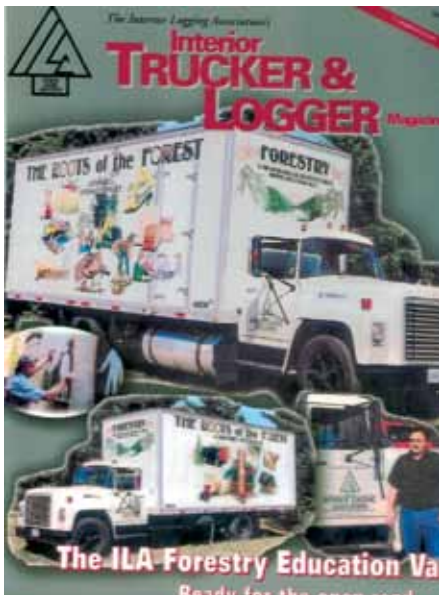
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where the delegates were warned by Resources Minister Ray Williston that multiple use of BC's forests being promoted by the growing environmental movement was the new mantra and that loggers, like all forest users, had to accept that things were changing. The ILA embraced the need for change and President Audrey Baird noted at the 13th Annual Convention that "multiple use was the way to go."

In 1977, the BC Logging Association was created as the merger of the ILA and the Central Interior Logging Association (CILA) with Derek Stamer as chairman of the joint Board of Directors. With growing memberships in both organizations and issues that were common to both, it was felt that joining forces and pooling resources would give a stronger voice to Interior contractors and truckers in policy and regulatory development. While initially the merger provided benefits to the joint memberships, by 1982 local issues forced separation of the two organizations and the ILA once again continued working on behalf of its southern Interior membership.

Following ongoing pressure brought to the government by the ILA—hand-in-hand with their counterparts in other areas of the province—regarding ongoing abuse of contractors, Bill 13 was introduced by Minister Claude Richmond in 1991. As stated by Richmond on the introduction of the bill, its purpose was to address logging contractors' security in British Columbia. With input from the ILA, the Act was updated in 1992 to clarify the amount of work provisions and in



1996 it was again updated to become the legislation that endured until 2003.

In 1995, the objects of the Association were updated to more clearly focus the work of the ILA on harvesting practices, the value of working with other related groups, forest education and awareness. The Association also expanded its mandate to provide member benefits packages and training programs as well as consulting and support services to its members.

Wayne Lintott was hired as the ILA general manager in 1998 along with Nancy Hesketh, office administrator, hired in June of 1999. With a background in forest harvesting equipment sales and a keen understanding of logging and trucking,

Wayne has lead the development of the ILA to this day. It was in the same year that the ILA purchased its current office in order to secure its longer-term financial stability. With land and building values always on the rise, ownership of their office made a lot of economic sense.

Dubbed as one of the Interior's most exciting initiatives in forest education, the ILA supported the creation of the ILA Forest Education Van in 2001. The original vehicle was retrofitted with education tools and embellished with painted murals that tell the story of BC's forest. With a mission to educate and communicate to students, schools and the public, the van immediately started to enhance



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ILA office in Vernon, BC.

forest awareness. By 2002, the original van was replaced as the demands for attendance with the van at community and school events grew.

In 2002 the ILA was instrumental in creating the forestry section of the provincial equipment rental rate guide, better known as the *Blue Book*, published by the BC Road Builders & Heavy Construction Association. This initiative allowed for a better understanding of forestry equipment costs in an effort to support members in rate negotiations.

In November 2003, the Silver Lake camp suffered a catastrophic fire that destroyed the main facility at this important forest education camp. The ILA led a significant fundraising initiative that resulted in the contribution of approximately \$1.2 million to support the rebuild via Silver Lake Education Society, a long-standing ILA education initiative.

The provincial Forest Safety Task Force, on which the ILA participated via Reid Hedlund who was the chair, was established



Wayne Lintott and Nancy Hesketh of the ILA.

in July 2003 to develop an action plan to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries in the forest industry in British Columbia by 50 per cent within three years. The Task Force recommended the establishment of a sector-wide forest safety infrastructure that was to be funded by the entire sector. This recommendation led to the creation of the BC Forest Safety Council where the ILA has had a representative sit as a director since inception. In this way the safety concerns of BC's Interior loggers and truckers are at the forefront at all times.

The fall of 2007 saw Pope and Talbot, one of the province's major forest products operators, file for creditor protection in the wake of growing financial losses. As part of their eventual bankruptcy



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settlement, Interfor purchased its two southern BC Interior sawmills in Grand Forks and Castlegar along with other various company assets. However, not all logging contractors received payment for their services and the logs they had collectively delivered to Pope and Talbot mills in inventory. In aggregate over \$4.3 million was owing and each contractor was to be listed as an unsecured creditor and likely to only recover cents on the dollar. The ILA stepped in and worked with then Forest Minister Pat Bell and the court appointed receiver to facilitate 98.2 per cent of payments on all money owed to contractors.

The lessons learned from the Pope and Talbot bankruptcy and the fight to recover money owed to contractors was a pivotal motivation for government to heed to the 10-year advocacy effort by the ILA and other provincial logging associations for the creation of the *Forestry Service Providers Protection Act*. It was established in 2009 as a compensation fund from which logging contractors can draw from in cases where the companies they are working for go bankrupt. Instead of remaining

as unsecured creditors to court proceedings like in the case of Pope and Talbot, Forest Minister Pat Bell said: "By enabling a fund and providing for liens on forest products, we're ensuring that logging contractors will be protected financially."

In keeping with their education mandate, in 2012 the ILA partnered with Thompson Rivers University and the provincial government to develop logging focused training programs for log truck drivers and forest harvesting heavy equipment operators. Each program results in basic training and the ILA supports students in their efforts to find additional practical experience upon graduation. Since inception, the program has been full in each course and on average 20 graduates enter the logging workforce each year. Funding for the programs is provided by the Government of Canada through the Canada-British Columbia Job Fund.

Looking forward to 2018 and beyond, the ILA is changing as the world around it evolves. With its continued mandate to work with provincial and municipal governments to ensure member interests are recognized in policy and regulations

development; to work with the BC Forest Safety Council to ensure members are operating to the highest standards of safety and their workers come home to their families each and every day; and with a commitment to grow a thriving and sustainable industry; the ILA is a strong supporter of education and training programs that help prepare the next generation of forestry workers for the greenest workforce in our province.

For 60 years the ILA has worked to promote the interests of those engaged in the logging industry in the Cariboo and southern regions of the province, and to promote and support forest education and awareness. Many rural communities depend on the forest industry for their livelihoods where ILA members live and work.

Looking forward, the ILA has hired Assistant General Manager, Todd Chamberlain, RFT who will work with Wayne and allow the ILA to continue its advocacy efforts throughout the BC Interior. The ILA will continue to work with the industry that supports them, their membership and their communities.▲



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