

Dream a “Little” Dream

When I was an instructor in the SAIT Land Administration Certificate program in the early 1990s, my students often asked me why there wasn't an association for Land Administrators and I really couldn't give them a reason. I began to think of how an organization could be created that would bring together people who were involved in Land Administration. At the CAPL golf tournament in the summer of 1992, Cindy Rutherford and I had a “brainstorming” session, with the aid of a few beers at the nineteenth hole. Both Cindy and I had started our Land careers in Land Administration and we felt it was time to raise its profile in the industry and to create an environment where people could network and develop their skills. Cindy agreed to contact individuals within her Land network to see if they would be willing to work on the initiative and the rest, as they say, is history.

Over the next year and a half a group of very committed individuals met on a regular basis to build the foundation of the new organization. We spent a lot of time discussing its purpose, objectives and vision. We then worked on the bylaws with help from Craig Johnstone, our legal counsel, who generously donated his time to our fledgling association. Craig is still CAPLA's legal counsel and a very enthusiastic supporter.

The next item we needed to address was a name for the association. Any of you who have had to choose a name for a baby know this is not an easy task. Not only do you have to choose a name that will hopefully stand the test of time, you have to be careful to select a name that has an appropriate acronym. I must admit we came up with a few names that did not meet these criteria and that created more than a few laughs during the naming process. We also decided the name should not refer to a specific job function such as Land Administrator, but rather to the overall process of Land Administration. This would allow us to be more inclusive in offering membership to all the job functions related to and involved in Land Administration cross-functional processes. As a result, we chose the name Canadian Association of Petroleum Land Administration. We now had a name and bylaws, so in October 1993 we applied for incorporation under the Alberta Societies Act.

Even though it took a lot of work to become “official” the real work had just begun. We were the “new kid on the block” and needed to start building lasting relationships. We felt it was critical to make a good first impression that reflected a well organized and professional organization. We had met early on with the CAPL Board of Directors who had offered their encouragement and support. We made presentations to other industry associations and stakeholders to increase their awareness and understanding of our purpose and objectives.

The planning then began for our first association meeting to be held in January 1994. We approached companies to provide “seed” money for development of a logo and initial organizational expenses; the response was very positive. We had a betting pool amongst ourselves on how many people would show up for the meeting and how many would join in the first year. I can't remember who won the bet, but none of us could have predicted the success CAPLA would achieve in its first year and beyond.

So on January 18, 1994, we held our first meeting at the Calgary Convention Centre where 340 brave souls showed up during a blizzard. The energy and noise in the room of people meeting face to face with peers they had corresponded and talked to over the phone for years was electrifying! Before the meeting started, I remember looking out over the crowd and saying “I guess we have met our minimum target of at least 25 people attending and there is no turning back now”.

Within six weeks, the first issue of the CAPLA newsletter was published and another four issues were published that year. During the first year, eleven education seminars and workshops were held and a job bank for members was established. By the end of 1994 CAPLA had 835 members.

In November 1995, CAPLA became one of the first industry associations to have their own website. Another highlight in the early history of CAPLA was the Executive Night held on May 7, 1996. With over 700 people in attendance, our guest speaker, the Honourable Pat Black, Alberta Minister of Energy, announced major changes to the Alberta Petroleum and Natural Gas Tenure regulations and procedures, which CAPLA had played a part in helping develop. CAPLA held its first conference at the Calgary Convention Centre in June 1996 with over 500 delegates attending. The “little” dream had become a significant reality.

The dedicated and tireless founding CAPLA Board members that I had the privilege of working with were:

Linda Bernier - Communications Director

Jonathan Chapman - Vice-President

Karen Dowling - Education Director

George Green - Standardization Director

Frances Maier - Social Director

Ross Mortlock – Secretary

Bob Pfeffer - Accreditation Director

Shirley Rattray - Membership Director

Avis Roemer - Treasurer

Cindy Rutherford - Assistant to President

Through the tremendous work and commitment of its volunteers and members, CAPLA has truly delivered on its founding vision to raise the profile of Land Administration within the industry and to provide an environment of fellowship, skill development and innovation. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to work with and lead such an amazing group of people.

C. Gale Breen

Founding Director and First CAPLA President