

# THE BIG PICTURE

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Well, it seems like just yesterday that I was writing my first President's message for the magazine, and now I find myself struggling with the last one. Rarely have I been at a loss for words.

There are several thoughts I want to convey as I transition from my role as your president to that of an engaged member. I use the word engaged, because from my experience, you cannot work in this profession successfully without being engaged in this Association to some degree.

Over the past five years, I have witnessed the pride and professionalism of our members as we move forward with new programs and partnerships. Our members are getting more opportunities to have that "seat at the table" and play a larger role on projects. As we gain recognition as the professionals we are, it is important to remember who we are as individuals. We are ordinary people who are making a difference, who feel passionate about our work, and not only understand what is right and wrong, but what is fair and reasonable.

It was five years ago that we held our first Education Summit, where we created a new plan to expand our educational offerings to a more professional level. We have remained committed to the Association's Strategic Plan with the understanding that the plan never ends but only evolves. IRWA's executive vice presidents have helped us build confidence in our abilities while challenging us to think about where we came from and where we are going. As we have gained more external awareness, we are attracting new partnerships, affiliations and members.

I believe it is time to think of our organization as a business. I envision IRWA Headquarters and the IEC as the corporate core, with committees functioning like subsidiaries. The region chairs are similar to members of the board who oversee the divisions – in this case, chapters. The chapters are run by managers, comprised of chapter presidents and their officers. Moving forward, we will develop job descriptions for each group to help demonstrate how our individual roles contribute to the bigger picture.

At a region forum I recently attended, one the chapter leaders called on his military experience to express how to work with change: **improvise, adapt and overcome**. As an Association, we have been doing that for over 75 years, and we have become pretty adept at it. Now it is important to take measured steps

toward achieving our goals by creating the plan and working the plan. When our plan encounters obstacles, we can best respond by improving, adapting and overcoming them. And through our continued focus on **LEARNING, LEADING AND ADVANCING**, our combined efforts will ensure the Association progresses well beyond the next 75 years.

We recently embarked on a plan to make state-of-the-art leadership training available to all Association members. The key is to take our leadership abilities to a higher level by ensuring that

all members have an ample opportunity to learn new skills. Investing in our membership through leadership training is a win-win, as it will make the Association stronger and sustainable over the long run. As we elevate the professionalism of our members through training, we can ensure our diverse leadership makes decisions that support the best interests of their region or committee, as well as the Association as a whole. Leadership training is integral in this process, and the level to which we are prepared to do this is unprecedented.

With the evolving needs of our members and new professionals entering the workplace, it became evident that a more definitive path to the SR/WA Designation would help attract younger professionals to a career in right of way. We also recognized the need to review our certification specialties and get input through IRWA's Governing Council during the region forums. The Designation and

Certification Task Force had recommended a thorough review of our certification specialties, as well as adding new ones, such as management, to enhance our current certification program and give our members new opportunities to grow professionally. In response, the Association is planning to incorporate several career path options and phase them into our professional development program.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize our many volunteers. At times, there is a great deal of focus on the IEC, as well as the region and committee chairs and vice chairs. However, they are only a part of the volunteer effort that makes the Association run. Chapter leaders in all positions—from presidents to course coordinators—are the foundation of this wonderful group we call IRWA. The international committee members also play a major role in advancing the Association's goals, and in the future, they will be tasked with greater responsibilities.

To everyone who has helped me learn and grow, my greatest honour has been the privilege of working for you on the International Executive Committee. I thank you.

