

# IC History

Established in 1973, Interpretation Canada incorporated in 1977 and reached highest levels of membership in the 1980s, at over 500. These were the formative years of the relatively new field of interpretation, as practitioners defined their roles and explored new media with which to engage the public in historic sites and parks.

The next stage was the quest for legitimacy.

Interpreters found it within larger agencies, and in-house programs such as spring training workshops, awards, and evolved that overlapped traditional IC programs. Other organizations also emerged or became active in Canada, leading to the further fragmentation of IC membership.

However, museum educators and others were recognizing the heritage interpretation field and joining IC, broadening the membership base. Practitioners, including front-line people, continued to be the core while more experienced people gradually moved on. Over the past two decades, membership decreased in Eastern Canada in spite of improvements and additions to member

programs. Competition became a factor. IC's environment was changing—but did the organization have the capacity to adapt?

In 2004, IC was at a crossroads, with memberships at a low of 108 (note this included some group membership categories so actual membership was higher), two sections active out of six, and a reduced, demoralized national executive. However, a special resolution was passed, and Phase 1 of the Revitalization Project was initiated to shift the association to a sustainable mode. \$22,000 of IC

savings funded this 18-month initiative, and more has been spent in the year since then. The association has made significant strides, including:

- memberships more than doubled
- participation in IC member programs is up, such as writing for *InterpScan*
- *InterpScan* was internationally recognized as “one of the best professional interpretation periodicals anywhere” by US author and professor Dr. Sam Ham writing to interpreters in the UK in 2005
- upgrades to the IC website ([www.interpcan.ca](http://www.interpcan.ca)) facilitate more member involvement in running web-based programs as well as better access for remote, rural and isolated sites
- new programs including a national listserv, a budding digital library, a business directory and more
- national executive is now active once more, holds monthly tele-conference meetings regarding ongoing direction and business, runs many of IC's programs, participated in October's capacity-building leadership clinic, and has a draft strategic plan in place.

How will the next chapter read? Stay tuned!

