



ILAA 2025 – Banff, Alberta October 3 – 5, 2025

ATTEND TWICE AND YOU'RE HOOKED

My first ILAA conference was the 2024 conference in Colorado Springs. I was scheduled to be part of a presentation by Colorado judges at the ABA COLAP Conference and was asked by Alana if I would be willing to speak at the ILAA conference which would follow the conference. I had never heard of ILAA at the time. I learned what I could about the organization and attended a few zoom AA meetings. My interest and excitement grew. The actual ILAA Conference far exceeded my expectations. I was so taken by the members and their long-time dedication to the group, and most of all by the way they had chosen to carry the message to other alcoholics, particularly those in legal community. In my 25 plus years of sobriety I had never had the opportunity to associate with other lawyers around sobriety. It was very special and has resulted in some deep friendships.

Because of the great fellowship at the first Conference my wife and I decided we would attend the 2025 ILAA Conference in Banff, Alberta. It surpassed my experience of the year before. The speakers were exceptional, and the time spent with other attendees was even better. There were numerous AA meetings, impromptu gatherings, usually over meals, and an opportunity to take in some of the most beautiful country I have seen. The hikes were fabulous! The Conference renewed in me the ideal the I/we are responsible to carry the message of AA, both in and out of our profession. In short, my wife and I so appreciated the whole experience that we definitely intend to attend future conferences.

Mark M.



PLANES, TRAINS, AND AUTOMOBILES

As I sat on the plane from Chicago to Calgary on my way to my first ILAA Conference, I started thinking : “Am I insane?” My journey began in Delaware around 2:00 PM Eastern time. From Delaware I drove to the Philadelphia Airport and had one stop in Chicago. While at the O’Hare airport in Chicago, my gate for the flight to Calgary changes four times, resulting in my running back and forth between H and L terminals. After boarding the flight to Calgary, somewhat sweaty but intact, I was questioning whether the Uber I had prebooked would actually be waiting in Calgary to take me to Banff. In Philly, the Uber driver would cancel if a better offer came along. I was arriving in Calgary very late and all the shuttles to Banff had stopped operating. I really did not plan ahead. I would arrive in Banff around 1:30 AM, which was for me was 3:30 AM. My travel time to and from Banff was going to be about as long as the time I spent there. So, was it worth it? Those of you who have been to an ILAA Conference know the answer - of course it was.

The moment I walked into the Saturday morning AA meeting and saw all the familiar faces I had previously seen only on Zoom, I felt right at home. I immediately recognized Ken, Lisa, Link, Andy and Bill S. After sitting down in the circle, I saw other regular Zoomers including Mark, Dave N. and Jane. After the AA meeting I had breakfast and met new folks from ILAA and Alberta lawyers and I really enjoyed getting to know them both through casual conversation and through their shares. I also got to know my Monday night friends even better at this conference. This is one of the priceless gifts of ILAA – there is an instant connection through our shared experiences in law and with alcoholism.

Finally, Banff is stunningly beautiful. On Saturday, I went on the afternoon hike to Bow Falls with a small group, which included some Albertans, and then with a smaller sub-group up to Banff Springs. The views of the Bow River and majesty of the surrounding Canadian Rockies were amazing and the hike was also a great opportunity for one-on-one conversations. I enjoyed talking to the Canadian attorneys about their

practices and the similarities and differences in our jurisdictions. On Sunday afternoon, following a humiliating defeat of my Eagles, I took a walk through downtown Banff enjoying the shops, bakeries and restaurants. Rocky Mountain Chocolate was my favorite. There was also a lovely and very walkable riverside park very close to the downtown.

To sum up, the organizers of the conference did an excellent job. The speakers were amazing, the food was good, the additional excursions were well-received and the venue was beautiful. I would travel twice as far to experience this conference again.

Felice K.



FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

From October 3rd to the 5th, 2025, just over a half century after the first gathering of its kind, International Lawyers in Alcoholics Anonymous (ILAA) held its 51st Annual Conference, and like the first meeting of its ilk, the event was held on Canadian soil, in beautiful Banff, Alberta, nestled in Canada's majestic Rocky Mountains. The Banff Park Lodge Resort Hotel and Conference Centre served as the host hotel, a facility that proved to be a superb venue for the event, featuring comfortable rooms, delicious food and comfortable meeting rooms, all tucked away in a picture postcard setting.

Over sixty AA members from the legal community attended from Canada, the United States and Mexico for good fellowship, good food and good AA to share their gratitude for the many gifts that come from being a sober member of the legal community with a willingness to help the colleague who is still suffering from alcoholism.

This conference marked a departure from many of those held in the past, in that it took place at a different time and location from the American Bar Association's "Co-LAP" (Commission on Lawyers Assistance Programs) conference. This decision was taken out of a desire to pay homage to ILAA's founders, who first met in Niagara Falls, Ontario in September of 1975, and who would regularly meet on both sides of the 49th parallel in recognition of ILAA's status as an international body. The decision to meet at a separate venue was a courageous one taken by a group conscience of ILAA members, given the financial risks that came with planning such a conference. Aided by the hand of Providence, it proved to be a wise decision.

The conference began on Friday October 3 with a reception where many friends, whose usual meeting spot was in a Zoom room, got a chance to gather in person and strengthen the bonds that only AA members can understand. The Friday night AA speaker was Michael B., a lawyer with an accomplished c.v. and a compelling story. His talk was uplifting and inspirational and a strong opening for the event.

On Saturday morning, after a nourishing breakfast and an early AA meeting (or yoga for those more flexible participants), Dave P. and Chuck B. from Buffalo, New York, gave an outstanding presentation on the history of ILAA, one that was both well researched, as well as heartfelt. This was followed by a panel suitably titled (for the location as well as the topic) "Peaks and Valleys in Sobriety" chaired by Doug M., in which Tonii R. and Tiro C. reminded us that emotional sobriety comes with its highs and lows. After this terrific presentation, a tasty lunch was served, following which the group was given a special treat, as a former member of the Supreme Court of Canada who is also an ILAA member shared his own unique take on sobriety while navigating the legal profession.

A Saturday afternoon at an ILAA conference means free time and group excursions and this conference was no exception. The organizers had planned a series of enjoyable activities for those of all ages and energy levels. These outings included a hike along the Bow River, a visit to the Whyte Museum (where the museum's latest exhibit "The Ancestors are Talking – Paintings by the Indigenous Seven" was on display), and a trip to Norquay Mountain to see the spectacular views that lay at the end of the chairlift ride.

Your author was both privileged and humbled to be asked to be the Saturday night conference speaker, and I remain grateful for this honor that followed our Saturday banquet. (I'm told that the sticky toffee pudding was the biggest hit of the night, but since I was trying to be good, I can neither confirm nor deny this to be the case.) I had the pleasure of being introduced by David H., a lawyer that I knew from the early days of my legal career in Regina, Saskatchewan from 1979 to 1993. Despite over 43 years of sobriety, my character defects still act up from time to time, including ego, and while that part of me wonders how my talk went, the wiser part of me knows that in Alcoholics Anonymous we suit up, show up and leave the results to our Higher Power.

These conferences come and go too fast, and by Sunday morning it seemed as if the weekend had flown by too quickly. After another delicious breakfast, and a morning AA meeting (or outdoor walking meditation for those so inclined), ILAA's Annual General Meeting was held. Michele S. was selected to fill the vacancy on ILAA's board of trustees, and there was general acknowledgement that a great debt of gratitude was owed for the job that our outgoing board chair Andy C. had done in steering the organization over the past year. His wise leadership, his boundless energy and his wisdom and vision have been appreciated and will be missed.

The conference concluded following its final speaker, Michele S., whose message of joy and awakening in sobriety was a splendid takeaway from the conference. Some rushed off to catch flights, while others lingered to enjoy the many delights that Banff has to offer. For me, the highlight of my Sunday afternoon was an invigorating hike in nearby Kootenay National Park with beautiful scenery and excellent company. It was a pleasure to spend the afternoon in the company of Andy C. and his spouse Doreen (aka "the Saint"), Mark M. and his spouse Kim, and with Lisa R. who has given me marching orders to trumpet the fact that she was a rockstar on what proved to be a long trek over some very challenging terrain. As any ILAA member who has ever attended one of our conferences can attest, it is quite often the memories made outside of the conference rooms that last the longest.

Conferences like this don't come off as successful as this one, and it is with some trepidation that I wish to acknowledge the hard work of those involved in the

planning of this event. These included Michele S., Tonii R., Spencer C., Andy C., Doug M., Kathy P., David H., Link S., Tiro C., Rick G., Nick L., and the incredible Pamela W. I know I will surely owe amends to those I have left out, as it truly took a village to make this conference so successful.

Whether or not you were able to attend this year's conference, I hope to meet you at the 52nd conference next year. As of this writing, no decision has been made about whether ILAA will once again follow Co-LAP and meet in Boise, Idaho from October 16-18, 2026, or if the group conscience will choose some other time and location. What I do know for certain is that, as another author once wrote: *"We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny."*

Keep on trudging!

-Yours in Service,
Ken S.



A SUCCESSFUL YEAR AND A FOND FAREWELL

The Banff 2025 ILAA Conference has come and gone, and it was a truly great event! Banff itself was spectacular; the hotel and meals were excellent, the speakers were terrific, and the meetings were extraordinary.

This Conference also marked my last duty as Chair of the Board of Trustees. I became a Trustee in 2024 and was rotated into the chair position last year. I'm pleased to welcome Harvey S. as the new incoming Chair and Michelle S. from Calgary as the new Trustee named to the Board.

The Banff Conference, organized under the leadership of Tonii, Spencer and Michelle S., was a resounding success.

The successful Conference was the culmination of an excellent year for International Lawyers in Alcoholics Anonymous (ILAA).

Key Accomplishments of the Past Year

The Trustees met monthly on Zoom, and one of our first considerations was our branding and our symbol, specifically the branding of "the bridge" and "the bridge to AA". This was in anticipation of the Vancouver International Conference of AA. After a thorough discussion, the bridge branding and mission statement—that ILAA is a Bridge to AA—were confirmed for the International Conference.

ILAA was an unincorporated association until this year. While workable for a time, this structure was becoming problematic—notably, an AA group in California faced a tax challenge because it was an unincorporated association. It became clear that unincorporated associations were not sustainable for the future.

At the 2024 annual general meeting, we began the process of incorporation, and during the year, Link S. finished the work. ILAA is now a California not-for-profit corporation!

That's not all Link S. accomplished. He also organized our books of account. All of our financial records are now on Quicken, and we receive regular reports. Well done, Link!

Outreach and Rebuilding Connections - Turning to the Vancouver International Conference, Ken S. organized all the details, and the event went off fantastically. The hospitality suite was well attended and staffed, and both panels hosted by ILAA were a resounding success.

The Trustees also followed up on an initiative begun in 2024: rebuilding the relationship with the Commission on Lawyers Assistance Program (COLAP). Tom R., an ILAA Trustee, accepted the role of liaison for COLAP and ILAA, and he was instrumental in ensuring ILAA's presence at the COLAP Conference. We had an Exhibitor Table, which he and Nicole P. staffed.

The theme of the table was: ILAA can help in remote and inaccessible areas, ILAA can make any LAP more effective, and ILAA doesn't cost a thing to help any LAP with its budget.

As part of the work of carrying the message, the Trustees hired a new webmaster and hosting agency to achieve faster responses to website changes. The new webmaster will also rebuild the website, making it more user-friendly.

The new website includes a renovation of the ILAA directory. The rebuild will:

- Increase security.
- Provide for searchability on both first and last names.
- Provide for searchability on geography and location.
- Allow members to indicate whether they are prepared to accept 12-step calls or help with sponsorship issues.

Much of this vital work, initiated in 2024, continued through 2025 and will continue as we strive to improve our ability to carry the message.

A special thanks has to go out to Lisa R., who is stewarding the newsletter. Thanks, Lisa!

This is my last message to the members of ILAA as Chair of the Board of Trustees, and I want to thank you for allowing me to be of service.

Andy C.

Make the ILAA conference part of your annual plans. It's a commitment that will bring you years of joy, memories and wonderful lifetime friends throughout the US and Canada.

For more information about our weekly meetings and the 2026 conference, please visit our website: www.ilaa.org