

# On the Road to Roundup

AS AME BC'S STANDING-ROOM-ONLY INDUSTRY CONFERENCE CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE, WE TAKE A STROLL DOWN MINERAL MEMORY LANE

By Julie Domville



More than a flash in the pan (l-r): David Dunn (accepting on behalf of his father, Bill Dunn), Ron Stewart, Rod MacRae and Bill Sirola received Gold Pan Awards at the first Roundup, in 1984; (second row, l-r) Andrew Robertson and Don Rotherham; (third row, l-r) Frank Lang, Charlie Aird, John Wilson and Geoff Whiton.

**MINERAL EXPLORATION ROUNDUP, OR** Roundup as it is fondly known, is the corner post of the Association of Mineral Exploration B.C. (AME BC). Since its debut in 1984, through the peaks and pits of the exploration cycles, Roundup has consistently provided a quality venue for the exploration community at large to meet, discuss,

learn and play. What began as a discussion on a ferry in February 1982 has grown into the world's premier technical mineral exploration conference.

The nub of the ferry-born discussion was how to tackle the declining membership, declining attendance at the annual general meeting and ensuing declining

revenues of AME BC (then known as the B.C. & Yukon Chamber of Mines). The AGM's format of a daylong meeting followed by a dinner and dance was getting old and the members' apathy was apparent by their absence. The exploration sector was struggling at the time, and the AME BC executive members recognized the need for

a nucleus to pull together all those who had a vested interest in the survival of mineral exploration in B.C. Hence, the huddle on the ferry between Jack Patterson, AME BC managing director; Bob Cathro, AME BC president; and Nick Carter, soon to become second vice-president. These three, along with Don Mustard, Don Rotherham, Charlie Aird and Terry Macauley, who together masterminded the technical program, were the architects behind the concept of building a conference around the AGM.

The Geological Division of the B.C. Ministry of Energy, Mine and Petroleum Resources, now known as the Geological Survey Branch (GSB), was approached with the concept of combining their open house with the AGM. The open houses, put on by the geological divisions of the federal, provincial and territorial governments, lacked verve and did little to stimulate exploration investment. GSB leapt at the opportunity to move their open house to Vancouver from Victoria and run it as part of the bigger program envisioned by AME BC.



Awards gala night: Stephen Rogers, minister of Energy and Mines, at the Roundup podium in 1984.

Carter recalls there being some discussion as to whether or not the date of late January was feasible for the Geological Division to have their field data ready for presentation. He successfully argued the point that it was invaluable to the exploration community to have the data available early in the year. The traditional release of field data is one of the many reasons Roundup kick-starts the year for B.C.'s exploration sector. Eventually everyone came on board and the conference was billed as a "joint venture of the British Columbia Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources; Geological Survey of Canada; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Yukon branch) and AME BC."

### Roundup Then

Jack Patterson coined the name "The Cordilleran Geology and Exploration Roundup," which summed up the focus of the conference in that era. Since then, the name has changed somewhat to better reflect the growing global reputation of the conference.

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Eighties accolades: Minister Stephen Rogers presents the Ed Scholz Award to Bob Hallbauer (right).

The executive, staff and a handful of volunteers threw themselves into building a three-day conference from scratch. In 1984, the first “Roundup,” as it quickly became tagged, was held at the Holiday Inn Harbourside. It was a resounding success with more than 700 registrants from government, industry and the supply and service sector. The success of that first conference is a tribute to the level of commitment and dedication of the executive, staff and volunteers. Looking back, Bob Cathro says, “I recall being delighted that our idea proved correct – that the poorly attended geological survey open houses and AME BC’s poorly attended AGM could be improved for the benefit of the members. We were trying to improve the format of the AGM so that it wouldn’t lose so much money. We certainly had no idea it would grow into a small industry of its own that would guarantee the financial viability of AME BC.”

The Core Shack also made its debut in 1984, marking the first time ever in North America that such a varied assortment of

drill core was displayed at a major geological conference. The previous year, at the annual convention of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, core from the Hemlo deposit was on display in Noranda’s hospitality suite. For many, it was the first opportunity to view core from that camp and the novelty of the experience caught the imagination of Jeff Franzen. He became the driving force behind the initial Core Shack – the model of which is still followed today – and arranged for Noranda, Golden Sceptre and Goliath to bring core to Vancouver. He also assembled an impressive array of core from deposits around B.C.

It’s interesting to note that in 1983, the AGM, traditionally held at Hotel Vancouver, was moved to the more modest Holiday Inn as a cost-saving measure. The first Roundup was also held at the Holiday Inn, but Patterson, seeing the potential for substantial growth, quickly booked the 1985 Roundup at Hotel Vancouver to allow for the inclusion of exhibitor booths. One remarkable feature

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about Roundup is that never, in its 25-year history, has it had to market the sale of booths – even when the industry was in a slump. The conference has always had a solid core of reliable, loyal companies who purchased booth space every year. Today, there is such demand for booth space it is generally booked up a year in advance, with priority given to exhibitors from the previous year. A waiting list of hopefuls is begun shortly after the conference closes.

In 1998, AME BC teamed up with the Society of Economic Geologists to jointly host “Pathways ’98,” thereby marking a turning point in the stature of the conference. Whereas the previous conferences had been run by AME BC staff and a few hardy volunteers, the magnitude of preparing for the much larger 1998 conference demanded a more targeted approach. A Roundup Committee was formed and from that hub, along with a vast number of volunteers, Pathways ’98 was a record-smashing success. In fact, the conference was so large it had to straddle both the

Hotel Vancouver (booths and entertainment) and Hyatt Regency (talks and presentations). Roundup stayed with that format until 2003, when the conference moved to the more commodious Westin Bayshore, thus amalgamating the whole conference under one roof. There was some grumbling within the membership that the Westin was too far away from the nucleus of offices in the heart of Vancouver, but a complimentary shuttle bus service dissolved the dissent. Concern was also voiced that the conference might never grow to fill the space at the Westin, but that fear certainly has been unfounded.

The timing of Roundup has always been in its favour, set as it is just after the post-Christmas trough, when everyone is back from holidays but before the winter drill programs begin. It is the first conference of the year, so everyone is eager to network and reconnect with peers and friends. The energy in the air is almost palpable.

### Roundup Now

Roundup has become, to AME BC, almost

an industry unto itself. An entire team of staff members is now dedicated to planning the event and overseeing the vast minutiae of details during the conference. Randy Turner, Roundup chair, says the unwavering success of the event is due to the limitless energy and commitment of AME BC staff and the army of volunteers. It is one thing to attract volunteers when the sector is flatlining, but it is quite another to do the same when it is enjoying a fever pitch of activity. B.C.’s exploration community is proud of their conference, and that pride is reflected in their dedication to ensuring that Roundup is better every year.

One of the concerns about moving the conference to the larger Westin was that Roundup would lose its ambience of old home week. After all, the exploration community is large, stretching to the far corners of the world. But it nevertheless is still a community, and nowhere is that sense of community more apparent than in the hallways and corners of the Westin Bayshore during the last week of every January. ►



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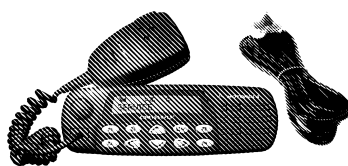
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## Who Says the Eighties Didn't Rock?

Exploration hot spots during a transitional era

**Toodoggone Area:** During 1983-1984, exploration for gold and silver in the newly recognized precious metals Toodoggone region in northern B.C. was continuing at a feverish pace. The Baker mine went into production (on a fly-in, fly-out basis from Smithers) in 1981, but closed in late 1983. The Lawyers property eventually went into production in 1989 and lasted until 1992. The development of the latter was facilitated by a new access road into the region, which has benefited future exploration in the area. It is worth noting that exploration for porphyry-type deposits in the area did not take off until the Kemess South deposit was located in 1990.

**Equity Silver Mine:** This transitional-type (between porphyry and mesothermal vein) deposit was put into production in 1980 by Placer Dome and operated until 1994.

Although totally reclaimed now, exploration (by Finlay Minerals) continues to the south on the Silver Hope property.

**Golden Bear:** No-seeum, Carlin-type (epithermal) gold was discovered by Chevron in fall 1983, and a large exploration program ensued the following year. Exploration during the next several years was successful in identifying a significant refractory gold resource in the Main (Bear) zone, with Homestake mining between 1990 and 1994. A 155-kilometre access road was constructed, which also facilitated other exploration projects in this remote area. Further exploration, based on a Carlin-type model, led to the discovery of additional oxide ore higher up the mountain, hosted in limestones. Significantly, heap leaching of two deposits (Kodiak and Ursa) between 1997 and 2002 was successfully carried out by Wheaton River Minerals (which has since been acquired by

Goldcorp). Golden Bear was North America's most northerly heap leach operation.

**Premier:** These mines accounted for the third largest gold and silver production in the province. In the early 1980s, as the price of gold increased and the potential for open-pit mining looked more attractive, Westmin Resources engaged in several years of aggressive exploration at Premier-Big Missouri. This culminated in production from open-pits between 1989 and 1996. The infrastructure (including a new power line) and developments at Premier over the years have been key ingredients in fostering regional exploration programs in the Stewart region, as well as sustaining the community of Stewart.

**QR Mine:** In 1983, Placer Dome discovered additional gold resources in the West zone at QR, which allowed for increased exploration by Dome Mines and eventual open-pit and underground mining by Kinross Gold from 1995 to 1998. The mine, which closed temporarily in 1998 due to low gold prices, was reopened in the fall 2007 by Cross Lake Minerals.

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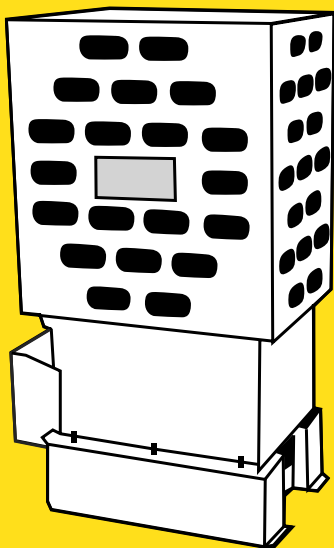
**Hedley (Nickel Plate) Mine:** Between 1904 and 1982, gold was recovered by underground mining at several deposits in the Hedley camp, with the Nickel Plate deposit being the largest by far. In 1983-1984, Mascot Mines initiated a major drilling program in the search for open-pittable gold ore at Hedley. Homestake Mining eventually brought the mine back into production between 1987 and 1996 as a low-grade gold open-pit operation. Today, the Hedley camp ranks fourth in total gold production in the province.

**Kutcho Creek:** Sumac Mines conducted a comprehensive underground bulk-sampling program on the Kutcho Creek deposit during 1983; this was followed up by several years of exploration by Esso Minerals. Up until the early 2000s when Western Keltic Mines gained control of the project, the property was inactive. Since then, Western Keltic has defined further significant base and precious metal resources on the site and is very close to initiating a full feasibility study to bring a mine into production by 2010.

**Mount Johnny (Reg) Mine:** During 1983-1984, Placer Dome, Anaconda and Skyline conducted exploration for gold in this remote area. Skyline eventually mined the Reg deposit between 1988 and 1990 and again in 1993. Significantly, it was during the exploration period in the mid-1980s that led Cominco to discovering the nearby Snip mesothermal vein deposit, which eventually yielded in excess of one million ounces of gold between 1991 and 1999. Exploration in the area remains active today, especially at the Bronson Slope project.

**Windy Craggy:** Exploration by Falconbridge and Geddes Resources in 1983 led to the confirmation of a world-class massive sulphide deposit, which eventually was touted as having one of the largest copper resources in the free world with 297.4 Mt grading 1.38 per cent Cu, 3.83 g/t Ag, 0.2 g/t Au and 0.069 per cent Co. Unfortunately, in an epic land-use struggle/decision, the deposit was alienated from development in 1993, having been included in the establishment of a Provincial Class A Park and World Heritage site. Nonetheless, its discovery and the subsequent knowledge gained from exploration and development programs have provided hope for future discoveries of a similar type.

—Tom Schroeter □



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