

## **Aboriginal Participation in the Mineral Industry**

**PDAC Convention, Monday March 6, 2006  
Metro Toronto Convention Centre  
Room 203, 2pm to 4:30pm**

In 2004, the PDAC established an Aboriginal Affairs Committee with a mandate to keep the Board and membership informed on aboriginal affairs as they may affect exploration and development in Canada. Promoting better understanding between aboriginal communities and the mineral industry is a key objective and to achieve this goal, the Committee has made it a priority to promote greater participation by aboriginal people in our association, at the PDAC convention, and throughout the industry itself.

To this end, the 2006 PDAC Convention will include a full technical session on Monday afternoon devoted to showcasing some of the many recent success stories of aboriginal participation in the mineral industry in Canada. The program, put together by co-chairs, Don Bubar of Avalon Ventures Ltd. and Michael Fox of Nishnawbe-Aski Development Fund, will feature a number of examples of aboriginal community-driven initiatives to build local capacity and become active players in the industry as prospectors, service providers and project generators.

Mineral prospecting is a natural extension of First Nations traditional land use activities. Through increased access to prospector training programs, aboriginal people are becoming skilled mineral explorationists, creating wealth and new opportunities for their communities. Recent examples of such initiatives from Kasabonika in northwestern Ontario and Wemindjii in northern Quebec will be presented at the session.

Leading off the session will be a presentation by Jack Blacksmith and Youcef Larbi of the Cree Mineral Exploration Board (CMEB) who will describe how the precedent-setting *La Paix des Braves* agreement between the Cree Nation and the government of Quebec has empowered the Crees to become major players in the mineral exploration business in northern Quebec. Integral to this agreement is an arrangement for resource revenue-sharing that has brought certainty to the First Nation's royalty entitlements and which could serve as a positive model for other jurisdictions across Canada.

Three other presentations will showcase how First Nations are currently participating in new mining projects on Vancouver Island, at Voisey's Bay in Labrador and at the award-winning Diavik Diamond Mine in the Northwest Territories [2005 PDAC E3 Environmental Excellence in Exploration Award; and 2005 Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program Gold level of achievement from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business]. In all three cases innovative partnerships were negotiated with First Nations that will improve employment opportunities and result in new aboriginal-owned service companies being established.

The session on Aboriginal participation in the mineral industry will be an excellent opportunity for PDAC members to introduce community representatives to the exploration and mining sector. The Aboriginal Affairs Committee is working hard to publicize the session in northern communities and attract new delegates who may not be familiar with the benefits of mineral exploration and development. As well, the PDAC has asked its corporate members to make every effort to encourage and assist representatives of aboriginal communities to participate in this session.

Increased participation by aboriginal people in the mineral industry is happening at a critical time. In recent years, our sector has seen a 21% growth in its aboriginal workforce, and we expect this growth to continue in light of a significant labour shortage in the mineral industry and the high number of aboriginal youth who are seeking career opportunities throughout Canada.