

Pan American Silver's Beaty among this year's seven award winners

Brian Sylvester

When Ross Beaty took the stage to accept the 2010 PDAC's Viola R. MacMillan Award for company or mine development, he took a moment to thank folks special to a dealmaker like Beaty – his lawyers.

He went on to thank a number of others including the “tens of thousands” of investors and his wife, Trisha.

“I have been a prospector and developer all of my life... While I was off roaming the world and chasing my dream, (Trisha) was raising five children and chasing her own dream of becoming a medical doctor,” said an emotional Beaty.

Since 1994, Beaty has raised more than \$1 billion in capital and created shareholder wealth exceeding \$4 billion by building and selling a number of companies, including Equinox Resources, Da Capo Resources, Global Copper, Northern Peru Copper and Lumina Copper.

He also launched Magma Energy and Pan American Silver, of which he is chairman.

Beaty was one of this year's seven awards winners, honoured at a banquet on Monday, March 8 during the PDAC's annual convention. The event was held at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel.

Perry Durning and Bud Hillemeier win Thayer Lindsley Award

The Thayer Lindsley Award for international discoveries was presented to Perry Durning and Bud Hillemeier, the principals of La Cuesta Corp., a grassroots exploration firm based in Arizona.

Durning and Hillemeier made several impressive grassroots discoveries in Mexico, particularly the San Sebastián silver-gold mine, the San Agustin gold deposit, the Pitarrilla silver deposit, and the Camino Rojo gold discovery. There are more than 800 million ounces of silver and seven million ounces of gold in those four finds.

Durning and Hillemeier formed La Cuesta International in 1993 after roughly a decade together at Fischer-Watt Gold, an Arizona and Nevada-based mineral exploration firm.

“I've been ‘married’ to Perry for twenty-seven years,” said Hillemeier, who thanked Durning for hiring him when he graduated in 1983 with a master's degree in structural geology from San Diego State University. At the time, Durning was president of Fischer-Watt.

Hillemeier also noted the corporate support he received from Robert Quartermain and Ken McNaughton of Silver Standard Resources, which is developing La Pitarrilla and exploring San Agustin.

Ring of Fire discoverers receive Bill Dennis Award

The Bill Dennis Award for a Canadian discovery or prospecting success went to five men credited with finding the Ring of Fire (McFauld's Lake) polymetallic camp in far northern

Ontario. The winners were John Harvey, Donald Hoy, Richard Nemis, Neil Novak and Mac Watson.

Novak, as vice-president of Spider Resources, was guiding De Beers Canada Exploration's drill program near McFauld's Lake, northern Ontario. In May of 2002, De Beers' drill cut massive sulphide mineralization, which led to a staking rush.

Nemis, as president and CEO of Noront Resources, and Watson, as president and CEO of Freewest Resources, staked their respective claims based on old airborne surveys. But it wasn't until the fall of 2007 that a hole into a promising anomaly sent Noront's share price through the roof. The hole returned 1.1% nickel, 0.9% copper and 2.1 grams palladium over 71.5 metres of magmatic rock that would eventually be known as the Eagle One deposit.

A year later, Watson's Freewest was drilling gravity targets that were thought to contain nickel-copper mineralization.

Drilling on the first target intersected more than 100 metres of high-grade chromite. Follow-up drilling outlined the deposit over a 1.6-km strike length and Freewest dubbed it Black Thor. The deposit contains an inferred mineral resource of 69.5 million tonnes grading 32% chromite.

"Don (Hoy) called me from the bush on a Sunday afternoon and said 'we hit 100 metres of massive chromite,'" Watson recalled. "I said 'what the hell are we going to do with chromite?'"

Steel producer Cliffs Natural Resources paid \$240 million for Freewest and its chromite deposits in January 2010.

Watson, representing the five winners, said the discovery "demonstrates how co-operation among juniors should work."

Environmental & Social Responsibility awards presented to two companies

The PDAC presented two Environmental and Social Responsibility awards. The first went to Don Bubar, president and CEO of Avalon Rare Metals, which has done a remarkable job of relationship building with Dene communities around its Nechalacho rare earth elements project in the Northwest Territories.

Bubar was quick to credit his team members, especially the company's vice-president, exploration, Bill Mercer, and aboriginal advisor Glenn Nolan.

De Beers Canada was the other Environmental and Social Responsibility award winner.

De Beers Canada, the only company in Canada operating two diamond mines, won the award for maintaining environmental certification throughout construction and operation of both the Victor and Snap Lake diamond mines as well as for excellent community relations work.

Three impact benefit agreements and a working relationship agreement are in place with the communities surrounding Victor, and four separate impact benefit agreements are in place at Snap Lake.

The agreements were signed after lengthy consultations with aboriginal leaders and ensure that northern communities directly benefit from diamond mining.

“This award belongs to everyone at De Beers Canada and our community partners,” said Chantal Lavoie, COO of De Beers Canada.

Nicholas Carter receives Distinguished Service Award

Nick Carter, a long-time senior geologist with the B.C. government, won the PDAC’s Distinguished Service Award largely for his association work.

He is a life member of Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia (formerly the British Columbia and Yukon Chamber of Mines) after being elected vice-president in 1984 and president in 1988. He is also a member of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC), a Fellow of the Geological Association of Canada, and a life member of the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum (CIM).

Carter joined the PDAC in 1981 and served on the board for 11 years.

“Have I had a lot of fun in this business or what?” Carter said. “I am humbled and honoured to receive this award and I can’t say how proud I am to be born and raised in a mining community.”

Willie Keatainak honoured with Skookum Jim Award

The Skookum Jim Award for aboriginal achievement in the mineral industry went to Inuk Willie Keatainak, who made his way from the small community of Salluit, on the northern tip of Quebec’s Nunavik territory.

Keatainak was the leader of a team that negotiated the Raglan Agreement with Falconbridge in the mid-1990s. It was the first impact benefits agreement ever signed between a mining company and an aboriginal community and it has served as template for many others since.

“When we talked of starting partnerships, it was unheard of,” recalled Keatainak, who thanked former Falconbridge executive Tom Pugsley.

Keatainak now runs Nuvumiut Developments, which partners with established contractors to bid on Raglan contracts. Keatianak said a partnership with mining contractor Peter Kiewit Sons started on a golf course in Montreal.

“I was the caddy,” Keatainak said.

He added: “We look forward to many more years working with the mining companies. We have some exciting times ahead.”