

Blooming expertise

LYNDA Bloom recalls that, in 1976, when she was on a field trip organised by the tutor of her geoscience course at university, the women students were told they could not go down the underground mine. The usual excuse was trotted out by the mine management: there were no women's toilets down there.

Move forward to 1993 when Ms Bloom and her friend Jane Werniuk presented a paper on the lack of women in management in the mineral exploration industry. "There were no women in management positions in the [Canadian mining] industry at that time, not even as exploration managers," she says. The researchers established there had been upwards of 25% of women graduating from geoscience programmes for 10 years. But this had not translated into senior roles.

Today, the scene has changed dramatically, she points out. There are considerably more women in management roles and a trend towards women as presidents of junior mining companies with worldwide operations. Today, more than half the people studying geology at Canadian universities are women "and they will have many more opportunities than 20 years ago".

Partly, this reflects the fact that mining is now a hi-tech industry. No longer do those involved need the tremendous physical strength that used to be required for many of the jobs.

My conversation with Ms Bloom began because of something buried deep in an announcement – mainly about the acquisition of a private company in Peru – by Canadian Shield Resources Inc (CSR). It mentioned that Ms Bloom, one of its co-founders and its chief executive for ten years, was "to step down

and pursue other opportunities".

Bernard Kraft, chairman of CSR, who has become interim chief executive, said: "We thank Lynda for her valuable contribution to Canadian Shield and wish her great success in her future endeavours."

To find out about those "future endeavours", you had to turn to a separate announcement – from Halo Resources Ltd, another TSX Venture Exchange company. It revealed with some fanfare that Ms Bloom had been appointed its president and chief executive.

Marc Cernovitch, Halo's chairman, said the rapidly-developing company required "the experienced leadership and technical background that Lynda Bloom brings to the company. This is about adding strength and greater depth to Halo's management team".

Ms Bloom, a geoscientist, is certainly well-known in Canada's mining community. During her 30 years in the industry, she has become a world expert on assay methods after travelling extensively worldwide to review sampling and analytical procedures. Analytical Solutions Ltd, the Toronto-based consultancy she founded and heads, has acted as a consultant to some of the biggest exploration and mining companies – including Barrick Gold, Falconbridge, Anglo American Corporation and Cameco, as well as many junior companies.

Today, she is also a director of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC). And she recently completed her term as chair of the Toronto branch of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.

On top of all that, she still finds time to serve on a couple of government advisory boards – at the Federal level for the Canadian Certified Reference Material Programme and also on the technical committee of the Ontario Geological Survey.

Asked why she does so much voluntary work, she responds with a chuckle: "I have 'sucker'

printed on my forehead. Once people know you are willing to do these voluntary jobs, you get asked to do more of them."

More seriously, mentioning that she has just been re-elected for a second two-year term as a PDAC director, Ms Bloom says: "It is a little bit of giving back. The PDAC does a lot of good."

For example, at present, as co-chair of the PDAC's Student Affairs Committee, she is heavily involved in organising a Student-Industry Mineral Exploration Workshop to take place in the Greater Sudbury Area in May.

The idea, she explains, is to bring one selected student from each university across Canada face to face with senior industry people who will give them a good view of the very broad range of career opportunities today's mining industry offers.

OTTAWA BEGINNINGS

Ms Bloom originally had no intention of joining the mining industry. Born in Ottawa, there was no family mining connections. Indeed, "I had never even slept in a tent".

However, after starting the chemistry programme at Carleton University, Ottawa, she found the subject relentlessly academic. But it became much more interesting – and down-to-earth, so to speak – when combined with geology. She emerged from Queen's University, Kingston, with an MSc in 1981.

Although hired chiefly as a librarian on graduation, she quickly became the in-house geochemist for Getty Minerals, working across Canada. After she was transferred from Saskatoon to Toronto, the Toronto office was closed, a victim of the recession in the industry at the time. By 1985, she had been made redundant four times so she realised "it was unlikely I would be collecting a pension working for a mining company", and set up Analytical Solutions.

Early on, Analytical Solutions worked closely with SGS, previously known as Société Générale de Surveillance, which claims to be the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company.

This took her to Ghana and Kazakhstan, and eventually work for other clients took her all over Latin America, to South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. It involved exploration geochemistry, data interpretation and quality control for assay programmes.

Ms Bloom says she frequently takes a "forensic" approach when companies call her in to get some independent help. She says: "When people have issues they want me to fix, I have the experience to know what to look for."


She built up a wide following, not only via word-of-mouth but also through her papers on the subject – so far, she has published 40 of them.

Her introduction to junior mining company boardrooms came in 1989 with Citadel Gold Mines, which had moved into production too quickly, needed help and asked her to become its president.

She was also on the board of First Nickel Inc, which listed in 2003. Ms Bloom resigned in June last year at the time changes were taking place in the top executive management team – including the elimination of the posts of president and chief operating officer.

She is also a director of Augen Capital Corp, a Canadian merchant bank specialising in the financing of and investment in very early-stage resources companies.

Explaining why she left Canadian Shield, Ms Bloom says: "The deal we did with Mohammad



"My personal focus is still Canada, where I have a network and speak the language, so I decided to work where I could have the greatest effectiveness"



Shares slip as South China Resources begins CEO search

IT'S coming up to the second anniversary of South China Resources' (SCR's) listing on London's AIM when it raised £3 million.

But the enthusiasm that drove the share price up from 5p to a peak 29.75p in April last year seems to have evaporated. On the way up some institutions put up another £5.5 million – in February last year – at 13.5p. The price has plummeted back to 5p.

The reason: the company's latest reports about its flagship Danfeng copper-molybdenum project have, to say the least, not lived up to previous expectations. The sudden departure of chief executive Steve Leithead last month, without a replacement being named, probably has something to do with the disappointment some shareholders feel. Everything SCR previously said about Mr Leithead suggested he was in for the long haul.

In comes David Tyrwhitt as an executive director. During 40 years in the industry, he was the

founding chief executive of Newmont Australia and was CEO of Ashton Mining before heading a Normandy Mining-Anglo American joint venture exploring in southeast Asia.

Subsequently, Dr Tyrwhitt worked closely with financier Robert Friedland in China and in the past five years has been looking for opportunities in Tibet – where SCR now has a copper project.

However, at 68, Dr Tyrwhitt is unlikely to take on the chief executive's role at SCR.

Executive chairman Alastair Clayton has the answers, of course, to questions about whether a search is on for a new CEO, whether Mr Leithead is due for any compensation and how much.

However, he simply says: "It is not appropriate for me comment on specifics. I'm sure you understand. I think our current board composition is outstanding and has the right mix of skills and experience."

Al Fayed in 2004 brought us into Peru, and the exploration projects there have great potential. My personal focus is still Canada, where I have a network and speak the language, so I decided to work where I could have the greatest effectiveness."

Noteworthy anniversaries – such as being presi-

dent of Canadian Shield for ten years and her 50th birthday – also played a part in her decision.

Canadian Shield has now recruited Phil Anderson, a Colorado School of Mines-trained geologist who resides in Peru, as vice president, exploration. It was the acquisition of Mr Anderson's company that featured

largely in the announcement, which briefly included the news that Ms Bloom was leaving.

Halo is moving its head office from Vancouver to Toronto and Ms Bloom promises she will devote 90% of her working hours to push the company forward. She says Halo offers "an amazing opportunity". But before taking the chief executive post, she cautiously joined the board last November "to get to know the people and whether we could work well together".

Mr Cernovitch, who previously was Halo's chief executive and chairman, is an economist and former stockbroker who wanted to bring in a mining expert to help run the company.

Halo has three projects, but the one that Ms Bloom finds most exciting is the Sherridon, where the company has consolidated an impressive land package, of some 200 km², near Flin Flon, Manitoba. The package contains both a former copper-zinc producer – it was Sherritt Gordon's first mine, "but they got diverted by the big Lynn Lake nickel discovery further north" – and historical base-metals resources.

Ms Bloom says: "This is a unique Canadian opportunity as there has been essentially no exploration for VMS (volcanogenic massive sulphide) deposits in this area for 60 years, yet the property is connected to Flin Flon by road and rail.

"For me, the combination of potentially low capital costs and incredible upside for new discoveries is a winning combination."



NATIONAL QUARRIES COMPANY LIMITED

INVITATION TO BID

Tender for the Operations of Scott's Quarry

National Quarries Company Limited wishes to invite interested quarry operators and other interested parties for the operation of their Blue Limestone Quarry known as Scott's Quarry located at Verdant Vale, Blanchisseuse in the Island of Trinidad.

1. Bid Document can be acquired from the Office of the Company Secretary located at NQCL's Corporate Offices, Churchill Roosevelt Highway, Arouca upon payment by certified cheque of a non-refundable fee of Five Thousand Trinidad & Tobago Dollars (TT\$5,000.00) or Eight Hundred United States Dollars (US\$800.00).

2. Bids must be submitted in duplicate in sealed envelopes addressed:

“REFERENCE NO: NQCL/SQUIT/002/007”
TENDER FOR THE OPERATIONS OF SCOTT'S QUARRY
Secretary, Tenders Committee
National Quarries Company Limited
Churchill Roosevelt Highway
Arouca
TRINIDAD, WEST INDIES

3. Proposals should be submitted no later than 3.00 p.m. on Monday 30th April 2007.

4. No late proposal will be accepted.

5. National Quarries Company Limited reserves the right not to accept the lowest or any offer.