

# ROCK LEGENDS

A BRIEF INSIGHT INTO THE CAREERS OF MINING AND EXPLORATION INDUSTRY EXPERTS.

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Advisory Board - Siecap

Project Director (Consultant) - Mayur Resources

### Q. When did you start in mining and resources?

After a few vacation jobs, I arrived in West Australia from Ireland in 1996 which really kickstarted my geology career.

### Q. Where did you start?

I was initially hired as a contract exploration geologist and sent straight out to the Western Australia desert at Nimary Gold Mine's exploration camp, later to become Jundee Mine currently owned and operated by Northern Star Resources Limited. When I arrived in Perth, I called the Camp Manager and asked what I needed to bring to site, his response being "a good liver." Times have changed somewhat since then!

### Q. What was it like being female and starting out in mining back then?

It was challenging at times. At college I was the only student in the Earth Sciences course but luckily shared some subjects with geology, enviro sciences and engineering. In the engineering department, there was only one other female out of 135 students.

Beginning my career, I was often the only female on site and am often to this day the only female in a meeting, conference or panel.

25 years ago, conditions in remote camps could be challenging and communications limited. Before the days of mobile phones and email access, we'd anxiously monitor the fax machine for cyclone warnings. I remember waiting out a cyclone to pass by taking cover in the core shed with redback spiders and scorpions for company. I even managed to get bitten by one on the



face, earning the nickname "Cyclops" when one eye closed up and my supportive colleagues suggesting they charge people money to come and see me!

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### Q. Where have you worked?

I've been fortunate to work on projects all over the world in every continent and in different commodities. I moved from field-based roles to corporate positions quite quickly and looked at projects in Canada, South America, Africa, India, Australia and now looking at Papua New Guinea.

### Q. Companies you've worked for?

- Eagle Mining
- Xstrata/MIM
- Anglo American
- Queensland Government
- Arrow Energy
- Consultant to various companies
- Mayur Resources and Siecap

### Q. Why/How did you get into geology?

I started at University College Dublin in 1991 then completed four years at Trinity University majoring in Earth Science. I had actually applied to do zoology but a misunderstanding at Trinity saw me enrolled in geology by accident and decided on earth sciences as a compromise. Interesting twist of fate that proved quite fortunate and timed my entry to the world of resources to perfection! I've never looked back!

### Q. Favourite place to explore?

So many. I loved my time in Western Australia especially in wildflower season. Travelling to Australia as a young person from Ireland, I was super-impressed by the landscapes, the wildlife and the contrasts as well as the huge exploration opportunities.

I also love India; blown away by the contrasts, the vibrancy and colour.

### Q. What can be improved in the exploration and mining industries?

The biggest challenges for explorers are social

license and access to funding. There should be active promotion about the benefits of the industry to the wider public, including schools. Some great work being done by the likes of QRC, AUSIMM etc but the target audience is for the most part onboard already. Much wider campaigns are needed to remove the misinformation so prevalent in the mainstream.

The Resources industry generally has a bit of a reputation for overspending and gold plating things, so we need to get better at delivering on time and in budget if we're to compete with other industries for investment. You have to do what you say you're going to do – there has to be some correlation between the more you explore and the results you get (easier said than done, I know...).

I think the correlation from spend to discovery also needs to improve if funding upstream projects is to get easier. While exploration rates have increased again in the past couple of years, there's been no correlation to discovery, so we need to change our approach and think outside the box. Lots of data available; datamining should be treated as a science and not an art.

Drilling itself could get better; drilling rates, recovery and predictability haven't progressed at the same rate as other technical advances across exploration and mining.

### Q. If you were down to your last drill hole, where would you drill?

I like the underexplored geographies in the Pacific Rim for copper and gold where Tier 1 discoveries are more likely than the mature supply regions.

The North West Minerals Province is also exciting though challenging owing to depth of cover and access. I'm watching Teck and Anglo closely to see where they land and am sure it's only a matter of time before the remainder of the Isa super-basin is better defined.

### Q. Key advice for young geologists out there?

Get your boots in the field. You've got to get out from behind your desk and get some field and operational

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experience if you want to have any credibility later in your career. I'd suggest you try and get experience in at least two commodities and two geographies to best "cycle-proof" your career. Also, pick up another language, many of the more senior roles in the geosciences have a global focus so a second or third language is a big plus.

If you're going to do a masters or post-grad, do something that broadens your offering rather than consolidates it. My preference would be to overlay a geosciences degree with Geotech or environmental engineering or some commercial/financial discipline rather than an academic exercise in vitrinite reflectance for example. Try not to pigeonhole yourself too early until you figure out what really grabs you.

**Q. Any exploration companies out there whose projects you like?**

Lots... Kirkland Lake have had the Midas touch and found some incredible projects, so too Solgold. Any of the Juniors with good copper and gold intersections in supported jurisdictions will do well.

From a coal perspective, some good smaller companies in the Met Coal space like Bowen Coking Coal and Stanmore have done remarkably well and also some good stories coming out of SW Alberta that are worth watching.

Funding of upstream work is difficult for explorers without cashflow, but the good projects will get funding just the same.

**Q. What are some industry innovations that could attract more females to the workforce?**

More females at the C-Suite level would have a huge cultural impact that would cascade throughout the business. Pay parity and demonstrable support and inclusion for women at the top. Still a view of the glass ceiling for women trying to crack into senior and executive management.

Certainly, flexible working arrangements, attitudes towards co-parenting and supporting women who have stepped up into senior roles where quotas have been set. Zero tolerance for sexual harassment which is still accepted as the norm in too many workplaces.

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**Q. I'll never forget...**

Being on a Cessna headed to the West Australian desert that was struck by lightning. The plane had a black out and all systems failed with a smell of burning throughout the cabin. We suddenly lost a lot of altitude and had to make an emergency landing with no instruments. We all thought we were going to die. Grown men were hugging each other and crying. Terrific team bonding experience but not one I'd recommend!