Conference Report: COM 2017 Hosting World Gold and Nickel-Cobalt
27-30 August 2017, Hyatt Regency, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Saturday, August 26-27: Prior to the 56th Annual Conference of Metallurgists (COM 2017), short courses were held. These classes provide a great way for professionals to keep up with current trends. COM 2017 offered two short courses during these two days. Both the "Gold Processing" and "Introduction to Hydrometallurgy" courses attracted more than 60 people.

Gold recovery by resin by Richard Shaw of Goldcorp

Sunday, August 27: Conference registration began after the short courses on Sunday, in conjunction with the Opening Reception being held on the 34th floor of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Attendees soaked in an amazing view of the Vancouver skyline while enjoying drinks and hors-d’oeuvres. It was great opportunity to catch up with old friends and do some networking. Following the Opening Reception, the students in attendance got together for a fun-filled night. First, they teamed up and used their astute problem-solving skills to work their way out of an escape room at SMARTYPANTZ. Later, the ones that did manage to escape capped off the night with a celebratory beer at a local pub.

Monday, August 28: After a continental breakfast (served during every morning of the Conference), the MetSoc Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Plenary Sessions took place. MetSoc of CIM 2016-2017 President, Prof. Zhenghe Xu, invited Kenneth Thomas, President of CIM, up for a discussion. Also during the meeting, the new President of MetSoc of CIM, James Budac, was inaugurated and delivered a welcome speech.
After other MetSoc board members made speeches, Samuel Marcuson delivered a presentation showcasing the achievements in the history of Canadian Metallurgy from a technological perspective.

The next plenary entitled "What/Who is Preventing You from Innovating (and Other Excuses)rename the title?" was delivered by Nathan Stubina of McEwen Mining. With the mining industry facing challenges such as lower grade ores, smaller deposits, increased social demands, and higher taxes, Nathan underlined the importance of innovation. He said: "If you ask senior mining executives, they generally agree that innovation is essential, however, often their actions do not reflect this imperative. Why not?" Nathan discussed some of the barriers to innovation and what we all can do to move our industry forward. The presentation was very insightful and rich with examples pulled from different disciplines.
Invited Plenary: "What/Who is preventing you from innovating (and other excuses)?" by Nathan Stubina of McEwen Mining

Following the invited plenaries, technical sessions commenced. COM 2017 included many different symposia: Advances in Materials Manufacturing III, Advanced Measuring Techniques and Technologies in Mineral Processing, Energy and Eco-Efficiency in Mining and Processing, Light Metal Alloys, Enabling Innovation in Metallurgy, Corrosion and Environmental Degradation of Materials, General Hydrometallurgy, and the second symposium on the Women of Innovation. This year’s COM hosted the 7th World Gold Conference and the 4th Nickel and Cobalt Conference as well.

Monday’s luncheon was hosted by The Historical Metallurgy Committee of MetSoc and featured guest speaker John Marsden, President of Metallurgium. His presentation, "A Brief History of Cyanide-Nature’s Wonder Reagent", discussed the use of cyanide in different applications. FLSmidth sponsored this luncheon.
On Monday afternoon, a special presentation entitled "Where Will Your Engineering Degree Take You?" was organized by the Emerging Professionals (EP) Program of MetSoc. A panel discussion effectively exchanged the experiences of professionals in our society. EP panelists included Nils Voermann, Hatch; Mary Wells, University of Waterloo; Boyd Davis, KPM, and François Audet, Foundry Solutions. The EP program was launched by MetSoc to enhance the opportunities for those who have recently entered or re-entered their careers in the Canadian metallurgy or materials industries. This program helps emerging professionals engage with our Society and participate in Society activities, become better acquainted with each other, and make important contacts with CIM and MetSoc leaders over a period of two years. There are different sections, such as Hydrometallurgy, Pyrometallurgy, Environment, Light Metals, and more. As an EP member in the Hydrometallurgy Technical Section, I was invited to the Hydrometallurgy Section Executive Meeting on Monday evening. The experience was priceless! For more information on this program, you can visit http://www.metsoc.org/emerging_professionals/.

Poster judging for students happened during lunchtime. A committee judged Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. student’s posters and selected the best ones. Following the EP panel discussion, the Student-Industry Mixer, a long-time staple of MetSoc meetings, took place. The Mixer is a great environment for networking, chatting, and making new friends. This is a must-attend activity for students and new graduates looking for jobs. The awards for the best posters were announced there as well. SNC-Lavalin, thyssenkrupp, and Agnico Eagle were sponsors.
Tuesday, August 29: On Tuesday morning, the World Gold panel discussion entitled “Can Innovation Sustain the Glitter of Gold?” moderated by Engin Özberk took place. Mr. Özberk is the Special Advisor to the CEO Mitacs & to the Vice President Research, University of Saskatchewan. The panelists were David Dreisinger of UBC, Simon Hille of Goldcorp, Peter Kondos of Barrick, Fiona Morgan of Mintrex, and Nathan Stubina of McEwen Mining. The panelists discussed gold innovation over the last decade and what should be the focus of innovation over the next decade. It was an interactive discussion with questions taken from the audience.
The Hydrometallurgy Section of MetSoc had their annual technical section luncheon where Michael Collins of Sherritt International delivered a special presentation. Dr. Collins talked about the development of autoclave technology and pressure leaching. Student scholarship awards were also presented during the luncheon.

The MetSoc Awards Banquet & Reception took place Tuesday evening. The Metallurgy and Materials Society of CIM honoured its outstanding members by presenting them with MetSoc Awards. A three-course meal with wine and a fabulous reception was included along with light entertainment. CBC news anchor Suhana Meharchand was our host for the evening. The attendees had a great evening and spirits were high. Afterwards, James Budac, President of MetSoc, took the podium and closed the Awards Banquet, and invited the award winners for a photo. Mintrex sponsored the Awards Banquet.
A view from Awards Banquet: The Outstanding Student Chapter Award 2017 Université Laval, presented by Zhenghe Xu, president of MetSoc of CIM 2016-2017

A view from Awards Banquet: Silver Medal Award to Doug Boyd of Queen’s University (retired), presented by Mary Wells, President of MetSoc 2015-2016
Wednesday, August 30: Innovation was the word of the day on Wednesday, with two unique and highly-anticipated sessions on the topic drawing big crowds! Nils Voermann and James Budac chaired the Enabling Innovation in Metallurgy session. The Enabling innovation luncheon featured speaker Bo Pelech, Consultant, MayorW.com. He presented "On the Front Line of Innovation". thyssenkrupp sponsored this luncheon. One of the panel discussions was entitled “Enabling Collaboration Between Parties and Vested Interests in Canadian Mining Innovation” moderated by Nathan Stubina. The panelists were Boyd Davis of Kingston Process Metallurgy; Vladimiros Papangelakis of University of Toronto; Greg Rasmussen of Gekko Systems; Rob Stephens of Teck; and Nils Voermann of Hatch.

Women of Innovation was a full-day session discussing the role of women in the mining and metallurgy industries. Three panels were organised: "Building the Archives of Canadian Women in Science, Engineering, and Innovation"; "Women Engineers in Private Sector"; and "Women Engineers in Academia and Government". Elizabeth Cannon, President, University of Calgary, was the keynote speaker during a luncheon in which she presented "Five Lessons in Leadership and Life". SNC-Lavalin sponsored this luncheon.
Chris Twigge-Molecey of Hatch presenting at Enabling Innovation in Metallurgy

A view from Women of Innovation session
A view from Metals 2017 Network and Trade Lounge

A view from technical session
**Thursday, August 31:** One of the common features of COM conferences are the industrial tours. This year’s tours included a one-day tour of laboratories operating in the Vancouver area, and a two-day tour of the Sherritt Ni-Co Refinery & Pilot Plant. I attended the Vancouver labs tour. A group of 21 people visited the CESL Pilot Demo Plant of Teck Resources Limited, and the AuTec Metallurgical Laboratory of Barrick. It was an informative and impressive tour. You can read about these labs in many publications, but the experience of visiting on-site, talking with engineers, and asking questions is an incomparable experience.

This Conference gave all of us a much-awaited opportunity to analyze and discuss the rapid advances in the mining, metallurgy, and materials sectors. One great thing about COM in my view is that it helps bridge the gap between universities and the metallurgical industry, thereby enhancing their collaboration. Another benefit of attending was meeting with new colleagues and reconnecting with old friends. I would appreciate to receive comments and contributions from the specialists who attended to COM 2017 to continue this discussion or perhaps highlight certain aspects of it that I didn’t mention. For those who could not make it this year, I hope to meet you at the next MetSoc conference. For more information, please follow #AnnualCOM on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

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